PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
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AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

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Director of Catering Services—Mrs. S. J. Harrison

Operations Manager—N. M. Hutson

Catering Accountant—D. R. W. Wood, FCA

Executive Chef—I. Gabay, MBE

Personnel Administrator—Mrs. S. M. Nicholls, FHCIMA, MIPM

Catering Manager, House of Commons—P. Gale, MHCIMA

Catering Manager, Bellamy's—Ms. S. Hovells, LHCIMA

Banqueting Manager—C. J. Griffiths

Assistant Banqueting Manager—P. D. Heywood

Assistant Catering Manager—M. W. E. Johnson

Assistant Catering Accountant—Mrs. B. A. Langley

Personal Assistant to the Director—Mrs. A. G. Lunn

Deputy Executive Chef—S. Norris

Shorthand Writer to the House—Mrs. E. M. C. Holland

Head of Security—Chief Superintendent A. E. F. Longhurst, LVO

Deputy Head of Security—Superintendent R. J. Warne

Communications Manager—A. Blake

Deputy Communications Manager—W. Tarr

Postmaster—J. Arnold

Transport Manager—J. W. Jones

19 October 1992

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 212**

SIXTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1992-93

House of Commons

Thursday 24 September 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock, notice having been given by MADAM SPEAKER, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 12 (Earlier meeting of the House in certain circumstances).*

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

2.34 pm

Resolved,

That this House, at its rising to-morrow, do adjourn till Monday 19th October; that, at this day's sitting, the Speaker shall not later than Ten o'clock put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of the Prime Minister; that, at the conclusion of those proceedings, the Speaker shall adjourn the House without putting any further Question; and that, at to-morrow's sitting, the Speaker shall, at half-past Two o'clock, put the Question already proposed from the Chair.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Economic Policy

Madam Speaker: We now come to the motion on United Kingdom economic policy—*[Interruption.]* Order. I am delighted to note that the House has returned in a good mood. Before we begin, I must announce that I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the right hon. and learned Member the Leader of the Opposition —*[Interruption.]* Order. These are important announcements.

The House will not be surprised to hear that many of those hon. Members who wish to speak will be disappointed. Therefore, I must put a 10-minute limit on speeches between 6 and 8 pm. However, I make a special plea to those right hon. and hon. Members who speak outside that time to restrict the length of their speeches. We need to hear a variety of opinions in this House and I expect the co-operation of the House in ensuring that that happens.

2.37 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): I beg to move,

That this House expresses its support for the economic policy of Her Majesty's Government.

Following the developments in the foreign exchange markets over the past weeks, I thought it right to recall Parliament to debate the present position. The essential conditions for Britain's economic success are low inflation, low taxes, free trade and freedom from excessive state interference. I am happy to reaffirm those principles today. The Government stand for a low-inflation, low-tax economy—and so, I believe, do the British people. That is why, five months ago, they made their choice and we sit here and the Labour party sits on the Opposition Benches.

We joined the exchange rate mechanism in 1990 to help to bring down the rate of inflation in this country. British industry supported us in that decision; indeed, it urged us to join believing that, on balance, it would help to stabilise exchange rates, bring down inflation and bring down interest rates from the high British level, which then applied, to the much lower European levels. Of course, during the period of our membership, interest rates fell from 15 to 10 per cent.

[The Prime Minister]

I congratulate industry on its magnificent response in the battle against inflation. I know that it has not been easy, but, against a difficult background, exports have risen to record levels, costs have been controlled and productivity has soared. It was not just industry which supported entry into the ERM—so did commerce, the City, most trade unions, the TUC and the Opposition parties in this House.

The Leader of the Opposition, whom I warmly welcome to his new responsibilities, was consistent in his support of the exchange rate mechanism. When we joined it, the right hon. and learned Gentleman supported us, and agreed. When I announced the exchange rate central figure the right hon. and learned Gentleman was generous enough to agree. When, last week, I said that we needed reforms because of the fault lines that had become apparent, the right hon. and learned Gentleman agreed that reform was needed. I congratulate him on his consistency, even though on this issue the House has been not just a debating Chamber but an echo chamber.

Now, of course, we hear most loudly from those people who were critics of the exchange rate mechanism. They come from all sides and every party. My right hon. Friend Lord Tebbit, I understand, says that the Government were, I think the expression is, "dragged in" by the then Chancellor. Now we all know my right hon. Friend Lord Tebbit. He is an old friend to us all. I admire him as a man of great courage, a fighter, a bruiser. He likes to bite your ankles, even if you are not walking up his pathway. Yet even my right hon. Friend Lord Tebbit lost many battles with my formidable predecessor. Despite this, according to Lord Tebbit, even my formidable predecessor, whose convictions and firmness of purpose are everywhere admired, was somehow dragged into the exchange rate mechanism by her new Chancellor. Ah, yes, I remember it well.

Since we joined the exchange rate mechanism we have brought inflation, which was rising to 11 per cent., down to nearly 3·5 per cent., and falling. That is an achievement for which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer deserves to be warmly congratulated, so let me do so and let me say this: I take full responsibility for the actions and policies of my Chancellor.

In the exceptional circumstances of last week, we were obliged to suspend our membership of the exchange rate mechanism. In the circumstances, there was no choice. No mechanism could have survived the market's attack on the scale that occurred last Wednesday. One after another—not just sterling—the currencies of Europe came under fire. We need to see that against the background of events world wide: a referendum in France, whose outcome was in doubt, and great economic difficulties in Germany where interest rate levels were at their highest level for a decade. Those strains were increased by a slowdown across Europe and the falling exchange rate of the dollar. That speculative attack turned first to the lira, which was forced to devalue and subsequently to step outside the exchange rate mechanism.

It created havoc beyond the exchange rate mechanism—in the Scandinavian countries, where overnight interest rates in Sweden touched 500 per cent. The market, encouraged by injudicious comments about realignment which should never have been made, then turned on sterling. In such circumstances, there could be only one response: to defend the pound with foreign exchange reserves and then to raise interest rates. That is what we did, but the severity of the attack compelled us to leave the mechanism. Other currencies, too, have come under attack and suffered varying degrees of damage. I do not wish to understate the consequences of this event.

Let me turn first to the exchange rate mechanism itself. I do not see that we could readily return to the mechanism without dealing with the problems that have been thrown up in the past fortnight. These need careful examination and consideration before we can decide whether such a mechanism can be made to work to the benefit of all its members. Some fundamentalists say that it cannot. Other fundamentalists say we should pop straight back in.

Let me say bluntly to the House that I have no intention of being bound to either course without a proper examination of where future British interests lie. My expectation is that co-operation is a better way, if it can be seen to be adequate, and no one should doubt that we will examine carefully whether a reformed mechanism can be made to work. But I do not believe that we shall be able to go back into the mechanism soon, or into the same mechanism that we left last week. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has already made our criticisms very clear to other European Finance Ministers, and I will be doing so at the European summit next month.

But inside or outside the exchange rate mechanism, the Government's economic policy must retain the same objectives. Our ambitions to bring inflation down steadily but surely during the lifetime of this Parliament were spelled out in the last Budget, and that remains our strategy. Thus far, our anti-inflation strategy has succeeded more spectacularly than anyone in the Opposition ever believed possible.

Outside the exchange rate mechanism, the conduct of monetary policy cannot, indeed should not, be exactly the same. We must have regard to a range of indicators of monetary conditions to make sure that our objectives on inflation in particular are not at risk. These will include our existing narrow money target, the behaviour of broad money and asset prices and, of course, the exchange rate. Nobody should believe that a floating exchange rate is a free meal, always allowing interest rates to fall to a very low level.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The Prime Minister spoke about fault lines in the exchange rate mechanism. When did he first discover them? Did his Chancellor, who we now understand is a long-term sceptic of the ERM, ever inform the Prime Minister of his doubts, and if so, when?

The Prime Minister: The speculative attack on sterling was of a size and scale that we have not seen for beyond a quarter of a century. I do not believe that any mechanism would have been able to withstand the size and scale of that. But I believe that there are other areas within the exchange rate mechanism where reform could have made it a more credible instrument for use last week. We shall discuss that with our European partners and others.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough) *rose*——

The Prime Minister: I shall give way later.

Interest rates elsewhere in Europe have been driven up this summer, particularly by the strains in Germany.

Indeed, in the last 10 days of turbulence in the mechanism, interest rates have risen in Greece, Italy, Sweden and France. In Spain they have not only devalued but have effectively reintroduced exchange controls. Ireland, too, this morning reintroduced exchange controls. Since we stood aside from that turbulence, it has been possible to reduce base rates by a full percentage point this week, and the benefit to business and to home owners will help strengthen economic recovery.

But interest rates alone will not achieve the non-inflationary growth that we need in this country, and that point needs to be understood. That depends even more crucially on keeping firm control of public expenditure. The Government's new system of control will allow money to be directed towards priorities, while we keep strictly within the overall limits laid down for the growth of public expenditure as a whole.

In essence, the Government have set an upper limit to expenditure and will divide resources between priorities in the public expenditure round. That contrasts with the previous system of individual bids that were added up at the end of individual negotiations. It is a fundamentally different system of controlling public expenditure. It is tough and will be tough, but it is necessary and is an important component part of overall economic strategy.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): Will the Prime Minister give the House some idea of the likely time scale for reforming the exchange rate mechanism? Will it be Christmas or in three of four years' time?

The Prime Minister: Reform self-evidently depends on negotiation with all the other members of the mechanism. At this stage, nobody can say how long that will take. As I said a few moments ago, given the turbulence that has existed—not least the money supply figures announced in Germany yesterday—I would not expect our return to any mechanism, and certainly not the same mechanism, to be in the near future. I do not believe that that will be practicable, and I must make that clear.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): The Prime Minister is speaking as President of the European Council, not just as Prime Minister of Great Britain. He has repeatedly told us that his object is that we should be at the heart of Europe. Will he please explain how allowing speculators to determine our currency, German banks to determine our interest rates and French voters to determine the future of the Maastricht treaty puts this country at the heart of Europe? Is it not clear that the British, like the Danish, Irish and French, are entitled to determine what is essentially a political matter, although in a debate dressed up as an economic debate?

The Prime Minister: I will turn directly to the question of Britain's place in Europe in detail in a few moments. On the question of speculation, it is certainly within the memory of the right hon. Gentleman that, whether inside the mechanism or outside, inside the European Community or outside, sterling has been subjected to speculative attacks on many occasions in the past. The exchange rate mechanism offered an extra line of defence, athough not a complete defence; as we have seen, and as we have always known, there could be no total and complete defence.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): To avoid any possible misunderstanding, will the Prime Minister say whether it is the Government's intention to seek to rejoin a fixed exchange rate system?

The Prime Minister: I have explained to the House twice that we shall examine whether a system can be made credible. When we have finished that examination, we shall make our decision.

Mr. Bell: Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman, and then I shall make some progress.

Mr. Bell: The Prime Minister is announcing what appears to be a very important and significant change of policy: we are moving away from the external discipline of the exchange rate mechanism and the deutschmark as an anchor to our policy of getting inflation down to an internal discipline. Are we still shadowing the deutschmark, and will there be a wages control policy for public sector employees?

The Prime Minister: I announced to the House—for I think it has a right to know—how we shall conduct economic policy while we are not in the exchange rate mechanism. It is essential that the House is aware of how we shall conduct policy. I have said that we shall examine the practicality of returning to a reformed exchange rate mechanism and make a judgment on whether that is a workable system and then whether to join. We shall certainly undertake those negotiations.

I turn now——

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Hon. Members: Give way!

Madam Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister has made it clear that he wants to make a little progress.

The Prime Minister: I give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Budgen: I am sure that my right hon. Friend will agree that we have been discussing the details and fundamentals of the exchange rate mechanism for very many years in this House. Will he please explain to the House what are the new details that have caught him out so unexpectedly that he requires guidance on them before he can tell the House whether he intends to go back into the mechanism?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has a long-held view that the right thing to do is to let sterling float. I understand that view, but I must remind him that sterling was floating when, in 1981, interest rates rose by 4 per cent. in less than a month, and that it was under a system of floating exchange rates that interest rates rose to 15 per cent. before we were able to bring them down to 10 per cent. within a co-operative mechanism such as the ERM.

The Government's general policy towards Europe must be founded on a concern for our long-term national interests, and I believe that it is time that we turned afresh to face directly the whole question of Europe and our place in the European Community.

There are broadly three schools of thought about our membership of the Community. The first—it is spread thinly across each political party—is that we should leave the Community; that we should never have joined. It is a

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minority view, often disguised by rhetoric affirming support for the principles of membership while actions speak the opposite. There are people who, in their hearts, would prefer it if we were not in the Community, who trade under false colours and who do not address their arguments to the implications of non-membership for jobs, prosperity and the future.

The second school of thought is that European development is inevitable and goes inexorably in one direction: that sooner or later a centralised Europe is inevitable. Those who take that view are often the direct descendants of those who, 20 years ago, thought that socialism was inevitable, before it became completely discredited around the world.

I do not share the belief in the desirability or inevitability of a centralised Europe. Each country in the Community at times of crisis will inevitably look first to its own national interest; each will pool some of it in the common interest, but none will sacrifice it. Just as the interests of France and Germany will always come first for them, so the interests of Britain must always come first for us. I understand the fears about a centralised Europe, but I think that they are fanciful, for we will not have one.

The third school of thought, the one for which I stand, is quite different. It is that it is in the interests of Britain —our interests, our objectives and our prosperity—for us to be part of the development of our continent. By part, I do not mean a walk-on part; I do not mean simply being a member. I mean playing a leading role in the European Community. I mean helping to determine the direction of policy, building the policies that we want and fighting those that we do not want. We will need to compromise on some matters, but so will every national state in Europe unless we return to tribalism right across the European Community.

This co-operation in Europe demands a wider Europe. It demands the entry of the Scandinavians and the Austrians and, over time, of the east Europeans—those newly democratic states which have every right to look to the Community and the west for a more secure future. This co-operation also requires us to deal with the concerns about the internal development of the European Community. Those concerns exist not only in this country but in every country of the Community.

There are fears throughout Europe that the Community is too centralised, that it is too undemocratic and that the leaders of the Community are seeking to develop it too fast for their national Parliaments and people. The events of recent months have shown that, if Europe is to be built on a sound foundation, we cannot ignore those feelings or brush them aside as a matter of no concern. The good European does not ignore those fears. He seeks to put them right—and that is the policy we pursued up to Maastricht, during Maastricht and after Maastricht.

The Maastricht treaty has become a totem around which those in favour of Europe and those opposed to Europe are now dancing. In truth, it is less important than the pro-Europeans claim and in no way as far-reaching as the sceptics tell us. Many of the things for which the Maastricht treaty has been criticised spring inexorably from the treaty of Rome or the Single European Act.

One of the main criticisms of the Maastricht treaty is the move towards a single currency. The House will recall that I declined to accept that move in the negotiations because I did not believe that Europe would reach the right economic conditions to support a single currency. I have never believed—I have stated it frequently—that Europe would reach the right convergence by the mid-1990s. That is why I refused to commit Britain to a single currency.

In the light of the continuing economic problems throughout Europe and of the currency turmoil of the past week, I must say that I was right and—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. William Cash (Stafford) *rose—[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. A great many of our fellow citizens were keen that the House should be recalled, and they want [illegible] hear what the House has to say—as, I believe, do people thousands of miles away. Let us give each and every one of us a proper hearing. The Prime Minister knows exactly who is standing behind him. If he wants to give way, he will do so.

The Prime Minister: I must tell those who have exaggerated ambitions for a single currency that it must now be an ambition postponed. In the Maastricht treaty, we safeguarded our national interest on the single currency. Elsewhere in the treaty, we secured other very important gains for Britain. I remind the House that, early in their presidency, the Dutch presented proposals on foreign policy, defence policy, immigration and justice—all of which would have been undertaken under the treaty of Rome. We rejected that. At Maastricht, we secured provision for co-operation between nation states outside the treaty of Rome, outside the power of initiative of the Commission and outside the jurisdiction of the European Court. Those who claim that Maastricht was a treaty too far should ask themselves, "What was the situation before the Maastricht treaty?"

Another important achievement was the provision restricting the scope for Community action. That provision was put in at our insistence. It reflected our long-standing argument that the Community should take action only where it could do so more effectively than a nation state or more than one member state co-operating voluntarily. We had to fight hard for that provision with the support of some other countries—notably Germany —but it was a break point and we won it. It has since found an echo in public opinion in Denmark, France and right across the Community. Although the Danish people narrowly voted against the Maastricht treaty, the Danish Government have made it clear that that is not necessarily the last word. The Danish Government plan a further referendum.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: I will make some more progress.

If, however, the Danes were unable to go back to the people, or were to lose again in that further referendum, the Maastricht treaty could not proceed. It would not be acceptable for the 11 to go ahead without Denmark, and against the will of the Danish Government and people. That cannot happen, and it will not happen.

The Danish Government will publish a White Paper next month, at the start of a process of consultation. It would not make sense to bring the Maastricht Bill back to the House of Commons before we know clearly what

Danish intentions are, and when and how the Danes propose to consult their people again. When those things are known, however, we must examine the Bill further.

Those who assume that the Bill is dead have overlooked two things. First, there is much in it that we want; secondly, with the consent of this House of Commons, I agreed that Bill. I do not believe that it would be proper for a British Prime Minister to agree a treaty, and then come back to the House of Commons and disown it.

In this country, people know that it is in our interests to be in Europe, but they fear that the Community seeks to intervene too intrusively in our national life. They fear that things that have always been dealt with by individual nation states—and should be dealt with by individual nation states—are instead gradually being drawn within the control of the Community. So we need a definition —a settled order—of what is for national action and what is for Community action. We need clear criteria by which Community proposals will be judged. When we are satisfied that such a system has been put in place, and when we are clear that the Danes have a basis on which they can put the treaty back to their electorate, we shall bring the Maastricht Bill back to the House of Commons.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If the French, the Germans and the Benelux countries decide to forge ahead with a Community based on greater monetary and political co-operation, will the Prime Minister be prepared in any conditions to leave Britain outside that in the Community?

The Prime Minister: There might well be circumstances in which others would make decisions that they believed to be in their national interests; but I have said repeatedly, and agreed under the Maastricht treaty, that any question of a single currency must be determined by the House of Commons at the time when others go ahead, and I stick to that view.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Is my right hon. Friend really telling the House that—notwithstanding the fact that two thirds of the French people did not vote in favour of the ratification of the Maastricht treaty; notwithstanding the fact that, when the question was first put to them, the Danes voted against it; and notwithstanding the fact that my right hon. Friend will not grant the British people a referendum—the House is somehow to proceed with this extraordinary process?

The Prime Minister: We are a parliamentary democracy, and the House is the place in which to consider the Bill—line by line and clause by clause. Other nations may have a tradition of referendums: they may call a referendum, followed by a debate on the whole Bill lasting one or two days, and approve every part of the Bill immediately. That is not our parliamentary tradition, and I do not believe that it would be acceptable to the House of Commons.

As for the second part of my hon. Friend's question, I have made it clear—and I repeat again—that, when the conditions that I have set out are fulfilled—when we have moved forward on subsidiarity, and when the Danes have decided how they will proceed—I will bring back to the House the treaty that I negotiated with the approval of the House: the treaty that was approved at the general election, and on Second Reading some time ago.

Let me repeat that, when we are satisfied that a settled order has been put in place, we will bring the Bill back to the House. That is one of the matters that are to be put in hand at the special meeting of the European Council on Friday 16 October.

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way. He has expressed the view that the House should take the final decision on the Maastricht Bill. Therefore, will he give consideration to allowing a free vote in the House?

The Prime Minister: I believe that my hon. Friend stood at the general election supporting the Conservative manifesto, which indicated that we would bring the Bill before the House. I still support the commitment that I had in that regard in the manifesto. I said that that was one of the matters to be put in hand at the special meeting of the European Council on Friday 16 October. That special meeting will take place at the international conference centre in Birmingham.

That European Council needs to respond to the concerns that people right across Europe have shown about the direction of Community policy, to review what is wrong with the exchange rate mechanism and how the system can be made to work better in future, to consider preparatory work to meet Denmark's concerns and, of course, to give a further impetus to the general agreement on tariffs and trade round. During recent months, our concerns about the Community have been mirrored across Europe. The British agenda is now on the table in every country of the Community.

It is worth reminding ourselves why the Community was built and why we joined it. Its founders wanted lasting peace in western Europe, and they achieved it. But they wanted something more *[Interruption.]* Yes, what about the economy? The founders wanted to build up economic prospects across Europe on a scale that no previous generation had seen, and they achieved that. They wanted the prosperity of each generation to exceed that of its parents, so that the chances for each generation would be greater and the opportunities more fulfilling. Collectively in Europe, that is what we have achieved, despite the difficulties that presently exist.

Mr. Jimmy Boyce (Rotherham): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Given that the debate's title is the United Kingdom's economic policy, could you tell us when the Prime Minister is going to get round to discussing that policy?

Madam Speaker: As I have not seen the Prime Minister's speech, I can only say that the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Boyce) must give the Prime Minister the opportunity to reach that point.

The Prime Minister: Clearly, the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Boyce) does not realise the extent to which our economic well-being depends on our relationship and trade with Europe.

I have never seen our future as being a sour, isolated country off the mainland of continental Europe. That surely cannot be a way for us. Even though some will swallow hard at compromises that may need to be made, they should remember that others in Europe will need to compromise as well. The voice that is raised to say that we should look after only our own interests is the voice of narrow self-interest. Such a voice always has resonance in

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politics and is almost always wrong. It is a policy more certain to begin with cheers and end in tears than any other policy that has been devised.

I have never understood why some are so fearful of our prospects in Europe—neither do I understand why those who are often most fearful are those who would claim to be most proud to be British. Why, then, with that pride do they assume that we will always lose the arguments in Europe when that has not been the Community's history and will not be the Community's future?

We have the chance to build in our time, in our generation, the sort of Europe for which we have always longed; the sort of Europe that I believe its citizens want; a secure Europe of nation states co-operating freely for the common good; a prosperous Europe, generating new wealth within the biggest free trade area in the world; a free trade Europe in which Brussels is kept off industry's back. Only one Government—this Government—offer industry freedom from state control. Only our policies of low taxation and low inflation will allow the genius of British enterprise to flourish, and only this Government's policies will secure for the British people the prosperity that they deserve in the '90s and which this Government will deliver. I commend the motion to the House.

3.14 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

"condemns the total collapse of the Government's entire economic policy following their humiliating withdrawal of the pound from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism; deplores the Government's failed economic policies which have thrown the United Kingdom economy into a deep and damaging recession which has made it weak and vulnerable to speculative attack; believes that the Government's credibility and claims of economic competence are in tatters; demands the adoption of an economic policy which reduces unemployment and recognises that a strong economy can only be built by consistent investment in manufacturing industry and the infrastructure, by a sustained commitment to an expansion of training, the stimulation of innovation, technology, and regional development and by international cooperation for economic expansion; and firmly opposes cuts in public expenditure which will prolong the recession, increase unemployment, and weaken the United Kingdom's vital public services."

It might just be worth recalling that the motion on the Order Paper is that the "House expresses its support" for the Government's economic policies, because we have heard precious little about that from the Prime Minister. I admit that there is a certain vacuity about such a motion. Seldom have I seen on the Order Paper a shorter statement than

"expresses its support for the economic policy of Her Majesty's Government."

Why is that not amplified, defined or explained? For a simple reason. The Government do not know what is their economic policy. That was startlingly clear from the Prime Minister's speech.

The Prime Minister explained the tragi-comic events surrounding our humiliating withdrawal from the ERM, in simple terms. He said that we were scuppered by the speculators. That is all we are to get by way of explanation from the Government. What has happened during the past week or so is not merely an upset for the Government's economic policy, but the complete destruction of what they claimed was a total political and economic strategy—a strategy to which the Prime Minister could not have been more closely committed.

Only a few weeks ago, *The Sunday Times* carried the story that the Prime Minister had a new vision of the future. It is said that he had revealed to his colleagues and party supporters that his ambition was no less than to see the pound replace the deutschmark as the most stable currency in the European Community. Under the headline, "Major aims to make sterling the best in Europe"—

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman not concede that it would be an objective of his to make the pound a stronger currency than the deutschmark?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman will understand the purport of my comments in a minute or two—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."]. Any sensible person wants a strong and stable currency in this country, but it comes rich from a party which has just devalued the pound to even mention it in this House.

I return to the story in *The Sunday Times* headed

"Major aims to make sterling the best in Europe."

Michael Jones and Andy Grice reported that the Prime Minister had

"embarked on an economic strategy designed to see the British pound replace the German mark as the hardest and most trusty currency in the EC."

The response to the plan to topple the deutschmark was mixed. At the time, eyebrows were raised among our recession-weary public. The most generous thought that it was a case of audacity straining the bounds of credulity, while others thought that the Prime Minister had simply taken leave of his senses. An acid comment from Goldman Sachs in its *International Bonds and FOREX Bulletin*—probably the speculators journal—published on 3 August, said:

"Assuming *The Sunday Times* headline of 'Major aims to make sterling the best in Europe' is not some brand of morbid humour that we fail to grasp, it is worthwhile considering whether this is likely to happen."

The passage continued:

"The Prime Minister certainly has his work cut out—much the same as Eddie the Eagle had in attempting to win the gold at the winter olympics."

Now, of course, the Prime Minister's words read with a mockingly hollow ring.

On 10 September the right hon. Gentleman took himself to Glasgow to address the Scottish CBI—picking, as usual, hostile audiences as the best place to float his ideas. There, he said that there would be no devaluation and no realignment. As we all know, that policy was wrecked by his decision on black Wednesday, less than one week after the Glasgow declaration, to withdraw from the ERM, as a result of which the pound has now been devalued by more than 13 per cent. So much for the Prime Minister's vainglorious nonsense about the pound easily replacing the deutschmark as the anchor of the ERM.

Those who have studied the Prime Minister's utterances since he became involved in our economic affairs—as Chief Secretary, then as Chancellor, and now as Prime Minister—know only too well that such delusions of grandeur are the norm, not the exception. His words were not just a wild aberration—bad enough though that would be for a head of Government. I believe that such delusions have been his stock in trade since he became involved in the management of our economy.

One of the most notable previous examples occurred when the right hon. Gentleman was Chief Secretary to the Treasury. On Second Reading of the Finance Bill in 1988—that heady year of so-called Conservative success—he observed:

> "During the 1960s we praised and envied the German economic miracle. In the 1980s the position has been precisely reversed."—[*Official Report*, 26 April 1988; Vol. 132, c. 214.]

To claim that the German economic miracle had been surpassed, and then, in the middle of the recession, to go on to foresee the pound replacing the deutschmark takes a certain detachment from reality of which Walter Mitty himself would have been proud.

The real lesson to be drawn from a comparison between the British and German economies is that, before one can have a strong currency, one needs a strong economy—and that to create a strong economy we need consistent investment, a recognition of the vital importance of manufacturing as the basic wealth creator, a strategy for training, for innovation and technology and for regional development—in short, an industrial strategy.

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): The right hon. and learned Gentleman talks about detachment from reality. Does he agree that his colleague, the shadow Chancellor, was even more detached from reality when he suggested that the best way to defend the pound was to cut interest rates?

Mr. Smith: The shadow Chancellor has argued week in, week out, and month in, month out for an industrial strategy to put this country into a strong position. It is a great pity that his recommendations were not adopted by the Government.

The comparison with Germany is important, because Germany adopted an industrial strategy. It is a tragedy for Britain that, for the past 13 years, we have been going in the opposite direction. Instead of real achievements, the Government can produce only policy failures garnished with absurd hype and rhetorical fancy.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that most people expect Germany to be on the slide now? Its economy is in a mess and the Germans are paying too much in subsidy to their coal mining industry. There is nothing wrong with the United Kingdom wanting its currency to be at the top. While the right hon. and learned Gentleman talks this country down, it will be down.

Mr. Smith: If Germany is in such a mess, yet we have been forced to devalue our currency against its currency, what kind of mess is this country in?

Look at the Prime Minister's record of economic prediction. January 1988:

> "Inflation is low and will remain so."—[*Official Report*, 14 January 1988, Vol. 125, c. 549.]

Fact: it doubled in the two years that followed. Prediction, December 1989:

> "The recession is neither likely nor necessary."

Fact: we have had the longest recession since the 1930s. Prediction in June 1991 in *The Daily Telegraph*:

> "Recovery coming on in weeks".

Fact: the economy has ever since been mired in such deep recession. Perhaps the prediction most close to public memory was in the last election:

> "Vote Tory on Thursday and recovery will continue on Friday."

Fact: there has been no recovery at all and now we have a devaluation. So much for the Prime Minister's key promise at the election.

Regrettably, that is but one of the promises that have been and will be betrayed as the coming public expenditure cuts—never mentioned at the last general election—rip the Conservative manifesto apart. I have little doubt that there are party workers hard at work already on the excuses; no apologies, no expressions of regret, just excuses and more excuses. We heard a few of them today from the Prime Minister in his typical speech.

In the new situation, the Government propaganda machine clearly faces new challenges. Its principal tasks are to seek to disguise the void in Government policy by pretending that it does not exist and to divert attention from the Government's culpability by seeking to place the blame on others. A good example, I understand, is the note which, according to today's *Financial Times*, appeared in Minister's boxes on Monday evening headed:

> "ERM. New line to take."

I am, of course, not able to say whether the line that we got from the Prime Minister today was the line advised on Monday. After all, it might have changed since then.

But the real problem for the Government in finding a new line to take is the speech given by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the European Policy Forum on 10 July entitled "Britain and the ERM", which is helpfully reproduced in at least two newspapers today.

The Chancellor expressed his support for the then policy in robust and uncompromising terms but, interestingly, he went on to examine what he described as the alternatives—all the alternatives—to such a policy and mocked every one in turn. He said,

> "Plenty of alternatives are suggested. But in my view they are all illusory or destined to fail."

I admit that it might be difficult to know which of those alternatives now is Government policy. After all, according to some newspapers, the Chancellor appears to be on quite a different path from his colleagues in the Government, including the Prime Minister, but whatever that policy is, it must be one of the alternatives that he contemptuously dismissed in his speech.

The Chancellor described the option of leaving the ERM and cutting interest rates as the "cut and run option"—a cut in interest rates and run on the pound. He went on to say:

> "Many who advocate floating exchange know full well what the consequences would be. They intend a devaluation of the pound and they will certainly achieve it."

He finally dismissed the option in his conclusion:

> "We would have given up after less than two years . . . and we were back to our bad old ways."

Well, are we back to our bad old ways, lurching back to the Thatcherite economics which pulverised our economy during the 1980s?

The Chancellor then went on to attack a policy of leaving the exchange rate mechanism and setting interest rates according to domestic monetary targets. Here the Chancellor had what I believe was a genuine flash of insight. He told his audience:

> "We have been here before. In the 1980s we fixed domestic monetary targets, and we attempted to meet them by setting interest rates accordingly. But in practice the money supply figures often provided a poor guide to interest rate policy, particularly in the wake of the financial deregulation."

So much for all the Thatcher years—dismissed like that.

[Mr. Smith]

Those of us of a generous spirit would be inclined to congratulate the Chancellor on an honest, if unrepentant, reassessment. It is, however, difficult to do so if the former sinner is determined to revert so quickly to the sins of those former years. After all, now, with the benefit of experience, he knows that it is wrong and, after this performance, who can ever believe him in anything he ever subsequently says? In his speech on 10 July, the Chancellor ruled out every alternative that he could envisage. How can any one of them be offered now as convincing Government policy?

In the wake of the destruction of the Government's economic policies, we must ask where we are now. The sad but unavoidable truth is that, instead of reaching the heart of Europe, the Government have succeeded in having Britain relegated to the second division. There are two reasons for that disaster. For years, the Government followed policies that have thrown our economy into a deep and damaging recession, which made it weak and vulnerable—weak and vulnerable, incidentally, to speculators. Faced with a crisis, the Government chaotic mismanagement and sheer incompetence forced them to abandon all that that they stood for in a matter of hours.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell the House whether he would take Britain back into the exchange rate mechanism?

Mr. Smith: That question was singularly not answered by the Prime Minister in the rather curious answer that he gave. I will answer the hon. Gentleman's question directly. He will not think it unfair if I point out that, when the Prime Minister was asked a roughly similar question, he did not answer it at all. He said that, if a credible exchange rate mechanism could be achieved, he might think about whether or not he would rejoin it. That, as I fairly understand it, is what the Prime Minister said. Let me say what I think. I think that there are advantages in having a system of managed exchange rates. One is that in those circumstances, one is less likely to resort to curbing public expenditure as the anchor or one's economic policy—which is one of the difficulties that we now face.

The circumstances in which we would rejoin the ERM must be judged according to the state of our economy—and that is regrettably weak. The first thing that the Government should do if they are to acquire any option for Britain's economic future is to build up the strong economy that can be the only foundation for our future.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): I am very grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman. Will he tell the House what would be the cost of his recovery package; and what effect that would have on public borrowing and on the currency market?

Mr. Smith: I did not think that point would be pursued by Conservative Members today. After they lost £1 billion in a hopeless attempt to prop up the currency, and with increasing unemployment costing the taxpayer £8,000 for every person unemployed, they have the sauce to ask us the cost of a recovery programme. I ask them: what is the cost of a non-recovery programme? That is what they appear to be committed to.

To return to the events of black Wednesday, a bewildered British public watched those tragi-comic events unfold. First, there was a 2 per cent. increase in interest rates, and then they were up by 5 per cent.—all in the course of a few hours. It all ended in Britain's withdrawal from the ERM. That was not some considered choice or policy but was forced on the Government by their weakness and incompetence.

The British people deserve to be told what went wrong. The Prime Minister had the responsibility to tell Parliament and the public today. We heard what he had to say—a few desultory remarks about economic policy, and a long rambling piece of nonsense about the future of the European Community.

As the Prime Minister was unable or unwilling to tell the House what happened, let us examine the facts. The genesis of the crisis was that Tory election promises of immediate economic recovery following the general election turned out to be totally false. Since April, all the main economic indicators of the real economy have deteriorated. Markets, consumers and industry increasingly lost confidence in the bogus predictions of a recovery that seemed constantly to be postponed.

What did the Government do? Nothing—absolutely nothing. Even as bankruptcies mounted, home repossessions kept rising, and unemployment remorselessly increased, the Government did nothing—absolutely nothing.

The continued weakening of the British economy that I have just described coincided with the predictable pressures on currencies arising from the uncertainties of the French referendum and higher German interest rates. The position called for prompt and decisive action to initiate and co-ordinate a Communitywide response—*[Laughter.]* So this is a matter for laughter. Those who hold the presidency of the European Community deride a Communitywide response even before they hear what any such response might be. I have come across few such revealing actions. The Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on this day of all days when they are in the dock, are chuckling.

As I was saying, the position called for prompt and decisive action, for a programme of growth in the Community, for jobs, for investment and for an early reduction in interest rates across the whole of the Community. Britain, holding the presidency of the Community, was uniquely well placed to take such action, as we repeatedly proposed, but it did not.

The Prime Minister: I was chuckling at the right hon. and learned Gentleman's lack of understanding of how matters work in the Community. He seems to think that, when there is a problem, all we have to do is to persuade the remainder of Europe to do whatever is convenient for the United Kingdom. What does he think happens when it is not convenient for the remainder of the Community to do that? It would have been right to persuade the Community of the need for a general downward realignment of interest rates, but if others in the Community would not agree to that, how would the right hon. and learned Gentleman face that reality?

Mr. Smith: I shall come in a moment to the question of a realignment of currencies and interest rates. What is revealing about the Prime Minister's intervention is that he obviously did not even try to persuade the remainder of the Community. As President of the Community, to a large extent he can determine the Community's agenda, yet he did not put on it a programme for recovery involving all Community countries. If there are those who disagree, the right hon. Gentleman should argue with them and persuade them. At the very least, he should try. Instead, at the first hint of disagreement, he leaves the field. There can be few more revealing instances. If the right hon. Gentleman had so wished, he could have told us a great deal more about that, instead of making a rambling speech that had little to do with the issues.

The only action that the Chancellor took throughout the whole period was to announce the borrowing of an additional £7 billion. We used to hear great diatribes from the Conservative party about borrowing. When anyone else borrows money, it is a total economic disaster; when the Conservative party borrows money, somehow it is an economic triumph. However, on this occasion, given the underlying fragility of the British economy that move, not surprisingly, was interpreted by the markets as a further sign of weakness—*[Interruption.]* It was, so there is no point in the Chancellor shaking his head. We can all read the newspapers, perhaps better than he can. We read them and that is what they said.

As the crisis developed—*[Interruption.]* I am coming to an important point, to which I hope the Chancellor will listen carefully. As the crisis developed, crucial discussions took place over the weekend of 12-13 September, which resulted in an announcement from Brussels on the Sunday evening that the lira was to be devalued. It was also strongly hinted, not least by British Government sources, that a substantial cut in interest rates would be announced by the Bundesbank. However, when made on the Monday morning, it was the smallest reduction possible. I do not know for certain what happened in meetings and other discussions during that weekend or in the days leading up to it. However, I know that, in the context of the Ecofin declaration in Bath only a week or so previously, it was clear that there would be no realignment of any currency. An outcome that resulted in the devaluation of the lira alone was an open invitation for speculation against another of the weak currencies.

Mrs. Judith Chaplin (Newbury): My understanding has always been that a Leader of the Opposition does not say anything that jeopardises sterling in the markets—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I want to hear the hon. Lady's intervention.

Mrs. Chaplin: As the right hon. and learned Gentleman called for a slash in interest rates three days before Britain left the ERM, does that mean that tradition has been replaced by opportunism?

Mr. Smith: I was waiting for someone to blame me for the devaluation last week. The hon. Lady has not disappointed me. Of all the charges that could have been laid against me and of all the comment that there has been in recent weeks, the argument that I have been undermining sterling is the most far-fetched that I have ever heard. It just shows that, whatever one says or does not say, some on the Conservative Benches will find it unacceptable. *[Interruption.]* It seems that there is a new charge: that any criticism of the Government undermines sterling, but sterling has already been undermined by those who are in charge of our affairs.

I return to when the lira was devalued. If the Government knew anything about the markets that they profess to understand and what was likely to follow, what consideration did they give to finding an alternative to a potentially disastrous confrontation, with a speculative market in full flood? There was only one feasible alternative: to have a general realignment so that the markets were not presented with an open invitation to speculate in circumstances in which our defences to their attack were weak. If that had been done, we could have had an orderly realignment, not a rout, a co-operative change, not a crisis. Britain would not have been forced to leave the exchange rate mechanism. We should not have had to use billions of pounds of reserves, which involved damaging real losses, which some have estimated at over £1 billion, and interest rates would have been lower throughout the Community.

What is more, the possibility of considering this option did not appear suddenly and unexpectedly on the Sunday. Widespread reports in the press, both here and abroad, indicated that a number of our European partners were raising the issue of interest rate reductions and having them combined with a currency realignment in the weeks preceding the crisis. The Government must tell us why this option—the multilateral option, the European option, the less inflationary option—was not taken when it was clearly in the national interest.

The Prime Minister: What the right hon. and learned Gentleman has said is extremely important, and I shall answer it. I draw his attention first to the fact that the Italians, who did not devalue, subsequently had to come out of the system as well. More substantively, what the right hon. and learned Gentleman has just pronounced, presumably as Opposition policy, is that, whenever there is a speculative attack on the pound, he would pre-emptively devalue. That is what he has announced. That policy, if it were to be followed, would encourage every speculator on every occasion to attack the pound.

Mr. Smith: What the Prime Minister has just announced is that, if he ever goes back into the exchange rate mechanism, he will never be in favour of any realignment, ever, and he might as well call it a single currency. He must know, as everyone who operates in the exchange rate mechanism knows, that it is a system of semi-fixed and adjustable rates. In the early period of the European monetary system, it was frequently realigned and varied.

The Prime Minister did not answer the question that I put to him: faced with a situation in which the alternative was likely to be that the Government's policy would be scuppered by the speculators, why did they walk blindly on? Why did they not look at an alternative that would have been better for this country, better for our economy and better for our currency? I shall be happy to give way again to the Prime Minister if he wishes to correct me.

The Prime Minister: Neither the right hon. and learned Gentleman nor anyone else can be certain at any moment what the scale of a speculative attack would be. At this precise moment, at least one other European currency is under attack that has decided to do precisely as we have done: that socialist Government have decided to defend their currency with their reserves and to raise interest rates rather than to take the step of devaluing. They have done that because, of course, devaluation is undesirable for all

[The Prime Minister]

the reasons we set out. We were forced to do it, not because we wished to, not because it was a good option, but because of the inevitability of the size of the speculation —a size that no one, not even the right hon. and learned Gentleman, could ever have foreseen.

Mr. Smith: That is the defence: overwhelmed by unforeseen events, in charge of the bridge when along came a wave and overturned the vessel, the captain pleads not guilty. That is the nature of the Prime Minister's defence. There was an alternative and I should like the Prime Minister to tell us why it was not adopted. There could have been a general realignment of the currencies. The system allows for that and we know that there were requests for that to be considered. The Prime Minister was defeated but he speaks as if he won. He did not win, he lost, and there was an alternative to that humiliating failure.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is in charge of the Government's economic policy.

Sir Peter Tapsell: Has not the right hon. and learned Gentleman's careful reading of the Goldman Sachs comic persuaded him by now that any discussion within the ERM of a realignment immediately sets off speculation? That is precisely why we should not return to fixed but adjustable rates.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman does not take account of the fact that such adjustments were made in the past in the very ERM of which he speaks. But they must be made with a little care. I assume that even this Government could manage to make them confidentially, although sometimes I wonder about their capacities. It cannot be argued that it was impossible, which is what the hon. Gentleman says.

In view of the debacle, one would expect at least a word of explanation or apology, but there was not a hint of that in anything said by the Government, whose most noted characteristic is that no one takes responsibility, no one resigns—at least not yet—and no one takes the blame. They are a "not me" Government.

The most ingenious and perhaps the most ironic of the Prime Minister's new excuse were in his first comments after he emerged from his air raid shelter. He told us that the problem was that the markets were irrational. What are we to make of that one? Now that the Prime Minister is possessed of a genuinely new insight, may we invite him to refrain from insisting that these irrational market forces should determine all aspects of our national life? Given the total mismanagement that has been so vividly demonstrated, may we have no more assertions about the Conservative party's unique and expert knowledge of the working of markets?

After all this, we are left with an economy and a society ravaged by recession. There is no more important priority in Britain today than the adoption of a programme for economic recovery. If that is not done, the price will be paid by millions of unemployed. The lesson of recent years as well as of recent weeks is surely clear. We cannot afford to neglect the real economy. I repeat that a strong economy is the only sure foundation for a stable currency. We consistently argued that case before Britain joined the ERM, and we have argued it repeatedly since.

Time after time, we have argued the crucial importance of supply-side policies that would improve our economic performance, raise investment, especially in manufacturing, boost the housing and construction industries, and promote innovation and technology. Perhaps above all, we must enter into a real and sustained commitment to education and training. The result of the Government's policies has been tragically shown by the redundancies announced by British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce.

Ms. Anne Coffey (Stockport): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, if desperately needed help and support to British Aerospace had been forthcoming over the past few years, we would not be in the present sorry state of affairs? Unless immediate help and support is given to that industry, in the way that other Governments support their industries, we shall have no aerospace industry and no jobs, and the skills of the people in that industry will be lost to the nation for ever.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend, whose constituency has taken the brunt of the savage redundancies, speaks well in defence of her constituents. I see that the President of the Board of Trade is sitting a suitable distance from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but even if he cannot see these events, he can at least hear them. I hope that he will pay some attention to that, because it is a tragic comment on what is happening to Britain that British Aerospace is moving its activities to Taiwan, of all places. That is where a British pride has taken us—a Government who remove our jobs to Taiwan.

The predictable response of the Government when we argue the case for investment, training and regional policy is to say that they have heard it all before—and so they have, but I can tell them that they will hear it again and again until they change their policies.

I know that the Government do not listen to us, but I hope that they might occasionally listen to employers' organisations. On black Wednesday, the Engineering Employers Federation—I hope that the Government will listen to this, because it is from engineering employers, not engineering unions—said:

> "But what is essential now for the UK—irrespective of what happens to the pound—is to formulate an industrial strategy which will promote recovery and sustain economic success."

When we use the words "industrial strategy", there is mocking laughter from Conservative Members. I am glad that they are not mocking the engineering employers. The federation continues:

> "After the events of Wednesday 16 September, even the most ardent promoters of unrestrained short-term market forces must be seeking some shelter."

It goes on to argue for investment and support for British industry. Those are policies that the Government should consider.

The end of the passage from which I am quoting says:

> "The Government appears to have been paralysed over the past three months by lethargy. Ministers have not been capable of redirecting economic activity towards the manufacturing and infrastructure investment needed for a lasting economic recovery."

The engineering employers put it very clearly and concisely. I hope that the President of the Board of Trade and his colleagues will do something about it.

I fear that what we shall get from the Government is not a change of policy, even though by their ineptitude they have caused circumstances to change dramatically, but a new hunt for new excuses, new escape clauses and new ways of wriggling out of broken promises. I have recently come across what I think is a prototype of an excuse that is being market tested. It arises in the context of the Government's policy of privatising the Forestry Commission. A query was put to the Prime Minister by the forestry trades unions and it was answered on the politically significant date of 3 April—the final week of the general election campaign. A letter headed

> "The Right Hon. John Major, From The Office of: The Prime Minister and Leader of the Conservative Party"

reads as follows:

> "Dear Mr. Murray,
>
> John Major is grateful for your letter of 7th February, regarding any possible privatisation of the Forestry Commission."

It is signed by Robert Boscawen.

Subsequently, a story appeared in *The Guardian* about correspondence between the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Scotland, which caused a further inquiry to be made to the Prime Minister. The reply sent to Mr. Murray on 27 August said:

> "The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter of 6th August. I apologise for the delay in replying.
>
> I appreciate your concern about '*The Guardian*' article quoting correspondence between ministers on the possible privatisation of the Forestry Commission.
>
> You may be unaware that the commitment given by the Prime Minister on this matter was drafted incorrectly during the frenzied activity of the general election campaign".

[Laughter.] The letter goes on:

> "The correct line is that the Government has no plans at present to privatise the Forestry Commission."

It is signed by Miss Lucy Miller, political officer.

So there we have it. What a concoction of weasel words. Provided the background was one of active frenzy, no promise needs to be kept, no commitment honoured. I do not understand how a Prime Minister who gives his word in such an uncompromising and unqualified fashion can thereafter contradict it so spectacularly. There is clearly no more devalued political currency than a Conservative election promise.

In their frenzied re-election campaign, the Conservatives were prepared to say anything and do anything to get re-elected. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about you?"] I fear that there will be no area in which this will be more spectacularly revealed than in the coming cuts in public expenditure. In the weeks and months ahead, pledge after pledge will be betrayed, commitment after commitment dishonoured, as cuts in public expenditure intensify the recession, weaken our infrastructure and erode the quality of our public services. And the price will be paid by the British people—paid in lost jobs, unbuilt homes, missed opportunities and declining services.

The conclusion that our people are reaching is that they are governed by a Government and Prime Minister fatally flawed by incredibility and incompetence. After all, who was it who dismissed the critics of Government policies as "quack doctors"? Who was it who told the CBI in Glasgow:

> "It is too easy to regard Britain's problems as unique or blame them on the ERM"?

Who was it who said that to leave the ERM would be "the inflationary option" and a "betrayal of our future"? Who, in that same speech, said that there was going to be "no devaluation, no realignment"?

This is a Government whose economic policy is in tatters, whose credibility is blown, whose incompetence has been exposed. It will no longer do to blame others and it will no longer do to say that their policies will, given time, come right. They have been in power for the longest continuous period in post-war Britain—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"]—and Tories' assent to that proposition means that they must accept that they are the only architects, the sole constructors, of our present dismal situation.

In the course of a few weeks the one policy with which the Prime Minister was uniquely and personally associated, the contribution to policy of which he appears to have been most proud, has been blown apart, and with it has gone for ever any claim by the Prime Minister or the party that he leads to economic competence. He is the devalued Prime Minister of a devalued Government.

3.57 pm

Sir Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): Our nation is suffering from shock and is much confused, and I believe that it is looking to this House today for clarification of the situation and for a detailed discussion of how our country can move forward in the future.

Like the Prime Minister, I should like to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on his appointment. This afternoon he has carried out the customary duties of a Leader of the Opposition—rather well, in fact—but now we must turn to serious business.

The Prime Minister reaffirmed that he believes that the Maastricht agreement, ratified by this House, is good for Europe and for Britain. I strongly agree. He has also reaffirmed that he does not exclude a return to the ERM at some future date. I should like to say more about that in a moment. He has also reaffirmed that in no circumstances will he agree to a referendum. In that he is absolutely right. I was glad that the Leader of the Opposition succeeded in carrying at least his national executive committee with him in deciding that there will be no referendum. There is no reason why there should be.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): We are still working on that.

Sir Edward Heath: I do not think that the hon. Member will have much success.

Mr. Skinner: The right hon. Gentleman should not kid himself.

Sir Edward Heath: It must be noted that, when we had a referendum on Europe—Harold Wilson was overturned and went against his undertaking made at the time of our entry into Europe—those who were most forceful about our having a referendum never accepted its result. What is the point of having a referendum if one is not prepared to accept the decision of the people? There are two right hon. Members on the Opposition Benches who have no claim on a referendum.

Mr. Benn: The right hon. Gentleman is asking us to get the Danes to think again after their referendum. Is it not

[Mr. Benn]

possible for arguments to continue? Do elections and referendums conclude the matter, particularly when new proposals are made?

Sir Edward Heath: Asking the Danes to think again does not affect our having a referendum. I know that the right hon. Gentleman proposes to introduce a Bill which he hopes will be successful. It will not be, but if it is successful he will have to provide the funds for running a referendum.

I strongly support the Prime Minister on the three major points I have outlined. He has said that there will be a detailed examination of the situation following last week's events. I welcome that, too. I hope that the examination will not be limited to the ERM or to last week's events. I hope that it will cover a much wider range of Government policy which has to be taken into account if we are to restore the economy.

We must not hide the fact that there are bound to be inflationary pressures as a result of a 14 per cent. devaluation. We must warn the country and consumers of them. We have experience of this from several other occasions and it would be foolish to try to deny that there will be inflationary pressures. One can say, therefore, that the task will be greater. Various opportunities that will have to be taken to deal with it must be made more acceptable.

From that point of view, I hope that the Prime Minister's review will go much wider. He is also—rightly—conducting a review for the summit meeting in the middle of October. I ask him to recognise—I am sure he does—that a review of a major item of the Community's life, and its industrial and financial proceedings cannot be done satisfactorily in such a short time. It cannot possibly be done. Nor can satisfactory discussions take place and conclusions be reached in a day's summit. We have suffered far too much from short summits, most of which are taken up with lunch and dinner.

Mr. Skinner: The right hon. Gentleman had a few.

Sir Edward Heath: Yes. I have been trying to lose weight ever since.

The review also requires detailed discussion with the other members of the European Community. I take as an example the faults that are now said to be found in the ERM. Perhaps the Chancellor of the Exchequer will go into rather greater detail about what the faults are. Major members of the Community do not accept that there are faults in the ERM. If this matter is to be discussed at the summit, it will have to be done with great care.

Already, I am afraid, there is in the Community a belief that the British have taken the presidency to run and change the Community. That is giving rise to resentment and counter-reaction to the proposals. It is not the job of the president to run the Community or even to tell the Community what it should do. The Minister who represents Britain speaks for Britain and makes the arguments about what we think should be done. We will not achieve our ends if we overlook the nature of those discussions in the Community.

That brings me to the question of the Danes. At the time, I expressed regret that Britain had stalled its action because of the Danish vote. Other countries did not do that; they went ahead. Ireland produced a large majority in favour of Maastricht. Referendums are part of the life of the Irish: they are constantly calling referendums. We do not do that. Why did we not celebrate the great Irish achievement, and say, "Yes, we will follow the Irish"?

The point about Denmark is this. If, at the summit, the Danes come forward with an answer as to what they propose to do, that will free us to go ahead with our own Bill in the House of Commons. If, on the other hand, the Danes say that they will do nothing until autumn next year—and that is what is coming out of Copenhagen at present—we cannot possibly be bound by that to do nothing, when the other major powers in the Community have already gone ahead. I hope that the Prime Minister will make it plain to the Danes that our consideration of their position is limited.

Also coming out of Copenhagen is what the Danes want. It is said that they want more social service arrangements—more than are contained in the Maastricht treaty—and that they voted against the treaty because they were not going to be given those arrangements. We took the opposite position; we opted out of the social chapter entirely. That explains the Danish vote: the Danes wanted more than they were getting, not less.

It is also said that the Danes want nothing to do with defence. Of course, they are not bound to defence provisions by Maastricht; but let me put a point to them. They expect to receive the best from the Community, and they expect to be defended by it if anything happens. Why, then, are they not prepared to play their part in Community defence? This is a serious point. The Danes ought not to be allowed to influence our timing of a referendum, or our reaction to it.

I understand that the Danish Prime Minister has said that he believes that Brussels should be much more open. What does he mean by that? Does he mean that people should be admitted to the discussions of the Commission, Ministers and Heads of Government? I have never been to Denmark, and I do not know whether the Danish Prime Minister invites visitors to Danish Cabinet meetings, just so that they can listen. Is the British Prime Minister prepared to go along with that? Is he prepared to admit all Cook's tours to Cabinet meetings at No. 10—in addition to the IRA? Those are impossible requests, all of which stem from misunderstanding and misinformation about the way in which the Community and the Commission work.

Last week, a revealing article by a correspondent unknown to me appeared in *The Daily Telegraph*—not a paper which I usually read, but the article was pointed out to me. It showed the extent to which Whitehall has elaborately decorated the arrangements that emerge from the Commission in Brussels. Do we not blame the Commission all the time? It is the Ministers who make the decisions, but, when they return to their Parliaments, they do not stand up and say, "Yes, I decided this"; they say, "It is that Commission again." That is completely unjustified. It does not achieve our ends, and it ruins a great deal of what is going on in Europe.

I suppose that the question of currency is by far the most important. The Chancellor will tell us what really happened, but it is said that we rushed out of the exchange rate mechanism at the last moment. I do not rely on newspaper reports, but it is said that there was not time or proper consideration for the full support that should have been given to sterling to be organised. The Chancellor can explain all that, but it is what a considerable number of people now believe.

We must ask ourselves why Germany with the mark and France with the franc can work together so closely, while we apparently could not. There must be an explanation. That question goes to the heart of another question: that of our attitude towards, and co-operation with, other Community members. It looks as though the franc is holding——

Mr. Skinner: It is in trouble.

Sir Edward Heath: The hon. Gentleman wants it to be in trouble—he wants trouble everywhere. How the hon. Gentleman can call himself a socialist or be acknowledged by others to be a socialist when he has such hatred of his fellow men and women in other countries, I do not understand.

Mr. Skinner: Unlike the right hon. Gentleman, I have not been taken in by all the bureaucrats in the Common Market. I did not fall for the daft notion that the Common Market treaty would last for ever. I did not ever believe that there would be political and economic union in the Common Market. I believe that the halcyon days of the Common Market and economic growth are over. Some of us have seen treaties before; we have read this country's history. This country has signed a thousand treaties with other nation states in the past 10 centuries. Most of those treaties have finished up in the political dustbin, which is where the unmitigated disaster of a Common Market will finish.

Sir Edward Heath: I must thank the hon. Gentleman for using far more refined language than he did last night on television.

The crux of the matter is that, if there is a flaw, it is not in the ERM, but in the problem of how to cope with speculation of the scale that exists today, which is unchallenged by all the commentators in a modern world with every means of communication at its disposal. That is the crucial question—what is to be the answer? That is the problem to which we must address our minds. Some people will say that we have a long time in which to do so. I am not so sure that we do have such a long time.

Mr. Pöhl, the former head of the Bundesbank, has said today that he believes that there must be a common currency. When a former head of the Bundesbank says that, and we see the possibility of Germany, France and the Benelux countries joining to use a common currency, we must take account of those factors. If such action occurs, it will happen fairly quickly—one cannot delay it. Therefore, I ask my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to give serious consideration to that possibility. We do not want to be left on one side again.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I think that the House understands the importance of speculators who look ahead, but do not the most successful speculators speculate on what appears to be a good chance or a dead cert? If the right hon. Gentleman is right and the only way forward is one currency, does that not mean one economic policy, one Government, one state?

Sir Edward Heath: I gave way to the hon. Gentleman as I always know what he is going to say, and I have the answer for him. The single market will require the development of those aspects—that is plain to everyone. The form that they will take has yet to be examined and decided on. There must be overall control with a single market.

When the former head of the Bundesbank says that he believes that there should be a single currency, one should respect his view. We must move to reduce our differences before we achieve that aim. However, the argument about differences is not borne out by what has happened with the single currency in the United States. Let us consider the different economic powers and standing of different states of the United States, which all get on with one single currency. Let us examine the difference between California and New York state, and some of the smaller southern states. The differences between them are enormous, but they all use one single currency.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is to be a new north American free trade area with three different currencies?

Sir Edward Heath: Yes, but they have not got it together yet. They have not even signed the agreement. I was in Canada last week.

Mr. Skinner: Who paid for it?

Sir Edward Heath: I cannot give that away. It was not an Arab—*[Interruption.]* I must apologise to the Prime Minister.

Which people are laughing over the free trade area proposals? The Mexicans, of course. They have infinitely lower labour costs, can churn the stuff out, and will spread it over the United States and Canada. Very well, but that is not what we want, and it is not what we had in the European Free Trade Association either.

The only long-term answer——

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): My right hon. Friend has made a very profound statement this afternoon. He says that he believes that one of the answers to the problems that we face is a single currency, one Government and one Community. Can he tell the House over what period of time he believes that that should be brought about, in view of the economic difficulties that we are facing?

Sir Edward Heath: We are one Community now—we have all signed the treaty and the House has approved its signature. That is quite clear.

From 1 January 1993, we shall be one single market. That is clear, and we have supported it completely. The question is how shall we develop after that, and that is through the Maastricht treaty, which the Prime Minister says is good for us and good for Europe. We shall pursue that. On the question of a single market, I believe that the quicker that we get there the better and that it will come more quickly than people think.

I do not want us to be caught out by there being a single market of the original members of the Community. I do not know whether it would include Italy, but it would certainly include France, Germany and the Benelux countries and would be very powerful. If there is to be a single currency, I want us to be in there.

On the Community, it is essential that we explain much more to the people of this country about what has been, is and will be involved in Maastricht. The Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer

[Sir Edward Heath]

have spoken consistently and fully about it. I sometimes wish that other members of the Cabinet had been trooping around the country doing so as well and as frequently. One of the problems is that people do not understand.

Consider the referendums that are being held. What is the answer to the French referendum? It was not a referendum on Maastricht. The cities and the business classes all voted for Maastricht and there was a vote against by country areas and farmers. That was a vote not against Maastricht but against their treatment in the Community. Farmers, especially in France, are fed up. Our farmers have lost 30 per cent. of their real standard of living as a result of policies carried out by the Government and confirmed by the House, but our farmers lie low. The French farmers do not; they protest, and the referendum was a means of protesting. It was not concerned with Maastricht.

Now I shall be accused of stirring up the farmers, but I am not doing so. When I first came to the House the president of the National Farmers Union was a major figure. When he made a speech we paid attention to it. I must confess that I do not have a clue who the present president of the NFU is.

That is what has been happening over Maastricht. We must now pay more attention to understanding people's real needs and how we can meet them, and not have people deciding everything, as they cannot do so. In supporting Maastricht, and refusing to allow a referendum, the Prime Minister is absolutely right, and he has my fullest support.

Madam Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members who are leaving do so quietly, so that we can continue with our business?

4.19 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): It is always a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath). It is not always easy, but it is always a pleasure. The right hon. Gentleman said things with which I profoundly agree. I shall touch on some of those in my speech, but perhaps his most significant comments, at the start of his speech, were about the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). I take great pleasure in welcoming the right hon. and learned Gentleman to his position as Leader of the Opposition. As the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup said, the right hon. and learned Gentleman's speech will be regarded by many both inside and outside the House as an excellent speech and an excellent start in his new duties.

As the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East said, we are debating a motion which asks us to approve the Government's economic policies. I had rather hoped that we might hear what those were, but the Prime Minister's speech, probably intentionally, gave us no clue. There were one or two pious hopes in that speech, but not one of the actions needed to turn those hopes into reality.

There was a commitment to respond in an ad hoc manner to the conditions of the market, but there was absolutely nothing about what the Government's lodestar or guidelines will be. There was nothing about their exchange rate policy and nothing about how to balance interest rates against the capacity to stimulate future inflation.

We have before us a one-line motion which says nothing—to be precise, no doubt it can be read to mean whatever the various opinions held, not only by Government Back Benchers but within the Cabinet itself, want it to mean. Probably that motion, framed by the Whips, is the only motion which the Conservative party could have tabled for which all Conservative Members will be able to vote tonight. Goodness only knows what it says to the markets out there, which are looking for some kind of guidance or assurance about Government policy. As usual, what comes first is the unity of the Conservative party; what is in the best interests of Britain's economy and of our present economic situation comes second.

What we do know is that last Wednesday the central plank of the Government's economic policy—and of their foreign policy—was obliterated in a single day. All the things that the Prime Minister told us would not happen did happen. In speech after speech, the right hon. Gentleman gave us an absolute assurance that he would not devalue. But he did devalue. In speech after speech he gave us an absolute assurance that his aim was to put this country at the heart of Europe. But last Wednesday he put this country at the periphery of Europe. During the election and afterwards, he gave us undertakings that he had healed relations with our European colleagues, most notably with the Germans. But since last Wednesday, Minister after Minister has been queuing up to blame the Germans in an attempt to shift the blame from themselves.

Whenever something goes wrong under the Conservative Government, why is their first action to blame others instead of taking action to put it right? I have some sympathy with them because this time their traditional targets for blame—the Opposition parties—were no longer available to them. We made it clear that we did not support devaluation. Indeed, the calls for devaluation came from Conservative Members; those voices were from the Prime Minister's own party. One could speculate that, of all that was done last week to destabilise our economy and undermine our pound, the comments of Conservative Members about the need for devaluation must be foremost.

Of course, the Government cannot attack their own, so what they cannot find at home they grub up abroad. They have sought to blame not their bungling, not their mismanagement and past policies, but the present attitude of the Germans. So discreditable an act—an act for which we shall pay a heavy price—is difficult to comprehend.

Perhaps the best way to describe what has happened is to look, as the Prime Minister recommended to one of his hon. Friends, at the Conservative party's manifesto in 1992. It is quite revealing. It says:

> "When the exchange rate mechanism was being created, during the final days of the last Labour Government, the then prime minister decided Britain could not take part. It is easy to see why. The economy was too weak . . . The Conservatives have changed all that."

Well, so they have. So they have.

The Prime Minister's own words—he said them, not me, and we might describe our present condition best in the words that he chose himself—were that devaluation would betray our future and be a route to the second division in Europe. Correct. What he has described he has now done.

After last Wednesday, thanks to the Government's policy, Britain is now condemned to being one of the second-tier economies in Europe, alongside and in the company of Italy, Spain and Portugal. It will take a long time to rebuild and recover our position and it will take a Government with a clear and determined policy in order to do so. I hoped that we would see that today, but I have to tell the Prime Minister that we have seen none of it.

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): I do not wish to take any hon. Member into the realm of fantasy in this serious debate, but I do not imagine that that would be hard for the right hon. Gentleman. If the right hon. Gentleman had been the Chancellor on that day, bearing in mind what he has told the House, bearing in mind that the Government took great measures to protect their membership of the ERM, bearing in mind that they announced an increase in interest rates, which took great political courage, and bearing in mind that that did not stabilise the pound, what would the right hon. Gentleman have done to protect Britain's membership of the ERM? Would he have raised interest rates even higher than the Government proposed? What effect does he think that that would have had on the economy?

Mr. Ashdown: Our position in the ERM could not have been protected on Wednesday because it was the Government's action long before Wednesday that made that simply indefensible, as I shall seek to show the hon. Gentleman in the next portion of my speech. The Prime Minister's defence before us today was that that was an act, as the hon. Gentleman has just suggested, of pure common sense; an act about which the Government had no option; the Government were, just on Wednesday, overwhelmed by a peculiar and singular event. What nonsense. The fact is that the origins of Wednesday's debacle do not rest in last week.

Mr. Skinner: Débâcle.

Mr. Ashdown: It is an interesting experience to have my French corrected by the hon. Gentleman.

The origins of last week's catastrophe lie not in last week but in the underlying weakness of the British economy which has persisted, under Labour and Tory Governments alike, these last 40 years, because we have failed to tackle the real problems of the British economy. They lie in the decision in 1985 not to join the exchange rate mechanism when we could have done at a rate that would have been suitable for Britain and when our joining the ERM at that stage would have prevented the hyperinflated boom of the late 1980s and the deep recession of the early 1990s. They lie in the timing and rate chosen by the Prime Minister himself, personally, in 1990. As Chancellor, he chose the time and the rate, nobody else. He is responsible for that.

Mr. Greg Knight (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): What did the Liberal Democrats say in 1990?

Mr. Ashdown: In 1990 we said that we were delighted that we had gone into the exchange rate mechanism, but let me make it clear to the hon. Gentleman that that was the least worst option at the time. When the Prime Minister, then Chancellor, decided to go in, the ERM was 39 months old. I have taken a look at it. Of those months, 30 would have provided better conditions than the month that the Prime Minister chose to go in.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): He did it for the Tory party conference.

Mr. Ashdown: Exactly right. We all know why the Prime Minister did it then. He did it because of the Conservative party conference. It had nothing to do with the best interests of Britain; nothing to do with what was right for our economy. It was short-term economic management for the benefit of the Conservative party. That is what has dogged the Government, week in, week out, month in, month out, year in and year out.

It does not end there. The position was progressively weakened by inaction since the election, and compounded by the most desperate complacency during the summer months. The markets were not commenting—as the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) half suggested—on the value of the pound in a single day. They were commenting on the weakness of the British economy, in which—directly as a result of Government policy—30 per cent. of our manufacturing base has been destroyed over the past 12 or 13 years. It is the same trend that yesterday produced redundancies at British Aerospace, followed today by further tragic redundancies at Ford and Rolls-Royce.

The markets were commenting not on a short-term phenomenon that arose only last week, but on this country's long-term economic management, and the Government's failure to establish an independent central bank and their short-term economic fumbling and mismanagement last week.

The markets were commenting when they acted last week not on some short-term scenario but on the uncertainties surrounding Britain's long-term intentions —as to whether we will be part of European monetary union or outside it. That led to uncertainties which undermined confidence in sterling, which was reflected in the markets.

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): The right hon. Gentleman made allegations about Conservative party conferences. With the benefit of his knowledge of the background to sterling, will he comment on the statement made by the Liberal Democrat economic spokesman, the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) last Wednesday, during the course of that party's annual conference, that sterling should move as swiftly as possible to the 2·5 per cent. band?

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Lady overlooks my right hon. Friend's other two propositions. He suggested that a clear statement be made about our intention to establish an independent central bank, and that we should immediately take steps in that direction. That would have reassured the market. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] That would have reassured the market. If it had been possible to go to the narrow band, that would have had the same effect. Both comments were perfectly reasonable and I fully support them.

Mr. Salmond: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that the origin of the crisis goes back a long way, but long after it was clear that the parity of sterling against the deutschmark was unsustainable, it was publicly supported by the right hon. Gentleman and by the Labour leader —who now argues for realignment, but did not do so then. There must be a better reason for supporting an unsustainable value for sterling against the deutschmark than that the right hon. Gentleman did not want to take the rap from the Tory Benches.

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman again excludes, presumably deliberately, the other points that we made. Of course we said that we ought to seek to hold the value of the pound, but we also said that other steps should be taken to increase the underlying strength of the British economy by beginning to invest and moving towards an independent central bank.

We now pay the price for those long years of Government mismanagement—for the wrong policies and decisions taken at the wrong time. That price is not paid by Government Members or even by Opposition Members, but in the form of more lost jobs, more lost homes and more broken businesses throughout the country. That is the suffering caused by the whole miserable catalogue of Government blunder and mismanagement.

The Government could have taken three actions to avoid the consequences of last Wednesday's debacle. First, they could have established in Britain that which every other modern economy has—an independent central bank that is mandated to maintain and to sustain price stability.

Mr. John Watts (Slough) *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: Forgive me, but I have already given way a number of times.

If such a bank had been established, there is no doubt that the confidence created in the market would have enabled the Government to use a larger sum of money to invest in the country's infrastructure—such as transport —and in those other things that the economy will need in the 1990s. Above all, we could have released the controls on capital spending in part if not in full, to enable councils to use the money that they produced from the sale of council houses to stimulate the construction industry and to get building started again in this country.

The Government could also have cleared up the dangerous uncertainty about our long-term intentions in Europe, saying that we would not opt out on monetary union but that we would be part of it. No question mark should hang over that.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North) *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: I must make progress, but I shall be happy to respond to the hon. Gentleman later.

If the Government had taken those actions, Britain's economic position would have been much stronger and we could perhaps have coped with the circumstances of last week.

That which the Government should have done is what now needs to be done. The Government say that they continue to make fighting inflation the centrepiece of their economic policy. Very well: let them prove it. Let them give independent status to the Bank of England, and mandate it to maintain and to sustain price stability in this country. If the Government will do that, people will begin to believe in their capacity to stick to their undertakings.

The Government say also that they want to strengthen the economy. Let them prove it, by at least sustaining the level of investment in our capital expenditure. I believe that there will be serious cuts in the next review of public expenditure. Let the Government at least give an undertaking that capital expenditure will be sustained, and release the capital sums held for councils, to help stimulate the construction industry.

I fear that the economy is in such a weak state that a fall in interest rates by one or two points will lead not to further spending but—as it did in the United States—to people using the greater amount of money that they have to pay off the mountain of private debt that is now borne in Britain. That happened in the United States, and it is likely to happen here.

Even if there were more private expenditure, it would serve only to create a consumer boom that would suck in more and more imports. To get the economy moving again, it will be necessary to do more than simply reduce interest rates. The Government must take a hand in beginning to stimulate economic activity. If the Government are serious about rebuilding the United Kingdom's position in Europe, let them face up to the challenge posed to this country and to this Parliament by the Maastricht treaty.

We all understand that the treaty has its flaws, but it was never intended to be a destination. It was always meant as a transition point. If the journey stops at Maastricht, progress towards unity in Europe will begin to unravel, with devastating consequences for Europe and for this country.

Government policy, as revealed by the Prime Minister, is that, instead of confronting the challenge of bringing Maastricht before the House and staking their own reputation on getting it ratified, the Government take refuge in delay and dodge. I am surprised that the Labour party seems to have joined the Government in that. We heard from members of both Front Benches today that Britain intends to hide behind the skirts of the Danish Government and of the Danish people.

It strikes me as odd that the Prime Minister was prepared to recommend a firm yes to the French but not to give real advice to the British people about the Maastricht treaty. Shortly after the Danish referendum, the Foreign Secretary told us that the 11 other member states would proceed immediately to ratify. We now hear that Britain must instead wait upon the Danes to decide. Why must we hesitate when almost every other European country finds it possible to proceed? Luxembourg, Ireland, Greece and Italy have all been able to decide without waiting for the Danes, and those countries will shortly be followed by Portugal, Germany and Belgium.

Why is it that Britain and this Parliament cannot face up to that decision and ratify immediately? That shows a vacuum of leadership which is made worse because with the Government's current presidency of the Community they ought to be giving a lead to not only Britain but the wider European community.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Is not the right hon. Gentleman being a little alarmist? If we have only to wait effectively for the preliminary and initial announcements of the Danish Government, Danish political parties and Kobenhavn as to their intentions and how they intend to formulate the questions to be contained in another referendum to the Danish people, there need be no delay in producing our own Maastricht legislation. That can be done well before Christmas.

Mr. Ashdown: Christmas this year? I must disabuse the hon. Gentleman of that notion. I wish that it were the Government's intention, but it is not and we know that.

They will not bring the matter before the House until the spring of next year, if not later, for the reasons given by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I will not give way, as I am keen to give other right hon. and hon. Members an opportunity to speak.

Why is there such a delay? Why are the Government, apparently aided and abetted by the Opposition, prepared to delay and allow the Danes to decide first? It is not because it is in Britain's interests, but quite simply because it is necessary to hide the divisions in both parties. Britain will pay a real economic price for that. For as long as we do not confront the challenge of Maastricht and we dodge the issue of ratification, for so long will the markets doubt our long-term intentions. For as long as we try to maintain the value of the pound at some given parity—we know not what—so long will the markets require higher levels of interest rates from us in order to do that. For so long it will also cost jobs. While the Front Benches delay and dither, for so long will the voices of the anti-Europeans in both the Conservative and Labour parties grow stronger and stronger and the uncertainties over this country's future become deeper and deeper.

I want to make one final point before I sum up—a point on which the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup touched. If there is one lesson to be learned from last week about what we must do in the face of the growing power of the markets and speculators, it is that we can solve the problem only by going into a single currency and not by running away from it. If we really want to be part of a system that can stand on its own feet against the speculation and the raids to which the Prime Minister referred, that is the lesson we must learn.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East) *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: I think that I have given way often enough and I must conclude shortly.

That is the lesson, but the Government dodge it and run away from it. There is no refuge for this country outside an exchange rate system that includes our major trading partners. Because of the effects of the Government's economic policy, it will now be very difficult to get back into the system, but we must get back in. The country and the House must face that fact.

There is no refuge in allowing a floating exchange rate policy that enables us to devalue. Freedom to devalue is the freedom to suffer inflation, to have lower growth, to decline while others prosper and to boom and bust, just as we have done for the past 40 years. Given Britain's record, asking for that freedom is like asking for the freedom for a drunk to go back into the pub. This country must begin to face the disciplines that we have just been pushed out of because of the Government's failures last week.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): The right hon. Gentleman said earlier that he thought that the rate of 2.95 was too demanding and could not be sustained. Now he is saying that he did not want it devalued. Which is it—or is this just the usual Liberal posturing?

Mr. Ashdown: If the right hon. Gentleman had bothered to listen, he would have heard me say that that rate could not be sustained without other policies to back it, such as those that I have just described. Not for the first time, the Chancellor is being highly selective. After all, it was the Government who chose the rate, not us.

There is no refuge for this country on the periphery of a Europe which is moving faster and faster towards closer unity. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup was right to say that the real danger that faces this country is that the core countries of Europe, France, Germany and the Benelux countries—the countries of the Schengen agreement—will now form a tight core. There will be a second-tier Europe, but we will not even be in that. We will be in the third tier of Europe, the slowest lane of all. Sooner or later this country yet again will have to face a decision about where it wants to be. Sooner or later we will be faced with a choice—are we in or are we out? Sooner or later yet again we will be faced with a choice about whether we will be in or out of a system that we have lost the power to shape and lost the will to be a part of.

That is the sum of what the Government are asking us to vote in favour of tonight. It is a Government economic policy which has led to the stagnation of the British economy, which now threatens growing inflation over the next two or three years and which is fast leading to isolation. Stagnation, inflation, isolation—that is what the Government's policy has delivered to this country. That is what the Government have brought us. That is what, in the light of the Prime Minister's speech, they now offer us. Their fundamental credibility to govern this country has been, even this early in a Parliament, destroyed. They will not be trusted again. Quite frankly, the sooner they go the better. If we can help that process through tonight's vote, we will.

4.45 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): When Parliament is recalled in circumstances such as these, there is always a real danger that the entire debate may be dominated by wall-to-wall Privy Councillors. Therefore, I wish to say immediately that I shall speak for only 10 minutes. I hope that the House will excuse me if I take a relatively narrow analysis and proceed with some celerity.

I wish to discuss the evidence that has accrued over recent months of a growing and effective German power. It is quite legitimate to consider that in the context of a debate that purports to be about the Government's economic policy. Indeed, the topic has touched upon my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's every thought during the past few days.

The House might reflect on the European diary of 1977 to 1981 of Lord Jenkins of Hillhead—I introduce him for the benefit of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) —in which he made a most effective analysis of the partnership that dominated the European Community: Germany with its growing economic power and sophistication but a very relaxed political role; and France, effectively carrying out the politics. We can now see how much that has changed.

On the whole, I welcome that change. I do not align myself with my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Ridley in taking a dire view of the implications of the revival of German power. Germany has a place in the European sun. The disasters in the inter-war years were as much a consequence of the unhappy Versailles treaty as anything else. I do not identify with those who are fearful and resentful of current German authority. However, I am

[Mr. John Biffen]

realistic enough to observe that that fear and resentment exists on a scale that transforms the European position. That was noted with some anguish by some of my hon. Friends in the decision on the combat aircraft a few months ago. However, it was never so much noted as in the conduct of German economic and monetary management in the context of the ERM.

I acknowledge that the reunification of Germany presented the most enormous economic, fiscal and social challenges, and I could not envisage how the much vaunted power of the President of the Bundesbank failed to prevail over political judgments. However, that was the world in which we were living. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor was relaxed in his language, but our right hon. Friend the chairman of the Conservative party was rather more robust in blaming the Bundesbank for a great many of our difficulties in managing our currency within the ERM.

Many hon. Members here today will say exactly how we should have managed our currency in those circumstances, but I shall not join them. I just wish to offer my good wishes to my right hon. Friend and my appreciation of his past struggles.

The House would be well advised to identify where all this will go. It is a matter of value judgment. I believe that unification has proved such a powerful, traumatic force in the national German experience that it is no good going back to the world of Helmut Schmidt and Willi Brandt —an era so affectionately regarded by many in the House as the appropriate guide to the future.

Germany will be increasingly concerned, I believe, with what lies to the east in terms of unification, but she will also want stability on her eastern border and the opportunity of economic influence through investment in that part of the world. Everything that is made available for that purpose is not made available for financial convergence in Spain, Portugal, Italy or Greece. That brings us to the heart of the Maastricht treaty: whether, in fact, it is a prospective reality, whether, in fact, it is rooted in the present or, in any sense, rooted in a likely future.

The crucial role which has been assigned for Germany was assigned by those living in another time who made an analysis of a situation that no longer prevails. Therefore the likelihood of Maastricht being secured is remote. I am sure that it is distressing to some hon. Members that the peasantry should play a role in French decision taking, but one is faced with the position that, even though the whole business community in France voted yes, a very powerful potential political power has been given to those who voted no.

I do not believe that French politics will cheerfully drift back into their previous mould. I do not believe that Giscard has that much of a golden future; it is more that of a golden oldie. Chirac will almost certainly not be controlling the UDR party in France for any length of time. If I am right in my analysis, we shall see powerful political forces operating in major European countries whose purpose will be to carry out economic policies that will frustrate what is in the Maastricht treaty. It is not a treaty that compels Government action. It is a treaty that lays down a course of action which it is assumed that Governments will follow. However, we have now destroyed a great deal of the popular basis of support for those policies and for that treaty. That, it seems to me, is an uncomfortable reality.

I turn to my right hon. Friend on the Treasury Bench and say to him that I did not hide my opposition to the exchange rate mechanism and to Maastricht. However, we are now confronted with a position in which we shall be invited to put on the statute book legislation that has little and lessening relevance. It is that fact which causes speculation. Speculators are not just a lot of yuppies from Essex in their braces. They are people of considerable sophistication. If they see that politicians have committed themselves to courses of action that are wildly improbable, they will draw conclusions that are wholly proper.

May I say, in the presence of the one-time leader of the Conservative party, my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), who coined the phrase "a full-hearted consent" in the context of the European debate, and also to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that we have heard from the former leader of the Conservative party that Maastricht is, for him, an integral part of a process to produce one Government, one currency, one state. That, I believe, would lead to its economic provisions being seriously contested and avoided by the member states.

On any count, that treaty is unacceptable. To proceed with it in the House of Commons, knowing that it gives rise to the sort of expectations held by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup and knowing the uncertainties surrounding the economic considerations, the true course of British statesmanship is to turn to one's neighbours and say, "Up with this we will not put."

4.53 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): It is always a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). I am particularly pleased that he drew attention to the relevance and importance of the Maastricht treaty to all that we are discussing today. It hangs like a cloud over our future. It has direct relevance to the debate about the exchange rate mechanism. If it were not for the fact that the ERM is supposed to be the first stage of a three-stage process leading to economic and monetary union under the treaty of Maastricht, it would not, I believe, have had the kind of pressures put upon it that we have seen in the last 10 days.

The other point that I should bring in under this general heading is that it was the French referendum that led to particular uncertainties, for nobody could be certain what the French people were going to say. Is it not remarkable that, when the people of a country are invited to vote, they register a vote that is entirely different from the expectations of the professional politicians, the classe politique which is so Euro-federalist at present?

When the French Chamber of Deputies and Senate met jointly to decide on the treaty of Maastricht, they voted by about 580 to 68 in favour—at least 8:1. When the matter was put to the people of France, it received their consent by a whisker—a 1 per cent. lead. It was the same with the Danes. The Danish political establishment voted for the Maastricht treaty by 125 votes to 25, but when they put it to the people of Denmark we know very well that they rejected it.

Therefore, I well understand why the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) should feel a certain nervousness about the awful prospect of inviting the British people to consider their own future. He has every reason to be nervous. I say both to him and to others that, if the people of Germany are invited or force their way into a referendum, we may get a very different result from what is assumed by their leaders in the classe politique.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Would not the opposition of the British people be even greater if they had heard what the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) said today? He conceded that a single currency would indeed lead to a single state and illustrated the position in the United States as an example of the federal structure that ought to exist among the member states. Does my right hon. Friend believe that there is the slightest support among the British people for such a concept?

Mr. Shore: One of the great things about the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup is that in many ways he blows the gaff. He does speak for a minority view in the House and for an even smaller minority view in the country that wills a federal Europe. The right hon. Gentleman wills the destruction of the British state. He wills the transfer of power to a higher body of federal government in Europe—a united states of Europe that would be something like the United States of America. He wants to hand over all the major, crucial powers of government to that body. That is what he is about. That is what so many people fear is the basic reasoning, the basic intention in the treaty of Maastricht, even though the Government have negotiated for themselves an opt-out from the treaty's most dangerous and sinister clauses relating to economic and monetary union.

Anyone who turns his mind seriously to this question must face up to the issue. If we go along that road and if we are driven to economic and monetary union, we shall virtually say goodbye to our own effective control over our economic life and, inevitably, to our effective control over the political destiny of this country. That is the real question. Although the Government have an opt-out, as it were, they have not yet faced up to that question.

Having watched the events of the last two years since we joined the exchange rate mechanism, we very much fear that the Government are doing their utmost to fall in with the requirements of convergence, which would make it possible for them to join the economic and monetary union in 1994. I cannot think of any other rational reason why the Government should have stuck to the ERM parity of DM2·95 for so long, fought so desperately, raised interest rates to 15 per cent., virtually halved our national reserves and borrowed money from abroad, all in order to keep sterling at 2·95 deutschmarks to the pound.

That is extraordinary. The Prime Minister told us that, when we entered the mechanism, many people supported him. They did not even cavil at the exchange rate. I regret to say that some of those hon. Members should have exercised better judgment.

It is two years since we joined the ERM in October 1990, and in that time things have not stood still in the countries of Europe. Some convergence has been achieved in terms of bringing our too high inflation down towards the European average. Great progress has been made there, but that does not necessarily lead to competitiveness which is not only about the rate of inflation but about the efficiency of output. I shall give the Chancellor an example.

In the three years from 1989, the British economy has probably registered an output change of minus 1 per cent. In spite of its problems in bringing together east and west Germany, that country has had an output gain of at least 10 per cent. An economy that has declined over three years is not as competitive as it was in 1989, but in the meantime our principal competitor nation, on which we are basing our exchange rate, has increased its output and competitiveness by a good 10 per cent. Unless there is a miraculous coincidence in which the rate of growth in all EC countries is the same, that is bound to happen. It is not a question of getting the exchange rate right on joining the mechanism. It is bound to be wrong in a few years because of differences in the rates of growth and competitiveness in different countries. I ask the House and the Chancellor to think carefully about that.

The Prime Minister said that we were overcome by a great tidal wave of speculation. That is a fair point, because there was such a great wave, and it affected other currencies as well. But, more importantly, we were forced to lower our exchange rate and to float because it was perceived by virtually all informed opinion that we were no longer competitive. Evidence of that can be found in our current account trade deficit, which is probably the best indicator. Despite nearly 3 million unemployed and the virtual abandonment of industrial investment by almost all firms in Britain and an immense number of company liquidations, we are still running a trade deficit this year of about £1 billion a month.

Britain is in the grip of the worst recession since the 1930s, but we still cannot pay our way. It is inevitable that, when an economy is seen to be performing as badly as ours, foreign opinion among bankers and Governments will be that the currency is out of line. That leads to waves of speculation of the kind that has finally triumphed.

I have a relevant question for the Chancellor. Do the Government think that we would be better off if we had managed, with the 15 per cent. interest rate and the squandering of reserves, to hold the exchange rate at DM2·95? Does the Chancellor think that we are better off now that we have freed ourselves from the ERM and the exchange rate is DM2·45 to DM2·48? I have not looked at the latest figures, but there has been a significant devaluation of 12 to 14 per cent.

Does any hon. Member who is in favour of our membership of the ERM say that we should have remained in the mechanism at the previous rate? Do the Government or anyone else intend rejoining the ERM at a rate of DM2·95 to the pound? If no one proposes that, it looks as if the country may have been done a good turn, because we now have a chance to make industry competitive and begin the process of recovery. We would be foolish not to learn the lesson of what happens to a currency locked into an impossible exchange rate that is bound to attract speculation and pressure. Our exchange rate could be sustained only by interest rates that were so high that they were squeezing the life out of the economy.

We are only in stage 1 of economic and monetary union. If we were back in the ERM and had renounced the pound so that it was impossible to come out or devalue, what would happen? If there were a permanently fixed exchange rate, let alone a common currency, and our costs and prices were not as competitive as those in Germany, it

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would be just too bad. There would be not 3 million unemployed, but 4 million, 5 million, 6 million or more, and British people leaving universities and colleges, after all the good training that my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition is anxious for them to secure, would find jobs not in Britain but on the continent in areas where growth was being sustained.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: The right hon. Gentleman cannot resist the opportunity to kick the idea of European union while it is down. His opposition is well known. Is he suggesting that sustained devaluation over the years has helped to strengthen the British economy? Was it not the weakness of his party when it was in government that helped to get us into our present mess?

Mr. Shore: It is easy to be emotional about exchange rates, but we must try to be rational about them. Leading people who insist that the index of a country's prosperity or its virtue as a nation should be measured by its exchange rate are quite mad. It is said that Japan and Germany are the two most virtuous countries in the world, but they are not. They are quite efficient countries and they have virtues, but they have immense defects as well.

We should go for a competitive exchange rate that is not out of line or overvalued. That is the only way to secure our prosperity. Of course, there were some post-war devaluations, but since we entered this fixed exchange rate arrangement, unemployment has grown by well over 1 million in the past two years. It is still going up, and nothing will check it.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Does my right hon. Friend recollect that, when he and I were at the Department of Economic Affairs, the 1967 devaluation was recognised as a platform, not a solution? By 1970, we had turned the deficit into a surplus equivalent to £5 billion at today's rates. We also achieved the highest ever level of manufacturing investment, but those things were all blown away when the Government, led by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), abandoned investment and went for consumer-led growth under the then Chancellor Lord Barber.

Mr. Shore: I recall that, and it is very relevant. I have never believed that devaluation is a policy in itself, but it is a necessary means of achieving not only the opportunity to recover but a balance in the current account, without which long-term measures will not work. That message should be taken on board by all hon. Members.

It is much better for Britain to float than to be locked into a permanent fixed exchange rate, which would destroy the nation. We simply cannot afford to g[illegible]ng that road. If we are to consider rejoining the ERM, as I suspect we shall, we must ensure that the preconditions that the Labour party laid down in its document in late 1989 are met. We said that we had to enter at a competitive rate and must have the power to keep it competitive, and that it must be part of a general policy of expanding growth in the European Community and in trade.

Last, but most important, we must break the link between the ER and the new goal under the Maastricht treaty of entering into full economic and monetary union.

5.10 pm

Mr. John Watts (Slough): The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) argued that we might have been better able to withstand last week's pressure on sterling if we had had an independent central bank and the House did not have the right to determine whether Britain joins a single currency. He did not describe any measures that were not already available to the Bank of England last week. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor was not reluctant to sanction massive intervention in the markets or substantial increases in interest rates to protect the parity of the pound. There were no other measures that an independent Bank of England could have taken.

The right hon. Member for Yeovil argued that the markets were in some way expressing their doubts about whether Britain intended to stay in the ERM and on course for economic and monetary union. If that is true, what have the markets been commenting on in the past week with regard to the lira and the French franc? Are there doubts about whether France wishes to remain in the ERM or whether it is committed to economic and monetary union? I suggest to the right hon. Gentleman that the markets were commenting on the clear reluctance of the Bundesbank ultimately to be involved in a single currency and on its doubts about whether, with the current policy stance in Germany that is being dictated by domestic concerns—in my view, rightly so—the ERM parities for any of the other currencies were sustainable.

By reaffirming the fundamentals of economic policy, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister helped to remove some of the obscuring fog that has surrounded the conduct of policy recently, in particular by emphasising the importance of a policy to drive down inflation. The policy that has been pursued since 1988—when interest rates were raised to an appropriate level to counter inflation that has built up from an inappropriately low interest rate policy and when we were following the deutschmark outside the ERM—has brought about a substantial improvement in inflation.

It is a matter of record that I have never been an enthusiast of the exchange rate mechanism. I declined to go through the Lobby to support the motion in the name of my right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Thatcher to approve the Government's decision to enter. None the less, I acknowledge that the first 12 months of our membership helped to reduce interest rates without stoking up inflation. In October 1990, the great imperative was to reeduce interest rates because of the growing recession without causing a serious sterling crisis and a run on the pound. That was made possible only by our joining the ERM. As inflation at that time was much higher, the inflationary pressures that would have flowed from a weakened currency would have added to our inflationary difficulties. Therefore, although I have never been an ERM enthusiast, I acknowledge that, during that period, our membership assisted policy, the central aim always having been to get inflation under control.

For about the past eight months, our membership of the ERM has constrained our ability to reduce interest rates in order to stimulate the economy, which has increasingly become the greater imperative. I have found among my constituents a sense of relief that we are no longer bound by our commitment to the ERM.

There has been much crowing from the Opposition—understandably so—about what has been described as a major U-turn in Government economic policy. Opposition Members will not be surprised to learn that I analyse the situation slightly differently. If my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, being aware that the Italian Government intended to devalue the lira, had said, "Let us devalue the pound now," that would have been a U-turn in policy and it would have undermined the credibility of any policy that the Government pursue in the future. But my right hon. Friend did not do that; he stood by the commitment that he, the Prime Minister and the Government have consistently made to seek to maintain our position within the ERM and to take whatever measures are necessary to achieve that objective. Intervention in the markets ultimately did not succeed in steadying the pound and the sanctioning of two rises in interest rates did not succeed in securing stability for the pound.

Those measures were taken against the background of a whispering campaign—whispers in double forte—by the Bundesbank that the pound and other currencies within the system should be devalued. That reinforcement of sentiments already present in the market built up irresistable pressures. I therefore view the decision that my right hon. Friends took not as a U-turn in policy but as a sensible and pragmatic position to adopt. If one is facing a wall, it is not sensible to bang one's head against it; one turns around and finds another way out of the problem.

The Leader of the Opposition seemed to offer a two-part solution to recent events, the first part of which was the oft-rejected Labour package of spending more taxpayers' money and borrowing a great deal more money. *[Interruption.]* Yes, borrowing and spending a great deal more than my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has planned to spend or borrow. Such a policy has been rejected by British people in successive general elections. I hope, without intending any personal malice, that the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) does not have the opportunity, by an appointment to the European Commission, to introduce through the European back door policies that have been rejected twice by the British electorate when put forward by the Labour party under his leadership.

The other part of the Leader of the Opposition's approach is what I would describe as "bier and wurst with the Bundesbank". The argument goes that everything would have been fine if the Governor of the Bank of England and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor had got together with the Germans and asked them nicely if they would agree to a general reduction of interest rates. There should also have been a general realignment of rates within the ERM.

That approach was clearly doomed to failure before anyone even thought of trying it. While it is perfectly fair to be beastly to the Germans and the Bundesbank for a whispering campaign to undermine sterling, it is not valid to criticise German policy by suggesting that Germany adopt policies inappropriate to the needs of its domestic economy and its great need to get on top of the inflationary pressures there. It would do nothing to strengthen the economies of the European Community if the motor economy, the German one, took steps that would weaken itself, especially with reference to inflation.

Mr. Boyce: I am a bit confused. The Prime Minister said this afternoon that we will rejoin the ERM once we have discussed the matter. The Germans are not going to be kind to us; we cannot use a reasoned approach; and we certainly do not have the muscle to use a strong approach. Will the hon. Gentleman therefore explain at what stage we will rejoin and what mechanism we will rejoin?

Mr. Watts: When the hon. Gentleman reads the *Official Report* tomorrow, he will find that my right hon. Friend did not speak in the terms that he has just misquoted. I am about to turn to Britain's future in relation to the ERM, so I ask the hon. Gentleman to be patient.

It would do nothing to improve the position of any other European economy if the German authorities took decisions inappropriate for dealing with the considerable problems facing Germany. By all means let us criticise the Germans, but let us do so for the right reasons——

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): Will my hon. Friend agree that that is one of the reasons why the cosy conversation to which the Leader of the Opposition referred, saying that it should have taken place, may well have taken place? Would he further agree that the Germans might have said no, and that the French might have said, "Not until after our referendum"?

Mr. Watts: That is an interesting speculation, but it would not be helpful to speculate further about a conversation that may not have taken place.

As for the future of the ERM, one of its core members, France, has been under great pressure in recent days. Probably the logic of the situation is that the mark should have been revalued against the currencies of all other member countries to avoid this blow up. What my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said about Britain's future relationship with the ERM was that there need to be substantial modifications to the system before we can contemplate rejoining it. We could certainly not rejoin the system as it stands; and the fault lines to which he has referred were clearly the events of recent weeks.

It was argued before Britain became a member that the reason why we were subjected to such great pressures on the foreign exchange markets was that we were not members of the ERM and that if only we would join, the strength of the mechanism would protect us. The events of the past two weeks have shown that the system could not protect us, the lira, or the peseta, and it remains to be seen whether it can effectively protect the French franc.

It seems to me that the very least necessary modification would be a requirement for a symmetry of obligations on member currencies. There cannot be just a one-way bet. A currency that is under pressure should not bear all the responsibility for maintaining its parity. There should be an equal and symmetrical obligation on a currency that is strengthening against its central rate to take action to deal with that. That is an essential component if there is to be any prospect of this country rejoining the ERM.

Looking ahead to the Delors process, the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) reminded us that we have not yet moved towards Delors stage 2, under which there would be a commitment to fixed parities. In the light of the experience of recent weeks it seems to me that the only way fixed parities could be maintained would involve an absolute and unlimited obligation on every central bank to convert unlimited amounts of its currency in exchange for the currency of other member states at the fixed agreed rate. So unless there was an obligation on the Bundesbank to convert unlimited amounts of pounds, lira or francs into

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deutschmarks, and hence to expand the supply of marks without limit, this stage could not possibly be made to work.

This is why this country is so fortunate that our Prime Minister and Chancellor saw the grave difficulties implicit in the plan that Mr. Delors presented to the Community Heads of Government—the plan for economic and monetary union—and that they obtained for us the right to decide, when other member states believe that the conditions for union have been met, whether or not to take part in that union.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Will the hon. Gentleman agree that the so-called Delors plan for economic and monetary union was taken forward on the instructions of the Council of Ministers? Can we get that straight once and for all?

Mr. Watts: My recollection is that, in most of these matters, it is the Commission's power to initiate and to determine the agenda that has led us into so many of the problems faced by member states in recent years—problems that have brought discredit on the European Community in the eyes of so many of our constituents. I disagree with the hon. Gentleman; the position is as I have explained it, although I stand to be corrected.

I urge my right hon. Friend the Chancellor not to seek early re-entry into the ERM for sterling, and I urge on our partners the merits of adopting a much more evolutionary approach to economic and monetary union, so that convergence of the economies precedes the creation of new institutions or of a new currency. The lesson that we should learn is that, when economies have become closely integrated, like those of Holland and Germany—there is little in the way of fluctuation between their two currencies—that is a natural process that comes from trade links. We should have a trade-driven Community, and institutions should be created and adapted to meet the requirements of the evolving Community. Bureaucrats or Eurocrats laying down deadlines and creating institutions and then expecting the real world to conform to their master plan cannot succeed.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I re-emphasise Madam Speaker's plea for concise speeches. The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) gave a powerful speech in eight minutes—let that be an example to us all.

5.28

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) made a point echoed from a different geopolitical standpoint by the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), but the two have been long-standing allies and they are both still wrong. I should like to concentrate on where we go from here, not on the past.

The economy is in such poor shape that a crisis could have occurred at any time. Certainly, the French referendum was the trigger, but the current account deficit is running at 2 per cent. of GDP and rising, unemployment is at 9·9 per cent., public sector borrowing stands at 6·5 per cent. and is rising; and even with renewed growth there is little prospect of getting public borrowing back under control at present levels of taxation and public expenditure. But even that is not the full measure of our plight.

Given the present rates of taxation and public expenditure there seems to be no level or path for the exchange rate which would bring the current account and public borrowing back to an even keel next year, the year after or at any time in the next decade, so devaluation offers no solution.

I did as careful an exercise as I could on the Treasury model, which the right hon. Gentlemen tried to use to support their arguments—they failed. It is a fairly eclectic model. I ran it in comparisons with other macro models. The results were published before the general election. The picture that emerged most strongly from the Treasury model was that there is no path for the exchange rate that brings the economy back into balance. The other models give greater weight to the improvements in exports of manufactures recently, but that improvement does not seem to be being sustained. The volume of exports of manufactures during the past three months is 3 per cent. down on one year ago, whereas the volume of imports of manufactures is 7 per cent. up although total expenditure is so depressed.

If the markets see no improvements coming through in the current account and from the recent fall in the exchange rate within the year or two it takes the J-curve to work, the pound will slide still faster and still fail to find a sustainable path. All this accords with the attrition of industry that we see in our constituencies.

I was content to fight the general election campaign on Labour's platform on the expectation that, as my colleagues opened the books and saw the grimness of the prospects, real weight would have been put behind the measures necessary to improve our technological competitiveness, which is what all Opposition Members have emphasised. Such measures take time to have effect, but if the markets take them seriously—that is a big if—the benefits are felt straight away in increased confidence. The alternatives are either a return to the surgery of incomes policies or severe cuts in public expenditure and increases in taxation—despite the recession.

The Government have not yet launched serious new efforts to improve our technological competitiveness. They believe—on reasonable grounds—that incomes policies would not work, so the prospect is for horrendous expenditure cuts and tax increases. The Government will feel that they could not get away with actual wage cuts, but that is probably what their figuring points to.

The countries whose currencies were under pressure before the pound—Sweden and Italy—have now announced savage cuts in expenditure and huge increases in taxation. In this situation what should Britain do?

Recent events certainly show the vulnerability of the ERM in setting up exchange rate targets against which the speculators can pitch their billions, but the treaty of Maastricht made the ERM only an interim stage towards EMU. Within EMU, there would be no room for attack on national currencies—there would be no national currencies to attack.

The problem of global stability would remain, against the dollar and the yen, but that exists now. Also, there would remain the big political question of how we would manage fiscal and monetary policy within Europe. Here, I would say to my hon. Friends that we are not offered equalisation of income, social benefits, unemployment or growth inside or outside the ERM and EMU. It would be nice if that is what convergence meant. The choice for us is whether we wish to manage our taxation and expenditure within the stable monetary regime of EMU or within the hazards of the international money markets.

For any country to join EMU there has to be convergence of monetary conditions—of inflation and interest rates, and limits on public borrowing—but those constraints have to be faced anyway, whether in the wilds of the international money markets or in the disciplines of the EMU. EMU offers the best environment in which to make the structural changes we must make in the economy.

We should try, first, to ensure that there is an EMU there for us to join at some time. That means Britain's ratifying the treaty of Maastricht, or its equivalent, which I believe the EC will bring forward, without Denmark.

Secondly, the Government should set out honestly the magnitude of the task we face in meeting the EMU conditions and the path they propose we should take in pursuit of them. There are differences between the way the Bundesbank and Germany see the problem of economic management and the Anglo-Saxon tradition of economic analysis. To British economists, German arguments seem crude and unsubtle; to German bankers, British arguments seem weak and indisciplined.

The Treasury has not represented the best of British traditions in recent years, and it is in no position now seriously to criticise the Germans. There needs to be much more serious engagement in technical arguments on the design of policies between finance ministries and central banks. In human terms, perhaps the Bank of England is now in a better position to reopen the dialogue with the Germans and the Community that is the Treasury.

Thirdly, the Government have to abandon their uniquely hostile attitude to industrial policy, to practical support at a serious level and to the structural changes needed to secure Britain's technological competitiveness. I am not sure that the President of the Board of Trade has all the answers, but he should at least be allowed to reopen the debate on industrial policy. The magnitude of the challenge is revealed by the fact that we have to increase our exports of manufactures by some 2 per cent. per year —£2 billion—faster than would occur from simple considerations of price competitiveness and the growth of world trade. That is a huge task and the achievement must be sustained for a decade if we are to preserve anything like our position in the world economy.

With a clear goal and a viable strategy, the Government must explain to the British people and the money markets the case for the short-term policy adjustments they will have to make. They will have to be painfully honest. They cannot expect to be believed unless they are painfully honest. If they are, and although the Opposition would have priorities different from the path the Government will pursue, I hope that we will not oppose such objectives as I have outlined or seek to frustrate their achievement.

5.37 pm

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): I do not think that anyone would argue that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has had an easy time in the past two weeks. I have particular sympathy for him as I was the Minister responsible for international monetary affairs when we joined the European currency snake—the precursor of the ERM. I studied the record and noticed that we joined on 1 May and left on 23 June. My right hon. Friend has done a great deal better than we did. We then floated the pound.

It is worth remembering that the Government joined the ERM under the leadership of the former right hon. Member for Finchley. The move was supported by the vast bulk of the Conservative party, by the Opposition and by the Liberal party.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): It was not supported by this section.

Mr. Higgins: Indeed. It was not supported by all sections of the Opposition.

The rate at which we joined the ERM was not the proper one, although it was, of course, the market rate. Subsequently, there was German reunification and the German Government insisted on a particular exchange rate between the east and west German currencies, contrary to the advice of the Bundesbank. The Bundesbank effectively took its revenge be raising interest rates and we have been suffering ever since.

The Government could not readjust the exchange rate without undermining their declared policy of fighting inflation, so we have gone from month to month in the same situation. It is not so much that the Humpty Dumpty structure of exchange rates that existed when we joined fell off the Berlin wall as that the wall collapsed underneath it.

I feel strongly that, over the past few days, the Chancellor, having declared his policy very clearly, did everything possible to achieve the aims of that policy. It has been suggested that, 10 days ago, there was a good deal of confusion. I believe that anyone who had sat down to deal with the position a day before all that confusion, and all the pressures in the exchange market, would have done exactly what was done by my right hon. Friend. He would have intervened immediately, as far as reasonably possible, and then raised interest rates; he would have threatened to raise them further, and then waited to see what would happen at 4 pm. At that point, he would know whether he had won.

As soon as it was clear that he had not won, it would have been entirely appropriate to move the interest rate in the other direction and to float the pound; it certainly would not have been appropriate to fix another specific rate. I believe that my right hon. Friend did all that he could, in the circumstances, to stick to the policy. Now, however, we must look forward—as, indeed, my right hon. Friend has done—while again stressing the vital importance of the battle against inflation.

The crucial issue is surely the level at which the Government should seek to set interest rates. There is a fundamental balance to be struck. First, we need to set the rates at a level that will result in the pound's settling down at a competitive rate, in relation not only to European currencies but, in particular, to the dollar. The dollar, after all, has been at a very competitive rate: in any previous period, we would have heard complaints about competitive exchange depreciation, beggar-my-neighbour policies and so forth.

My right hon. Friend, then, must bear in mind the need for interest rates that will bring about a competitive exchange rate. Against that, however, he must set interest rates that will enable him to fund the public sector deficit

[Mr. Higgins]

from the non-bank public; otherwise it will not be possible for him to control the money supply, and that must be crucial in the battle against inflation. My right hon. Friend must consider that balance very carefully as the markets gradually settle down. Having said that, I must add that, in that sense, the smaller the public sector borrowing requirement the better. The need for public expenditure control is very important.

Let me now refer to what was a matter of some controversy for the Treasury Select Committee during the previous Parliament. The Government seemed at that stage to change their position. It would not be right to cut public expenditure to compensate for the fall in revenue and the increase in unemployment benefit which have resulted from the recession. The so-called automatic stabilisers should be allowed to work; otherwise we shall deflate too far.

I should add—as the Prime Minister said in his speech—that, while we must seek to control public expenditure, we need to get the priorities right within that public expenditure. It is not just a question of cutting; increases are needed in certain sectors, to ensure—over, say, a year or 18 months—a rise in employment and tax revenues, and a reduction in unemployment benefits. I very much hope that it will be possible to include such positive measures in the autumn statement, in conjunction with an overall control of public expenditure.

It is, of course, always the case that, if a country devalues its currency, the exchange rate will not stick unless deflation takes place as well. I consider that, in the present economic circumstances, the degree of deflation that we already have is probably sufficient to enable the exchange rate to stabilise at a level that is competitive and does not add to inflationary pressures. These are complex and difficult issues, but I believe that the present circumstances do not call—as did all previous devaluations—for a policy of deflation.

When, if at all, should we rejoin the exchange rate mechanism? I assume for the sake of argument that it will still be there tomorrow morning, although that may turn out not to be the case: the Bank is under considerable pressure, and the Spaniards have introduced a fixed rate. We should appraise that question in the light of our experience over the past few days.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister referred to fault lines in the system. I think that we face a fundamental difficulty. Criticism has been directed very much at the Germans, but we must distinguish between the German Government and the Bundesbank. The German Government have effectively abdicated authority over many of the most important economic levers with which an economy can be controlled to the Bundesbank, an unelected body which is entirely beyond control. I take no account of the silly little cut in interest rates that it made a few days ago; that, in my view, was intended merely as an insult.

I very much doubt whether it is possible to run an exchange rate mechanism over a broader range of countries than the narrow range of countries around Germany while an independent central bank is operating in Germany. This raises difficult questions. I certainly do not go along with those who argue that we should have an independent central bank here, for the reasons given by my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts): in my view, the Governor of the Bank of England did everything possible in the circumstances, and could have done no more had he been independent.

Mr. Delors, Mr. Bangemann and others have suggested that the problem arose because we were not operating a single currency. I believe that the argument that we should solve our problems by rushing into a single currency, quite apart from being unworldly, is unbelievably dangerous. If we gave up the present arrangement for all time—long before the introduction of any degree of convergence—in favour of a single currency, parts of the Community would suffer from perpetual unemployment. Moreover, the demand for more and more cash to flow across the exchanges would cause terrible political tensions—although I believe that it would never happen in any event. Those tensions would be vastly greater than they would be if we acted in 10, 15 or 20 years' time, when reasonable convergence had taken place.

Finally, let me say something about the Maastricht treaty. Our dilemma is this. From a British point of view, the negotiation at Maastricht was remarkably successful: once the Community had refused to introduce a general opt-out clause to which anyone could subscribe, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said, "Very well, we will write our own," and that is what we did. Our clause included many measures—on the fiscal control side, for instance—that we would never have secured in a general clause. I consider it highly unlikely that, in a new negotiation, we would ever obtain terms as good as those that we now have.

We should watch carefully to see how matters develop. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that, for the rest, it must be an ambition postponed. Surely, in the light of the events of the past two weeks, the idea that we can actually proceed on the timetable proposed at Maastricht—although, as has been pointed out, we have been excluded from it—must breathe some air of realism, across the Community, into those who have adopted the almost pro-federal approach that has been reflected in some speeches this afternoon.

These are highly complex issues, entirely unsuited to a referendum. The concept of a referendum is, in my view, an alien one, completely incompatible with our system of a representative parliamentary democracy that allows us to consider the issues in depth. If we do that we shall find the right solution, and it will be seen that the way in which the Government have handled their economic affairs in recent days has been wholly appropriate. We shall then be able to continue to pursue an anti-inflation policy, and to get the economy going again.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether you have been notified by the Government of any request for a statement about the resignation of the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have had no such request from any quarter.

5.49 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): It is a great pleasure to follow the former Chairman of the Treasury Select Committee, although I do not agree with everything, or indeed much, of what he said.

I am interested in the fact that the sounds that we are hearing in the House are different from those that we heard in July. The Conservative party will hereinafter be known as the party of devaluation; the party with policies that are both calculated and designed to create inflation; the party that does not understand the workings of the international monetary markets; the party that is led by a Prime Minister who, on his own admission, has betrayed his country because there is a fault line in his brain. The Labour party will hereinafter be known as the party of monetary responsibility; the party that, when the sterling crisis was at its height, stood to attention and sang "Land of Hope and Glory" before declaring that never again would the pound in our pockets be devalued; the party that, in the pitiless pursuit of political virility, put that before intellectual integrity—perhaps the least valuable currency in politics, even less valuable than the pound.

Today of all days should be a day of penitence in the Chamber on the part of the British political establishment. Their folie de grandeur over the value of the pound has cost the British taxpayer between £500 million and £750 million, perhaps even more. Outside the Chamber there are people who are out of work, people whose homes have been repossessed and people without a future. They are asking why the establishment has let them down so badly. They believe that, if politics is to be more than a means of rising in the world, our political leaders must learn from their mistakes. Their message to the Labour Front-Bench team is that, if democracy is to succeed, politics has to be about competing ideas, not elites competing for political power.

It is not often that I agree with international financiers, who every day push about $1,000 billion across the foreign exchanges, sometimes in a speculative frenzy. But I believe that those poisonous vipers who speculated across the exchanges on black Wednesday were right and the politicians were wrong. Sterling's parity against the deutschmark was unsustainable; the right course was devaluation—the word that dare not speak its name. The fault lay not with Germany, Chancellor Kohl or Mr. Schlesinger, the president of the Bundesbank, but with British politicians, British civil servants and the Bank of England—an institution that claims to bat for Britain, although one would not think so to judge from its role in black Wednesday's debacle.

For at least two people in Great Britain it should be hail glad confident morn never again. I refer to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Sir Terence Burns, the permanent secretary at the Treasury. Those hapless characters behaved like physicists defying the laws of gravity or mathematicians who, when adding two and two, continually came up with any answer but four. If the Chancellor of the Exchequer has a brilliant mind until he makes it up, no one is better at giving in to his own mistakes than Sir Terence Burns.

Some people are smirking at the Government's plight since black Wednesday, saying that they have no policy on inflation, no policy for recovery. Sanctimony in the expression of unctuous self-satisfaction is not my style, so I would not dream of saying, "I told you so." However, for the record, on 15 June 1990 in the House I argued, using the fundamental exchange rate theory, that Britain should enter the ERM at DM2·60 to the pound. My argument was based on the need for a real exchange rate which, in the medium term, would generate a sustainable account on the balance of payments. Subsequently, and since we joined the ERM, I have tried on four occasions on the Floor of the House to enlighten the Government on the need for devaluation. They took no notice and the result is there for anyone to see.

As the recession tightened, there was another obvious reason for devaluing the pound: the need to reduce interest rates. My argument has always been that devaluation was a useful and necessary step for economic recovery, but a far from sufficient condition for recovery. In current circumstances, it merely helps to provide a macro-economic framework in which other measures can be made to work. The Labour Front Bench team's policies on housing, employment, training and investment are relevant in that context.

Mr. Winnick: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and share his criticisms of Government policies. However, he might remember that, when he spoke in the debate on the Maastricht Bill in May, he was extremely enthusiastic about the measure, and wondered whether he should vote for it. Does he agree that, if we were in that framework —I hope that we never shall be—we would certainly not have the flexibility that he rightly advocates now?

Mr. Sedgemore: I am one of those old-fashioned, fastidious people who believe that a speech should have a beginning, something like a middle and something like an end. My hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) has raised an issue that I shall discuss at the end of my speech—I certainly shall not duck it. My hon. Friend falls into the category of most of those anti-Europeans who are and were opposed to ERM. The mistake they make is that they are drunk on devaluation and believe that one devaluation after another, or a permanently depreciating pound, provides the cure for all our economic ills.

My hon. Friend asked about the future. I believe that we must reject the idea from the plebs of Southend and the nobility of Chingford that we can stop the world and get off, that we can henceforth act in splendid isolation from our European partners, ignore the decisions of the Bundesbank and prepare once again to fight the Germans on the beaches and on the landing grounds. Such Europhobic fantasies are, as the Italian Prime Minister said when rebuking our Chancellor and Prime Minister, for five-year-olds only. Certainly, only a five-year-old could have advanced the idea a fortnight before Armageddon that Britain would have the strongest currency in Europe.

I do not believe that the Government intend to rejoin the ERM this year, next year or the year after that. The Government do not have the slightest intention, whatever happens to the Maastricht Bill, of accepting the main thrust of the treaty. We are about to witness one of the greatest exercises in political hypocrisy ever seen in Britain. Ministers will talk good about Europe, but, in practice and behind the scenes, they will slowly try to unravel the progress made in the past two years. The Government are

[Mr. Sedgemore]

about to betray Europe, and 'twas ever thus. I imagine that Foreign Office officials are competent enough to carry out that policy as they have been doing for the past 200 years.

The Government have cast aside the ERM and are casting around for old and new fly-by-the-seat-of-the-pants monetarist signals: M0, M1, M2, M3, M4, M5, DCE, house prices, asset prices, PSL1, PSL2 and God knows what other bogus indicators. One might as well try to control the economy by tracking the prices of second-hand lavatory seats. Last week our economy was under the control of financial speculators; this week it is back in the hands of Thatcherite quacks.

At present, the only sensible option open to the Government is to go for a system of managed exchange rates. In the medium term, a new exchange rate system for the Community would involve three substantial changes from the ERM and two changes in Britain's domestic policy. At EC level, three changes are necessary. First, a semi-fixed system of exchange rates cannot be operated as if it were a fixed system. The flexible operation of any system has to allow for devaluations. Secondly, as the Chairman of the Treasury Select Committee said, currency realignments should be more symmetrical. Strong currencies have to be prepared to appreciate just as weak currencies have to be prepared to devalue.

Thirdly, we must create within the international monetary system weapons to enable Governments to take on the speculators. I know that people sneer, but I see no way to achieve that without some new form of exchange controls. We should do what we did when we last introduced exchange controls: send a little man from the Bank of England away for a fortnight and tell him to come back with a new scheme. I am sure that it can be done.

Two changes are required in domestic policy. First, we need to place more reliance on fiscal policy rather than on allowing interest rates to take all the strain. Secondly, domestic credit expansion should be controlled by administrative and other direct interventionist measures, as well as by interest rates.

The ultimate goal should still be the creation of a single European currency. I suspect that Germany, France and a few other countries would go ahead, leaving Britain behind. I suspect that Britain will have to pay both the political and economic price of last week's catastrophe for a long time to come. Let no one forget that that price has been brought to bear through the mistakes of the very political establishment that says that it supports European integration.

Yesterday, the Shadow Cabinet redeemed themselves by backing the idea of a single European currency and warning against the dangers of a referendum. The Government have done nothing to redeem themselves, and I shall happily vote against them in the Lobby tonight.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind hon. Members of the 10-minute rule between 6 o'clock and 8 o'clock.

6 pm

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): I know that the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) will forgive me if I do not follow him, because of the shortage of time.

I thought that the speech by the Leader of the Opposition was brilliant—for a Leader of the Opposition—but it masked the fact that for the past two years his policy has been to shadow the deutschmark at a rate of DM2·95, which has also been the policy of the Liberal party and has certainly been the policy of my right hon. Friends. Now that that policy has come unstuck, a great howl of triumph has emerged from critics of the exchange rate mechanism, who say that one cannot buck the market.

It is worth examining what they mean. Saying that one cannot buck the market is not in itself an economic policy; they really mean that we should return to the days when we tried to run monetary policy by watching carefully the course of M3, M0 and M4—and all those other forms of enjoyment—which caused such great difficulty. That policy was not effective, and because of what was then called the benign neglect of where our currency stood, the pound has fallen. Whenever it has fallen, higher inflation has followed after a suitable lag.

It is not surprising that that is the case, because overseas holders of sterling recognise that the pound is not going to remain strong, and demand an ever higher interest rate for keeping their money in sterling. During the time that the pound floated freely, that has been very damaging.

Many people now think that it is fashionable to have a floating pound. I must remind the House of the time when we had a fixed rate, with the Bretton Woods agreement. At that time—in 1963—there were $2·80 and more than DM11 to the pound. Short-term money rates were 2 per cent. and the Government could borrow for 20 years ahead at 5·3 per cent. That is so far beyond the bounds of possibility now that no one can believe it. Yet it was achieved by a fixed exchange rate system with the US dollar.

The thrust of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's policy to have a fixed exchange rate within the ERM was absolutely correct from that point of view. It was successful in reducing interest rates from 15 to 10 per cent. and markedly successful in reducing the rate of inflation to its present rate. I was a keen advocate of monetary policy and control many years ago, but I have to admit that it was a failure. For that reason, Baroness Thatcher brought us into the ERM. So sure was she that that was a good step, and as a mark of confidence in the pound, on joining we reduced interest rates by 1 per cent. At that time, there was no talk of bucking the markets.

When we joined the ERM, we thought that we were joining a currency—the deutschmark—which would exhibit its sober and exemplary record of low inflation and low interest rates. No one imagined that the Federal German Government would have an enormous row with the Bundesbank about the cost of East Germany, that the Government would refuse to raise taxes as they should have done, and that the Bundesbank would raise interest rates instead. That has produced a strain on Europe which has been difficult for other currencies, including our own.

I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor did his best, and I do not believe that he is to be blamed in any way for the holocaust which has swept over the lira, the franc and the peseta, as well as sterling.

The important question now is what is to be done. Some of my right hon. and hon. Friends seem to think that we can reduce interest rates to 5 or 6 per cent. right away, and bother the pound. I read that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor was said to be cheerful after devaluation and even went so far as to sing in his bath. I regard any cheerful

Chancellor with the greatest possible suspicion. I remember that Lord Barber was about the most cheerful person that one could ever hope to meet—look what happened to him.. Denis Healey once won a prize in Germany for comedian of the year. Of course, that says more about the Germans than it does about Denis Healey. When I see a Chancellor looking happy and content, I am very cautious.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will take to heart his admirable speech to the European Forum in July, and will be very chary about reducing interest rates. There is no room for any further reduction at the moment. I say that because our monetary policy was tried for an extensive period. People say that we failed to apply it properly and that we should have done it in 1988, instead of reducing interest rates to 7·5 per cent. in that year. It is interesting to note that that year interest rates were quickly increased, to 12 per cent. in August, and by November they were at 13 per cent. The take-off in bank lending did not occur until the following year. It is extraordinarily difficult to run our economy and to control inflation, quite apart from the difficulty of monetary targets. There is a delayed effect and there is also the difficulty of having an impact on the spending public once they have got it into their minds that spending is the thing to do.

I commend my right hon. Friend's remarks to the European Forum. I have taken them to heart and I trust that he will also do so. All that throws considerable doubt on the single currency. That doubt is properly shared by the Government and that is why we have the opt-out. That is a sensible thing to do. If a single currency is to be gained by the terms and conditions set out in the Maastricht treaty, there is no possibility that a single currency will be reached, because all the countries are way above the 3 per cent. limit for deficit for gross domestic product, including Germany. Germany's deficit is rising faster than that of any other country.

Surely we wish to broaden the boundaries of Europe and to take in the countries of eastern Europe as well. I do not see how we can do so with the strict conditions that exist for the single currency. I should prefer to proceed with broadening the bounds of Europe than with achieving a single currency, which would put an impossible straitjacket on any natural development of the European Community. Our posture on the single currency —the opt-in and opt-out arrangements, if we should wish to do so—is entirely right.

The truth is that we cannot isolate ourselves from world markets. We have to have regard to the value of our currency. We cannot afford to let sterling fall too far without causing damaging inflation and job losses. I hope that we may ultimately rejoin the ERM, once the Germans have sorted themselves out and reduced their interest rates. I do not say that with any particular enthusiasm for Europe, but simply as the best long-term method of dealing with inflation and with more than inflation.

It is nearly 30 years since inflation was consistently under control. A whole generation has grown up knowing and expecting nothing else. Property empires and service industries have been built up expecting nothing but inflation. We read about upwards-only rent reviews. What has that done to manufacturing industry, which depends upon stable prices for investment, stock and work in progress?

In the past two years, inflation has been brought right down. Of course there is still some way to go, but for the first time in many years business has had to win new orders by reducing prices and offering better services, not simply by offering more floor space to satisfy swollen spending. That has been a sea change over many years. After all the hardship of the past two years, it would be criminal folly to allow prices to rise again.

That is the key to a successful economic policy, and I trust that we shall stick to it.

6.10 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): When Charles Haughey, as Prime Minister of the Irish Republic, was confronted by a series of crises, he always described them as grotesque, unbelievable, bizarre and unprecedented. A much more acute mind than mine immediately shortened that description to "GUBU". If that word had found its way into the dictionary, it would have been much over-used last Wednesday, because it is so descriptive, and fits perfectly what was happening in the markets to the Government's whole economic strategy.

We did not simply wake up last Wednesday to find that that situation had been created overnight. Its genesis lay some time in the past, when the Government decided to grant control of United Kingdom's economic life to hands that were not British, and were not responsible to the British people. They did that by fixing the value of the pound in relation to other currencies.

When the Prime Minister ascended the steps of the throne left vacant by his predecessor's departure, those steps were heavily stained with her political blood. Her political assassination and replacement represented more than a change of personalities. They were the outward sign of the triumph of a different policy within the Conservative party.

So far as anyone outside the Conservative party can judge, the previous Prime Minister viewed the concept of monetary union and its inevitable consequence—a federal European super-state—with some misgiving. It was interesting that her predecessor, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), said today that he believed a single currency to be the natural outcome of the road upon which Europe has set out. That was not clearly said before 1972, and even today it is rarely said by people who are in favour of the economic Community. It is said only by those such as myself who are against the concept.

I wished to ask the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) a question during his speech, but he did not give way to me. If the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, a former Prime Minister, were still here I should ask him the same question. When a single European currency comes into existence, will it float, or will it be fixed to some other currency? I believe that it will float. I do not see how it could operate otherwise. People are really saying that, if an economy is big enough, its currency can float. I do not accept that that idea is necessarily tied to large economies; it is tied essentially to successful economies. In so far as the market value of the currency is a measure of how that economy is doing, we should accept that. Whoever succeeded Margaret Thatcher as the leader of the Conservative party would have been the prisoner of those who brought her down, and would have had to tread a path different from hers. Over the past few years, that is what has happened.

The policy of the Ulster Unionist party on such matters is clear, and was set out in our manifesto. We had hoped

[Mr. William Ross]

that that manifesto would be widely read, but it appears to have escaped the eyes of some—certainly those of the Prime Minister. Whenever the right hon. Gentleman referred to people who agreed with the Government's policy he described them as "the Opposition parties", and said that they all supported the same thing. However, the Unionist manifesto said:

> "Two distinct strands of Treasury affairs have to be recognised and addressed. In the first place, the whole question of control of national finances is central to the exercise of power because without such control no Government can be master in its own house. Ulster Unionists are, therefore, opposed to the concept of European monetary union and a single currency since the inevitable consequence would be the transfer of this most fundamental power of government from the elected representatives of the people of the United Kingdom to an unelected body which cannot be dismissed from office by United Kingdom electors.
>
> For the same reason, we oppose the creation of an independent central bank. National Governments should have the courage to exercise responsibly the power conferred by the electorate. Ulster Unionists are committed to the concept of a balanced budget and, in the long term, to the reduction of the national debt."

I believe that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will agree that that is not the policy which the Prime Minister suggested had been pursued by all the Opposition parties. We certainly did not and do not accept that it is.

Because that was our policy, I asked the Chancellor after his autumn statement last year whether the increases in public expenditure that he had signalled foreshadowed an abandonment by the Government of the concept of a balanced budget. He replied that he intended to balance the budget over the cycle. I have heard a lot of elaboration on that theme, but I must say that it still does not mean very much without such elaboration. The reality was that, with a fixed exchange rate, the Chancellor's room for manoeuvre was severely restricted. He was back in the position of every Finance Minister who has to wrestle with the attempt to hold a fixed value for a currency which is constantly changing under market pressures.

One more burden that has to be borne by politicians in such a position is that they have to be economical with the truth in any public statements that they make on the subject. They cannot be as open, frank and truthful about the economy and the real value of the currency as they would wish. Like Mr. Helmut Schlesinger, they make comments for public consumption and discuss the truth in private. The Government—any Government, but especially the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer—have to defend their stated position to the last ditch before they change. If they did not fully understand that before, I am sure that the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer now have burnt into their brains that simple truism: "You can't buck the market." The market value of the currency reflects the performance of the whole economy of the nation.

It is strange to me, and to any objective observer, that the party that worships at the altar of the market in relation to every other commodity, whether labour costs, the price of turnips or the price of energy, had to spend £10 billion during the ignominious escapade last Wednesday before finally capitulating to the very market forces that they so respect and applaud in every other sphere. Our Government paid out £10 billion, and the Germans paid out a lot of deutschmarks for pounds that are now worth much less than what was paid for them.

Her Majesty's Opposition and the Liberal Democrats are equally loud in condemnation of the Government. The Ulster Unionists have scant regard for their censure. For years those parties have been demanding that the Government go faster down the slippery slope on which they had already set out.

The world did not end because of the events of the past two weeks, and it will not end. Both the Government and the Opposition are now scrabbling around looking for new policies. The Labour party has apparently gone for "floating and flexible". To me that means that, instead of holding on until the last ditch one goes down the steps as soon as one possibly can. If it does not mean that, no doubt we shall be told what it does mean. I should like to know, because that seems to be the only way in which it can work. A currency either floats and reflects its true value in the market or it drops in large and small steps. Those are the only ways in which the system can operate.

The Government are returning to limits on spending. However, if they have learnt anything from the past two years they will not be regarded as having taken the nation through a defeat. They can accept it as a golden opportunity. Recent events have returned to this Parliament the fundamental power of financial control which was so foolishly and tamely handed away, at a high cost to individuals in this country in terms of homes, jobs and businesses.

There will of course be an autumn statement this year. This time the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister will be free agents as they have never been within the confines of the ERM. They can do something about interest rates—but not too much, because the productive capacity of the nation has been so reduced that we could not produce the goods which a relaxation of monetary policy would allow to be purchased. More imports would be sucked in.

The Government can do something about the projected public service borrowing requirement—but not too much about that either in the short term, because the framework has already been set for next year. I know that the Government will not call that autumn statement a Budget, but the reality is that there will be an autumn Budget, and it will be a long time before we are back in the ERM.

6.19 pm

Mr. Kenneth Baker (Mole Valley): Some time ago the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), in an illuminating aside, said that there was too much passion in exchange rates, and I would agree with him. People invest into exchange rate systems a degree of intensity and passion which is not needed. One should address the problems of exchange rates drained of passion, with a cool realism, and see what is in the best interests of one's country. That is really the job of the Chancellor of the Exchequer whom I therefore congratulate on withdrawing sterling from the ERM last Wednesday. *[Interruption.]* My right hon. Friend needs a few congratulations. There have not been too many winging around in the course of the past few days.

My right hon. Friend also knows clearly the reservations that I have always had about the strength of fixed parity systems. I expressed them to him when I was in Government and after I left the Government. The advantages of fixed parity systems have been exaggerated this century. One has only to consider the trouble that this country got into by being fixed to the gold standard in the 1920s. That led us into the slump and the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Winston Churchill, described that experience in a memorable phrase when he said:

> "I wish that finance had not been so proud."

In addition, the fixed rate system of Bretton Woods came to an end in the 1960s and collapsed in 1971 when my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) was Prime Minister and we welcomed that.

The advantages of the ERM have been exaggerated and they have been made more difficult for our country by the fact that the German economic cycle has not been in tune with the British economic cycle, and vice versa, for about four years. When we shadowed the deutschmark we had in effect to reduce interest rates at a time when we should have been increasing them. In 1990 we entered the system which I argued against at the time but I did not win the argument. We entered at a time which was historically difficult because Chancellor Kohl had made a political, not an economic, decision to pay for the reunification of Germany, not through the German taxpayer but by borrowing. The inevitable consequence of that was higher interest rates just at the time when Europe and Britain needed lower interest rates.

One cannot blame Mr. Schlesinger or the Bundesbank. Their job is to be concerned with the German money supply. They cannot be concerned with jobs in Yorkshire, Surrey or London. Mr. Schlesinger took action to control the German money supply and figures yesterday show that he was probably wise to do so since the German money supply is now increasing and it increases for every franc that is bought.

I hope therefore that the search for a replacement of the ERM will not be too vigorous. I notice that the Prime Minister said that we cannot readily return because there are fault lines. The thing about fault lines is that they are there from the beginning and they are there after the end. The only thing that one can do about fault lines, as any geologist knows, is to wait for an eruption of the earth's surface and then they will be corrected. The search for a system of managed exchange rates is difficult. Such a system is likely to be inherently unstable. The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) put his finger on that, as did other hon. Members. If one wants a stable system one is driven to a single currency, a single monetary policy, a single bank, a single fiscal policy, a single Budget and a single Government. I for one would not want Britain to go down that route.

I hope that on the minutes detailing conditions for re-entry into the ERM which I am sure are winging their way up to the Chancellor from the officials of the Treasury the Chancellor will scribble Kipling's comment:

> "Only the burnt fool's bandaged finger goes wobbling back to the fire."

This debate has been something of a search for people to put in the pillory—the Chancellor or the Prime Minister. Sir Terry Burns has also been mentioned. I have little sympathy for him because one does not have to be in Government for long to know that the economic pundits and the mandarins of the Treasury are held in high esteem in Whitehall, not least by themselves. Their advice has been not marginally wrong but comprehensively wrong. They have also failed to forecast the extent and depth of the recession. The Treasury forecast in the future will be given the validity that is accorded to a horoscope. The great Treasury forecasting computer has no more validity than the crystal ball and the gipsy's tent.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will follow the path that he has already mapped out. I welcome the reduction in interest rates. I heard what my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) said. We must not abandon an anti-inflation policy. That is important. Floating should not be inflating. I accept that. But in my judgment, with the money supply growth in Britain virtually negative at the moment, there will be scope for further cuts in interest rates. That is certainly what British business needs and it is certainly what British homeowners need. My right hon. Friend now has scope to do that. Therefore, I welcome the road that I think that he will be treading.

It seems irrefutable that last week tore a gaping hole in the Maastricht treaty. The centre of that treaty is economic and monetary union. Clearly, there are hon. Members on both sides of the House who want that to come about. I do not believe that that accords with the real interests of our country. The Danish and French referenda have shown vividly in the past six months that there is a movement across Europe which is not anti-Europe but anti-bureaucratic and against a centralised and bossy Europe. That is what I believe the no votes in France and Denmark were saying and what many people in Britain feel.

The Danes have given us an opportunity to think again about the next step forward. Clearly, there will be significant changes to accommodate the Danes. We heard today from the Prime Minister that we will want to know what those changes are. The House will want to debate those changes. It may well be that we will want some of those changes for our country as well. Why should there be changes for just one country in a Community of Twelve? We shall want to examine that carefully.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that one of the changes likely to be proposed by the Danes, which was not mentioned by our right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), concerns nationality because the Maastricht treaty contains a provision that anyone who is a national of any of the 12 member states thereby becomes a citizen of the European Union? There is a rising tide in Denmark to be exempted from that, perhaps by way of a protocol.

Mr. Baker: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. That is an important matter; but much more important is what is described by that rather ghastly word subsidiarity. The paragraph in the treaty dealing with that is vague and meaningless, and to the extent that it is interpreted it will be interpreted by the court which is obliged to make decisions in favour of European integration. Therefore, one needs to know exactly what that means. Subsidiarity is not the Commissioners saying what they will leave to us but what we as nation states are prepared to allow the Commissioners to do on our behalf. This centres upon the Commission. The Commission is too powerful.

It is interesting how quiet the Commissioners were in the run-up to the French referendum. They were overcome with modesty. They had no ambitions. But as soon as the referendum was over Commissioner Bangemann went on television and, misquoting Nelson, said,

> "Now is the time for you in Britain to do your duty."

[Mr. Baker]

He has learnt a little of our history, but we do not need lectures from Mr. Bangemann. He is a federalist. He has admitted that he wants a united government of Europe with him in a prominent position in it. When I was Home Secretary he was the Commissioner who led the campaign against Britain retaining its own immigration controls. Therefore, in the re-examination of Maastricht, we shall have to address the powers of the Commission, and that will be important.

I am clear that Britain will be inextricably linked with Europe in the future as it has been in the past, but Britain's future in Europe is not that envisaged by the Euro-fanatics. I want to see a wider and looser Europe. I want to see a Europe which draws its vitality and strength from the nation states because that will provide the growth and vitality of Europe in the course of the next 10, 20 or 30 years. I want to see Europe not at any price but at the right price. Above all, I do not want a united states of Europe but a united Europe of states.

6.29 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): On 18 August, I wrote to Madam Speaker asking for Parliament to be recalled. I must tell the House that this has been a totally unrealistic debate. Why did people want Parliament recalled? I will give three examples. One man telephoned me and said, "I am going to be evicted on 5 September. I have a mortgage and I owe £700 to a finance company. I am paying it off at £120 a month, but I am still to be evicted." I was unsuccessful in getting that action stopped. Am I to tell that constituent that we are squeezing inflation out of the system?

When I was first elected, 25 per cent. of the employment available in Chesterfield was provided by the coal industry. Soon there will not be a pit left. Am I to tell them in Markham, "We are shadowing the deutschmark"? I met an unemployed building worker who is also homeless. What was I to say to him, "We are managing our currency"?

Today, the House has failed to speak for the people that it represents. It has held a second-class, management seminar, addressed by a lot of people who would not even qualify to appear on "Newsnight".

I will not make a political speech, but my own opinion is that this country's problems will be solved in Britain, by us—and only when we have solved them will we be able to have satisfactory relations with other countries. If we want an industry, we must see to it that there is an industry. We do not leave the police, Army and hospitals to market forces; we decide to have them. Agriculture has been sustained that way. No economic magic—devaluation, floating pound, exchange rate mechanism or independent central bank—will guarantee that Britain retains and expands its industrial base.

The real cause of the problem stretches across the House. In the 1980s, most, if not all, of us were persuaded that market forces would provide a prosperous economy. They do not, because one cannot close down Rolls-Royce today and open it tomorrow, any more than one can close down a farm today and reopen it tomorrow. That is the only controversial point that I will make.

This is not an economic debate but a political debate. Longer ago than the 1980s every party—my own was equally involved—reached the conclusion that, because world capital was so powerful, the country must integrate itself deeper and deeper into a structure in Europe, where power was to be moved from the electors of the Parliaments to the European Commissioners and to a Council of Ministers, which makes laws in secret. It must be the only Parliament in the world that meets in secret. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) asked why the Council of Ministers should meet in public, as though it were a Cabinet—but it is a parliament.

We are rapidly moving towards full European union. I do not use the word "Maastricht" any more, because it does not mean anything to a pensioner who cannot manage on his money. If we ask, "Do you want this country absorbed into a full European union?" people know exactly what we are saying. A referendum does not mean much to people. But if we ask, "Do you think that you have the right to decide before this country is put into a full European union?" the public understand. Let us not use terms such as Maastricht, referendum, or managed exchange rates—let us call a spade a spade. The people have the right to decide the future of this country.

The treaty that was meant to unite Europe has divided every nation, every party in Europe and every party in the House. I have never known anything more divisive. I will not mention the treaty's name because I do not believe in it, any more than I believe in talking about Thatcherism. I can only say that I only represent Chesterfield and Denmark tonight, so I have a bigger constituency. I also represent half of France, so I cannot be described as holding isolated views, or be called a typical little Englander when the Danes agree with me.

To talk of being pro-Europe or anti-Europe is a plain lie. We were born Europeans and will die Europeans. It is a matter of geography. The question is what sort of Europe it will be. Am I anti-British because I do not like the Prime Minister or his policies? Of course not. Is one anti-American because one does not believe that they should have done this or that in Panama? We are discussing our own future and that of Europe. I introduced the Commonwealth of Europe Bill, and when the Maastricht treaty—there, I have said it now—dies, I believe that that Bill will acquire greater relevance.

There are some honest differences. I respect the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup for being a committed, passionate federalist. He does not think that the British people have any right to comment on this country's future. One hears talk about the peasants in France. On the BBC the other day, one commentator said, "It has become clear from our analysis that it was the poor and uneducated who voted 'no' in the French referendum." That is only half a minute away from taking the vote from people who are poor and uneducated. I believe that the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup would be happy to return to 1832—he has a slight 18th century flavour about him anyway.

There are some federalists in my own party, though they are a little more discreet. They talk about pooling our sovereignty. They do not want to pool their sovereignty with the British electorate, but they are happy to pool it with the Commission. There are also the nationalists. I am not one of them. I would rather die than go on a platform with Mrs. Thatcher, because the woman who abolished the Greater London council is not for me the best advocate for greater devolution of power. Do not ask me to go along with a woman who thinks that foreigners start at Dover and that some of them have got to Wolverhampton. That is not my idea of Europe. I am a democrat, not a nationalist.

There is the question whether the people had any choice. My right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), the Prime Minister, and the leader of the Liberal Democrats completely agree on this unmentionable treaty. I know from experience that when people really agree with one another, the level of abuse rises to a huge height to conceal the agreement that everyone knows exists. I have seen that happen time and again. The electorate were given no choice. They were told that the treaty would be agreed through parliamentary democracy. We have all been here a year or two and know that the vote on the treaty will be decided by two Johns. Party discipline determines our vote. The BBC asked me today, "Why are all the opponents of the treaty on the Back Benches?" The reason is that if one is on the Front Bench and opposes it, one ends up on the Back Benches—and if one is already on them, one never gets to be a member of the Front Bench.

I have no confidence that the House will reach a decision on the basis of the merits of the treaty. Party loyalty is very strong. I am a good party man in matters of current policy, but do not tell me that the rights of the British people can be handed away on the pretence of parliamentary democracy, when that is done under the discipline of the Whips.

Tomorrow, I am launching a national petition, like the chartists did, because I have no confidence in the House being allowed to reach the judgment in which it believes. If right hon. and hon. Members believed in their decision, that would be one thing. My petition ends with a prayer that the House will ensure that

> "before the Maastricht Treaty, or any modification or amendment of it, is approved by Parliament, or ratified by Her Majesty's Government, the Citizens of the United Kingdom shall be given the right to vote for or against that Treaty in a National Referendum, and that the decision reached in that Referendum be accepted as binding upon the Government and Parliament."

I will also present a Bill tomorrow—the Treaty of Maastricht (Referendum) Bill. The long title states that it is a Bill to provide

> "for the holding of a national referendum, and for the procedure for the subsequent decision of the House of Commons, on the question of British ratification of the Treaty of Maastricht before Her Majesty's Government may lawfully adhere to the Treaty on behalf of the (United Kingdom"—

and so on. That is all that I can do. Anyone who is listening to this debate or watching it on television will not have any confidence in the House to decide those matters. If there is an outside campaign for a referendum it will sweep the country. It was not for nothing that the chartists and suffragettes struggled for the vote. They did not do that so that the vote could be taken away because business managers and Eurocrats feel that they know better than we do. That is trying to reverse the gain of those who campaigned for the suffrage, and that will not work. I warn the House that if it tries, the next thing that will be undermined will be not the currency but the reputation of this Chamber in which we were all elected to serve.

6.39 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): After that non-controversial but very enjoyable speech by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), I want to tell my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister how greatly I welcomed his statement, which confirmed his plan to hold a special European Council on 16 October and to have a profound look at the position in Europe after the French referendum and various other developments.

I understand that the agenda for the conference has three main parts. The first is that there is an obvious need to sort out what, if anything, will bring the Danes back on board. They are signatories to the Maastricht treaty, which cannot live again unless they are persuaded to vote for it—which is entirely a matter for them. The second part of the agenda involves reconsideration of the systems for monetary co-operation in Europe. They have broken down and clearly need reforming.

The third and, perhaps, the most significant part of the agenda is to consider the growth of public concern in Europe since the signing of the treaty and the dramatic events of recent times. We need to examine the whole development of Europe and the fundamental worry whether it is a process of ever-accumulating power at the centre or, as my right hon. Friend rightly said this afternoon it should be, a settled arrangement and a settled sharing of powers between the ancient nation states and the Community institutions.

I shall comment briefly on each of those agenda points. First, what, if anything, will persuade Denmark to support the treaty? None of us yet knows the answer to that, because the Danes have not agreed it among themselves. They are talking about a variety of devices and it will be interesting to see whether they open up the treaty. They are talking about binding supplements, new protocols and other additions to it. It is inevitable that that will have to come before the House. We must wait to discover what comes out of the special European Council, but that matter must be examined. It is clear that some quite fundamental questions have already been raised by the Danes.

Secondly, on monetary co-operation, it is clear that the over-rigid version of the ERM was brittle. However, we must remember that that rigidity was created not by the founding fathers of the European monetary system, but by those who came along in the mid-1980s and said, "This is not enough. We must make it a stepping stone to a full single currency and single monetary union." Those people injected the rigidity into the system, which made it much too brittle and unable to sustain shocks, such as the excessive fall in the dollar and rise in the deutschmark, the cost of unification and a few indiscreet remarks from the Bundesbank. The system blew up. We cannot re-enter it and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is right to urge that we think again. It is no good the great policy authorities of Bonn and Paris saying, "It is good; it continues." It is a fundamentally weakened system and we must not rejoin it.

There are those who say, "Let the pound float." As my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) said, we must be careful that floating does not become inflating. It may feel good now because it is the fashion. The economists are switched on to the fashion of floating. They are great lemmings when it comes to fashion. When the chill wind blows, they will wish that there was some sort of ordered system, some sort of harness of co-operation across international currencies. That time will come, as sure as night follows day, and then we will need to think about what sort of co-operation we want. In the meantime, and even when we do have some new system, our monetary and fiscal policies must be very

[Mr. David Howell]

tough. Indeed, our monetary policy must have a toughness and quality which, under the present arrangements in this country, we cannot provide.

I have one point of agreement—although I am afraid it is the only one—with the rather prolix speech of the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), which is that we need to depoliticise some parts of our monetary policy and so enable them to be run in ways that place emphasis on the monetary factors that concern bankers. The Opposition will cry, "That makes them unaccountable", but too much politics in monetary policy makes it unworkable. If we want a strong pound in any future sort of international system we will have to revise our monetary structures. That day will come. The pure floaters may feel happy and ring bells now, but they may wring their hands later.

Finally, let us consider my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's fascinating suggestion that we take account of the vast change of mood throughout Europe, not just in this country and in Denmark, but in France, Germany and elsewhere. After the dramas of recent days, my right hon. Friend has set out a new agenda that will carry forward my idea of the European dream, which is not the same as some of the ideas held in Bonn, Paris and Brussels. I urge my right hon. Friend not to be diverted or deflected—and I do not think that he will be—by the flat assertions of Bonn and Paris that we must carry on as before, slap through the Maastricht treaty, go back to the ERM and keep on with the steamroller, the process, the train or whatever. I do not believe that that is the voice of Europe or the line that is good for this country. My right hon. Friend is right to argue for a third way and a new agenda for building the sort of Europe that fits the 21st century and the post-cold war era.

People talk of a two-speed Europe, but it is much exaggerated. There is no guarantee that the deutschmark will always remain the strongest currency. Perhaps for the time being it will and perhaps there will be a zone, but it will not be a Community zone—it will be one of Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, Holland and, perhaps, France on high days and holidays, together with Germany and the deutschmark. That may not last. The franc has problems, as has the German political system. The speed may alter and the runners may not stay the same distance apart. We should not assume that everything will fall into a two-speed Europe.

There is an unfinished European agenda that Maastricht does not address. In pointing out the issues that must be profoundly reconsidered post-referendum, my right hon. Friend is creating opportunities—out of what admittedly is a crisis—and giving a lead in what good Europeans should be doing. The unravelling of the whole of European co-operation would be a disaster, but, as others have said, the attempt to solidify the whole of European co-operation into an over-centralised and over-rigid united states of Europe, failing to take account of the diversity of the nation states, would be an even greater disaster. Even now, that has caused much difficulty that good Europeans, including my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, must reject. We must move on to a recovery that is in the right direction for Europe.

6.47 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): The whole House recognises that the Government have suffered a humiliating reversal. They were forced out of the ERM when they said that it was the cornerstone of their policy. Having said that they would never devalue, they have allowed the pound to depreciate by 13 per cent. against the former central rate of the deutschmark. In short, their economic policy is in tatters. Indeed, it was difficult to discover in the Prime Minister's speech whether the Government really have any economic policy. Let us consider the contradictions in what the Government are doing and saying. Having committed themselves to the ERM, they suddenly rediscovered the merits of floating the pound. Having supported the idea of currency stability as the main counter-inflationary discipline, they are now trying to resurrect the old monetary targets—the M-this, the M-that and the M-other. Those are the targets that failed so miserably in the 1980s. So confident are the Government about these targets that they do not propose to tell the world what their tough monetary targets really are. That shows the confusion that they are in.

As for interest rates, a number of hon. Members have asked whether the Government really believe that they can get interest rates down very much further and faster without, at the same time, creating a massive depreciation of the currency, with all the inflationary consequences that that may have. Above all, what is the Government's policy for getting Britain out of recession? The Government have been telling us for more than two years either that we are not in recession or that we are coming out of recession, but we are still in recession. What is the Government's policy for getting Britain out of recession? We did not hear a word about that this afternoon, but that is what my constituents want to know about. They want to know how the Government are going to improve the underlying strength of the economy.

The truth is that the Government are running around the ruins of their policy like headless chickens, not knowing what to do. Their humiliation is made even worse by the fact that their policy defeat, as they know very well in their own minds, is largely of their own making. The most junior speculator in the City knows that the main reason that Britain was forced to devalue and leave the exchange rate mechanism was the weakness of our economy. It is as simple as that.

To continue the chicken metaphor and to quote my right hon. Friend Lord Callaghan, the sky is dark with chickens coming home to roost. The seeds of last week's disaster go back to the policy failures of the 1980s. I remind the House of the record: of the unsustainable Lawson boom that led to the build-up of debt and the property bubble. That was followed by the clobbering of the economy by high interest rates, two years before we even went into the exchange rate mechanism. I believe that it was those high interest rates that were mainly responsible for the collapse of the housing market, the recession, the closing of factories and the rising unemployment.

Finally, when we did join the ERM, as many of us had urged, we joined in the wrong circumstances. As a Back Bencher I said on 15 October 1990 in the House that the Government's decision to join was taken at the wrong time, for the wrong reasons and at the wrong rate. I have been much quoted, but nobody has attributed the quotation to me. That is why I quote myself this evening. It is one thing for a Back Bencher to go around saying that kind of thing, but it is much more difficult for those who sit on the Opposition Front Bench to do that. If they had argued for devaluation, as a few of my hon. Friends have suggested, the Government would have been blaming us for the devaluation, instead of blaming the Bundesbank, as they now are. I think, therefore, that my right hon. and hon. Friends were very wise in the position they have taken.

Once we were inside the ERM, the Government failed to take the appropriate measures to strengthen the economy: measures to restore consumer confidence, measures to tackle unemployment and measures to improve our industrial efficiency. That is why we are still such a weak economy and so easy to speculate against. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) said, in a most brilliant and devastating speech—we know that it was devastating because no one on the Conservative Benches dared to intervene—the Government showed that they were incompetent even to defend the pound. These people, who are meant to be the masters of our economy, to know how to manage the economy and to understand the markets, did not understand the markets. They failed to defend the pound and we were forced out of the ERM, instead of securing, as would have been far preferable, a managed devaluation inside the ERM.

This week we have heard the Government blame the ERM for what has happened, we have heard a lot this afternoon about the fault lines within the ERM, but this was the ERM which, according to the Government during the election campaign, helped to bring down inflation from over 10 per cent. to under 4 per cent. For a number of years —and for the United Kingdom over the last two years —the ERM has provided much greater currency stability. It has enabled us to bring down interest rates far faster inside the ERM than outside it—at least, until a year ago. Now, all these "floaters" have suddenly emerged, but less us not forget that floating the pound in the 1980s led to wild swings in the currency that were totally unrelated to any underlying competitiveness. It was in those conditions that industry found that it was so very difficult to plan ahead. That is why industry was in favour of Britain's joining the ERM. That is the case for the exchange rate mechanism and for British membership of it. That case still remains.

Of course the ERM has been subject to strains, particularly in the run-up to the French referendum, and of course there is the problem that over the last year German interest rates, for very understandable domestic reasons, have been much higher than is justified by the general economic conditions in the other economies of the European Community. There is also a more general difficulty—people have a point when they raise it—that a system that was originally designed to be fixed but flexible has become more inflexible over the last two or three years, partly because of the desire to move towards a single currency.

But whatever the current strains and whatever the prospects for a single currency, which I certainly still support, the economies of the European Community, particularly the deutschmark bloc and France, are now so interdependent that European decision-makers will want to maintain some kind of fixed currency arrangement. That is the reality, whether we like it or not. Those economies have had far too much experience of the shortcomings of floating currency regimes not to keep on with some kind of ERM. That makes it all the more essential that we should at least keep open the strong option of returning to the ERM as soon as possible, but this time at a more defensible rate.

Instead, the Chancellor gives the impression that to return to the ERM is the last thing he wants to do. According to him, we are going to run a purely British economic policy. That is quite apart from the incredibility of the Chancellor running anything at all, after what has happened during the last two weeks. The rhetoric, which is all very splendid and obviously designed to encourage the Thatcherites inside his party and to strengthen his own position, ignores the fact that we live in a world in which $800 billion are traded on the currency markets every day. It also ignores the fact that our economy is closely linked to other European economies, that two thirds of our trade is now with the continent of Europe and that our main trading partner now is Germany. Therefore, we cannot divorce ourselves from the continent, whether we like it or not. Whether we are inside or outside the ERM, we are closely affected by what happens on the continent of Europe, particularly by what happens in Germany.

It is a question not only of keeping open the option of going back into the ERM but also of being positively involved in the European Community, which brings me finally to the Maastricht process. I have no fear of supporting the Maastricht treaty because I think that it is a good treaty.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order.

6.57 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): The former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), said today that politicians should be out in the country explaining things to the people. I think that the people want to ask the politicians what is happening. The treaty of Rome stated clearly that it could not be by passed or changed without all member states being unanimous. Then there was the ratification of Maastricht. Certain countries ratified it in their Parliaments. Others had to hold a referendum. Denmark said no. The strange thing is that we were told that if France said no the treaty was dead, but if certain other countries say no the treaty is, evidently, very much alive.

I was in the House when my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) asked the Prime Minister whether he was going to put pressure on Denmark. He said certainly not, but it seems now that the whole of Europe is engaged in putting pressure on those who democratically exercised their right to say no. If they were keeping their own laws, we would not have the controversy that we now have. There is a three-tier system. Some hon. Members say that Germany will go it alone, but if Germany or France or any other member state in the EC is a good member, it will stay and seek to persuade people to take the democratic way.

People ask, "Why are we always told by politicians that Europe is the answer to everything?" When he campaigned in the EC referendum in the United Kingdom the then Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, said that unemployment problems would be solved when we entered Europe. Can any hon. Member say that they have been solved? The right hon. Member for

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

Old Bexley and Sidcup crusaded for a Europe that is entirely different from the Europe of today. One would not recognise the Europe presented in that referendum.

The right hon. Gentleman said that the people know nothing about it and he made some disparaging remarks about the peasantry of France. I say, "Well done the peasants of France." They are entitled to say no and their votes are just as important as those of wealthy people. Is the vote to be taken away from ordinary people? I know something about Mr. Delors. He is an arrogant man. I have sat with him in committees for 12 years and I know his style. He has said that 80 per cent. of all decisions will be taken in Brussels. Nobody in this country wants Delors, and no Commission, even one containing Leon Brittan, should make decisions for this country. The people of Britain want this Parliament to take their decisions.

We are told that the people cannot be trusted. Why should not the people of this country be allowed to speak in a referendum? Hon. Members who believe in European union and one government in Europe—a single state that goes beyond federalism—should go to the country and say to people, "Do you want this?" The House decided that the people of Northern Ireland should decide their future by referendum but now we are told that referendums are undemocratic, alien and foreign. However, one is kept on the statute book for Northern Ireland and it is there because a former Prime Minister proposed it and carried it through.

We are told that Europe will solve every problem and that trouble in future can be solved by a single market. Our monetary difficulties were to be solved by entering the ERM. The leader of the Liberal Democrat party said in his speech that the answer was full steam ahead for one solid union in Europe, one parliament and one people. In the old days people used to speak about one air force, one navy and one police force. Everybody knows that if that happened there could be no withdrawal. At least we were able to get out of the ERM and float sterling, but a policy such as that proposed by the leader of the Liberal Democrats is similar to the law of the Medes and Persians and is for ever. Why should we be forced or rushed into such a decision?

The people of Europe are beginning to think again about Maastricht. I asked the French ambassador to the United Kingdom whether he thought that France was divided. He said, "Yes, my country is divided 50:50." Mr. Delors has succeeded in dividing his own country. France was the womb of the EC and supplied the grandfathers and the fathers of the Common Market. It is the Common Market establishment, and when almost 50 per cent. of its population say no surely all the other European countries should think again.

We were to have an economic debate today. We have had terrible cuts in Northern Ireland and a Scrooge policy is followed by the Northern Ireland Office. Hospitals are closing, housing estates are not being rehabilitated, jobs are being lost and unemployment is at 15 per cent. Those are the issues that worry the ordinary man in the street, and if the money that was wrongly used to try to stay in the ERM had been invested in our own country it would have made a great difference. It would have provided hospitals, houses and schools and investment in employment. The time has come for the Government to forget about the ERM and to put their house in order. They should tell us their economic policy, because I have not yet heard in the debate what they propose to do. The House has a right to demand that the Government set out their policy.

7.6 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I certainly agree with the last point made by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley). The motion seeks support for the Government's economic policy, but that is asking the House to support a pig in a poke when we do not know the shape of the pig or the direction of the poke. We have had no indication of the new economic policy that will replace what everyone in these islands sees as the shambles of last week. We need to know that there will be change in the policy that has led to the present unemployment in Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland and even in southern England. Social problems arise from economic problems and there is a crying need for a housing programme. We have not been told about a new economic policy and I fail to see how Conservative Members can support the motion.

I do not believe for a moment that last week's difficulties surfaced suddenly. I shall speak about speculators later. It is necessary to have some relationship between the currencies in EC countries, and that will be even more necessary from 1 January when there will be free movement of people, goods and capital. We need structures that will enable that to happen coherently.

We entered the ERM in 1990 at too high a rate. We said that at the time, but there is no kudos to be earned from saying "I told you so". We have been paying the price of too high an entry rate through high interest rates to sustain the currency at that level. That interest rate has caused difficulties for businesses and industry in getting the necessary investment, and it has certainly caused difficulties for people with mortgages.

We must ensure a new parity and, in the light of current inflation, interest rates could be reduced to 8 or even 7 per cent. If that happened, the pound would drift down even further, perhaps to DM 2·40 or $1·55. I hope that that will happen following lower interest rates, and that we can try to renegotiate ourselves into what may be left of the ERM or a replacement regime. I passionately believe that there must be a replacement regime.

A couple of weeks ago the Prime Minister inaugurated a factory in my constituency. That factory is the European headquarters of an international company and, as the Prime Minister heard, it exports 98 per cent. of its products. In the lead, up to the general election the Government made great play of the many international companies that have come to Wales from Japan, Germany and other countries. They have come to sell into the European market, but if we do not have a stable currency and a stable economic policy those companies will be undermined. A stable currency is necessary to build on the job opportunities that such firms provide.

I was saddened by the way in which people were so inclined to blame foreigners for what went wrong last week. It was easy to blame somebody outside. The frightening feature of the coalitions that are opposed to Europe, such as Le Pen in France, is the nasty inward-looking elements who want to turn the clock back. We should be extremely careful to avoid those elements.

Many people have been willing to blame the Bundesbank, but we should recall that last week it spent DM 50 billion on propping up currency, and DM 35 billion on sterling. We must remember the difficulties that Germany has experienced with the integration of East Germany, despite which it has taken in more than 250,000 refugees—far more than we have been prepared to take. Germany may not have behaved in what we regard as the most desirable manner, but it is easy to blame other people when the wrong decisions have been taken in this country.

The Prime Minister said that last week's events occurred because of a massive amount of speculation. If people sold sterling that they did not have on an unprecedented scale to undermine it, when it was known to be weak, and then moved against the franc, which was not known to be weak, in order to make a quick buck, we must take measures to ensure that it never happens again. What sickened my constitutents was watching people shuffling paper and making millions of pounds in the process. There must surely be an argument for some control over speculators and for a windfall tax. In addition, there should be rules to ensure that when there is currency speculation people have currency up front rather than being able to turn the currency around within 14 days or whatever period is necessary. The Government must investigate what happened in the currency markets last week to see whether there was deliberate action to undermine sterling and, if so, whether legislation is adequate to deal with it.

Our economic policy must ensure the regeneration of industry. A strong regional policy is necessary if we are to have fixed parity of exchange rates. Without it, pressure will build up and countries whose economies are not performing well will experience increased unemployment. We need a much stronger regional policy to help not only areas of Wales and other parts of the United Kingdom but Europe.

Next year will herald a new chapter in Europe and we must be ready for it. There must be fresh new thinking on economic policy to ensure full employment and the maximisation of people's potential. If the events of last week have taught people a lesson and have made them look again at new mechanisms and at ways of ensuring that that potential is maximised, perhaps some good has come out of them. But many people have been hurt in the past two years and the Government must now be a little modest and admit that they have made mistakes from which they have learnt and will build a better future.

7.13 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): For me, the ERM is the Maginot line on the road to Maastricht. It has failed spectacularly and we saw the result the other day with untold damage and anxiety when panic struck the country as interest rates rocketed up. We now have some respite, but the problem is that Maastricht is by no means dead. That troubles me, and no doubt other hon. Members, greatly.

This year's Conservative party manifesto said:

> "Membership of the ERM is now central to our counter-inflation discipline. But the ERM is not a magic wand."

We can certainly see that it is not.

Any modified form of the discredited system would simply not work because a series of divergent economies cannot be made to converge. Countries such as Germany on the one hand and Greece and Italy on the other inevitably will not achieve currency parity.

The cohesion fund under the Maastricht treaty is part of the economic policy that lies at the heart of these matters. The result is that, by our own admission, we have neither the money nor the intention to pay the amount of money that Delors is claiming for his financial package —Delors 2. The money is not available, nor is the will to pay it, so what is the rationale for continuing with the Maastricht Bill or for pursuing the dogma of the ERM?

With a number of honourable exceptions, I had not expected to hear such blatant hypocrisy from Opposition Members. They have been up to their eyes in this policy throughout. What we heard from the Liberals and my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) was unbelievable. They want a unified state. We cannot afford to rewrite the history books by pretending that what has recently happened did not really happen. We cannot brush it all under the carpet, pretending that it is business as usual.

When the British people reflect on the events of last week they will not find it easy to understand how we can simply continue with Maastricht. I am told that I have a good voting record, but on this occasion, as on the Second Reading of the Maastricht Bill and the confidence motion that was debated in December in the run-up to the general election, I fear that I must abstain—for a good reason. I do not believe for a minute that my constituents or many other people in the country would understand my voting for this motion, given the anti-democratic nature of the Maastricht treaty. In addition, we must remember that we have had no White Paper, for which I have been calling for three years. We have not had a free vote and we have not had a referendum. I heard my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup chattering on about what he would like to see—a unified Europe—but he gave us a White Paper in the 1970s and, as I understand it, there was a free vote in 1972 and a referendum in 1975. I voted to stay in Europe and voted willingly for the Single European Act. I challenge anyone to question my credentials. I believe in European co-operation, but not in a centralising treaty. I have outlined in previous debates and in various publications why I believe that the treaty is a centralising one.

Finally, I want to ask a simple question about the nature of democracy and to quote a passage from a publication known as "German Comments", a passage reprinted there in July of this year from the "Konrad Adenauer Siftung". The article, written after the Danish referendum, said:

> "More and more frequently elections are now distorting themselves into instruments of protests for the voters. Unless Europe soon encounters a new type of voter governing will become even more difficult than it was in the past."

That is a pretty remarkable statement and it shows the sort of problem that lies at the heart of so many of our present troubles. The Maastricht legislation and the treaty are riddled with contradictions—masses of them. The treaty is not just a compromise; it is self-contradictory. The only thing that we can do, therefore, is to determine not to have it and not to accept the ERM even in a modified form.

For a long time we have been taken down the wrong route. I said in a debate shortly after the dark days of our leadership election, following some unflattering comments that I had made about a web of deceit woven over the

[Mr. William Cash]

subject of Europe, that I believed that only in the Conservative party would we find the answers to the future of Europe for this country.

I implore my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to review the decision that appears to have been taken and not to continue with the treaty. I direct that plea to him in all humility.

7.21 pm

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): This was not a failure of the exchange rate mechanism; it was a failure of the Government. The ERM is not a policy; it is a tool, a means of arriving at monetary union. Because I am a socialist, I believe that we should still aim for the goal of monetary union. It is because others are not socialists that they do not believe in trying to control and contain Europe's monetary system so as to avoid disgraceful spectacles such as that which occurred last week. As I saw on television when I returned from the French referendum, young men were swilling down champagne to celebrate the fact that they had made £4 million out of selling their currency down the drain—and the Government are largely responsible for creating the climate in which that happens.

The Government cannot seriously object if their Back Benchers accept what they say at face value. The Government went to Maastricht declaring that they would fight the foreigners. The Prime Minister and Chancellor went there describing the bureaucracy in Brussels as awful and saying that they were determined to wrest back power from that bureaucracy. They returned claiming that they had fought bureaucracy and the foreigners, but they should have come back and presented the policies from Maastricht that they accepted and could recommend to the House because they were for the good of the people.

The single market is already in place. In the French referendum the Single European Act, not the treaty of Maastricht, was regularly criticised. If we do not move on to Maastricht and use it we will be left with a grand hypermarket devoid of humanity. The Single European Act, for which various hon. Members have said they voted, presaged Maastricht, and it would be to deny our promises if we did not vote for Maastricht. I am neither for nor against referendums—I would not go to the stake over them—but if we are to hold one we must present it properly. It must include a question on the environment, another on training, another on the powers of the European Parliament and one on the Committee of the Regions. That sort of devolution has not been mentioned in this debate, but it is an important link in the economy and with the European Community.

What sort of Committee of the Regions do our Government intend to have? Most Governments have declared their intention that it should have elected members. Will our members of it be appointed, as they are to hospital trusts? Will we be represented by estate agents or by people who truly represent the regions where real devolution happens?

The right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) said that he did not want people from Brussels taking jobs from Yorkshire. It is the Government, not the Commission, who have taken jobs from my constituency by their heedless energy policies and by their failure to act together with the rest of the Community to ensure a common energy policy so that we can use our coal into the next century. That is the sort of planning that is needed.

If I were the right hon. Member for Mole Valley, I should be careful about criticising the financial expertise of others. After all, he introduced the poll tax, so it ill behoves him to criticise the judgment of others.

The Government were never going to receive the same defence from the Bundesbank as the French have received, for the simple reason that when the negotiations took place our Government said that they wanted to withdraw —that they were in the ERM and that that was enough for us. They did not want to proceed to EMU; they would save that for a later date and not commit themselves. That was typical of the Government's half-hearted approach not only to the social chapter but to all the other social provisions. That approach has caused a crisis of confidence in the British Government on the part of our continental partners.

I was at the European Parliament on black Wednesday. It did not cause the stir there that it caused here. Following black Wednesday we said that the ERM was gone—finished—because the United Kingdom is now out. Not so. It is clear that France and Germany and the Benelux countries will come together as quickly as possible and will create a single currency. The remarks of the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) notwithstanding, these countries will form the core. How quickly then will we be able to catch them up? How soon will we be able to give our country the benefits that flow from a stable currency? We shall be hanging on to the coat tails of the single currency and, far from being independent, our policies will be directed by the fiscal and financial policies that the core countries pursue.

We must put together a series of industrial, fiscal and financial policies with our partners in the Community, but that is not to be done the night before one drops out of the exchange rate mechanism—or even the weekend before. It is a long and complicated haul. There is no easy fix. The Government should pick themselves up and start talking to their European partners. They should put their whole heart into Maastricht and tell our partners that we will go forward with them. And they should accept the social chapter as an earnest of their good intent to co-operate in future.

7.28 pm

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I should like to preface my remarks by expressing my support and sympathy for the Chancellor. He was given a virtually impossible job—to manage the economy in a straitjacket. He had to fix interest rates not at a level appropriate to the British economy but at a level appropriate to the German economy. I was delighted when he took the brave decision to come out of the ERM. If we had stayed in and interest rates had stayed above 10 per cent. for any time, we would have been in danger of the recession turning into a slump. I submit that membership of the ERM has not been beneficial to Britain.

We should look at the facts and compare our economic performance when we had a floating pound with that of the past two or three years. Between 1979 and 1987, when we had a floating pound, the rest of Europe talked about the British economic miracle. Inflation fell from 22 per cent. in 1980 to 3·4 per cent. in 1986. The budget deficit was progressively eliminated and we went into surplus. Trade was mainly in balance. We had economic growth for eight years. Manufacturing productivity rose faster than in any other European country. We had an explosion of enterprise and initiative throughout the country. Thousands of new firms were founded. During that time, the pound declined by no less than 25 per cent. against the deutschmark, but we had no currency crisis and we never heard the word devaluation.

How did we achieve those magnificent results—by following two basic policies. First, we made monetary policy the cornerstone of economic policy and, secondly, we exercised strict control over Government spending and strove to balance the budget. We should compare those golden years with what is happening today. We have a double deficit—a large public sector deficit and a large balance of payments deficit. We have had three years of minus growth. We have soaring unemployment and tens of thousands of bankruptcies and closures. We got it right and we threw it away. What went wrong? We changed our two basic policies.

The Government repeatedly relaxed their policy on public spending and were regularly interrogated by the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee on that subject. It does no good to say "I told you so", but year after year in debates on the autumn statement I warned the Government of the dangers of letting public spending rise too quickly. Ministers were unable to resist the pressure groups, the health service and the aid and arts lobbies, and no matter how hard they tried, they could not keep local government spending under control. All the time, the Opposition demanded even higher spending.

We abandoned our monetary policy. Lord Lawson, the architect of our monetary policy when he was Financial Secretary, for some reason, on becoming Chancellor, abandoned that policy and decided that the exchange rate would be the cornerstone. Because the then Prime Minister did not allow him to join the ERM, he shadowed the deutschmark, thus sowing the seeds of his destruction.

The economy was expanding quickly and Lord Lawson reduced interest rates when he should have increased them. In 1988, broad money rose by 20 per cent. Is not it ironic that we abandoned British monetary policy and put in its place Germany's monetary policy dictated by the Bundesbank? That might have been less damaging if Germany had remained a low-inflation, low-interest rate country but, unfortunately, Herr Kohl made a mess of reunification and the Bundesbank retaliated by putting up interest rates. As a result, we were prevented from cutting our interest rates when we were in the depths of a recession. Our membership of the ERM has made the recession six to nine months longer than it need have been. That has been the cost of our membership of the ERM and excessive public spending.

The events of last week were not a defeat just for Government policy. They were a defeat for the collective political leadership of the country. The leaders of the Opposition are equally responsible. I remember sitting on these Benches during the 18 months before the former Prime Minister was pressurised into joining the ERM. Every week, the former Leader of the Opposition demanded that we join, as did the present Leader of the Opposition. The new Leader of the Opposition does not seem to know what his policy is. A few days ago it was to rejoin the ERM almost immediately. Will they never learn that one cannot buck the market? A fixed exchange rate will not work unless the currencies of the EC converge completely, which, as has been said, will not happen.

The main casualty of last week was the ERM. It has failed to deliver. It has been shown that the aim of monetary union and a single currency as set out in the Maastricht treaty is a dead duck. In my view, that makes the treaty a dead duck.

Conservative Members should not regard what has happened as a defeat. We should see it as an opportunity. We should put this experiment behind us and never rejoin the ERM. We should not put British jobs and businesses at risk. We should unite behind the Chancellor to recreate the prosperity of the 1980s.

What must be in our economic package? Our first priority must be to stimulate economic recovery. Now we have a floating exchange rate, the value of the pound need no longer dominate policy. Monetary policy should be brought to the fore once more. We should fix targets for broad and narrow money but, because of the severity of the recession, broad money should be allowed to rise by up to 10 per cent. over the next 12 months. To prevent inflation, monetary growth should be reduced by at least 1 per cent. per annum. Interest rates can now be fixed at a level to suit the British economy. Because of the depth of the recession and the weakness in the growth of money supply, I should have liked interest rates to have been cut by 2 per cent. That would have given a fillip to confidence and taken pressure off the exchange rate at the same time. I think that there will be another 1 per cent. cut soon.

We must take the knife to public sector spending. The public sector deficit—it is approaching £40 billion—is unsustainable. We have to bring the budget back to balance. Reductions in spending should be limited to the revenue side, however painful that might be. The construction industry is in a terrible state and a cut in capital spending would do untold damage to that industry and serious damage to the British economy. None of the sacred cows can be exempt. Overseas aid is paid for by borrowing from foreigners. Spending on health, arts, social services, local government and even benefits should not automatically be increased.

During the recession almost all the pain has been borne by the private sector. Firms have closed and people have lost their jobs. The number of people who have had wage increases is small. Now is the time for the pain to be shared. To get the deficit down, there should be a moratorium on all public sector pay increases for one year. It should affect all employees—doctors, nurses, Members of Parliament, judges, firemen, the police—the lot. I do not think that it is unjustified in the circumstances.

There should be a housing package to help recovery in the housing market. We shall get no recovery in consumer spending until the housing market recovers, as the greatest asset of 70 per cent. of the population is their home.

I ask the Government to approach banks and ask them to relieve the pressure on small and medium-sized businesses. If the pressure is caused by lack of capital, the Governor of the Bank of England should tell them to have a rights issue and recapitalise. The Government should reduce the burden of the state and the EC on industry and advise Customs and Excise, the VAT department and the Inland Revenue to be more amenable to small and medium-sized firms with cash flow problems. We need urgent action on the trade deficit, with which I do not have time to deal.

[Mr. John Townend]

The City has given its verdict on recent events. There is now a feeling that we are once more in charge of our destiny. For the first time during his tenure of office, the Chancellor has been given an opportunity to run the economy for and in the interests of Britain. The Conservative party was given a new mandate at the general election in May. We must honour that confidence and deliver to the British people in the 1990s the economic miracle that we achieved in the 1980s.

7.38 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): In his speech today—and, indeed, before today, outside the House—the Prime Minister has claimed that the exchange rate mechanism has "fault lines". I agree with him. I also agree that something should be done about it, if that is possible.

The question that must be asked—it has already been asked today, but it has not been answered—is "Where on earth has the Prime Minister been all this time? Why has he discovered only now that there are fault lines in the system?" The right hon. Gentleman has been Chief Secretary to the Treasury; he has been Foreign Secretary; he was the Chancellor of the Exchequer who persuaded Mrs. Thatcher, as she then was, to take us into the exchange rate mechanism. Now he is Prime Minister—and now he tells us that the ERM contains fault lines.

Yes, the ERM has fault lines. In my view, it was flawed from the beginning: it acquired some rather bad genes from its immediate ancestor, the snake, which ended up a shambles, and from the Werner report, which made even Jacques Delors sound like a Euro-sceptic. It acquired other bad genes from its immediate parents, Chancellor Schmidt and Giscard d'Estaing—along with the then Mr. Roy Jenkins, who was hovering in the ante-chamber.

In fact, the ERM was not meant to be an economic currency system. It was meant to be political: it was intended, all along, to take the first step along the path to economic and monetary union and, finally, to a federal Europe. That was what the ERM was about when it was conceived by Chancellor Schmidt and Valery Giscard d'Estaing in 1979. When it was launched, some extraordinary claims were made for the system, as is always the case with such European forays. One claim was that it would create a zone of monetary stability in western Europe—I think that that was the phrase. Frankly, it has failed. Even in the period between 1979 and 1990, before the present turmoil began, there were 10 realignments. In truth, they were not realignments but devaluations—devaluations of all the other currencies against the German mark. Over that time, the French franc was devalued against the mark by 45 per cent.

It must be conceded that, from 1987 onwards, there were no more devaluations or realignments; a period of stability ensued. I believe, however, that the real reason for that had nothing to do with the ERM. In the main, it was probably connected with international economic factors—particularly the Louvre agreements, which stabilised the dollar for a long time.

In 1987, the ERM changed from a fixed but adjustable system—rather an inelegant phrase—to a quasi-monetary union system. That happened just after the realignments that took place in January that year, when the present Prime Minister became Chief Secretary to the Treasury. From 1987 onwards, the Prime Minister was at the heart of our economic policy; yet, apparently, no one told him that there were fault lines in the system, or else he did not spot them.

After 1987, the fault lines widened and deepened. The Single European Act had been signed in 1986; the final realignments had taken place in January 1987; a few months later, the Basle-Nyborg agreement conceded, in effect, that countries could support each other's currencies in the short term. Then, four months after that agreement, a memorandum came from the French Finance Minister, arguing that the European monetary system itself should become a European central bank and a full currency union. Throughout that period, we were moving towards a quasi-monetary union.

At the same time, however, capital and exchange controls were gradually being relaxed. Between 1987 and 1990, country after country took such action; by 1990, no controls remained except for temporary purposes. We were left with an extraordinary system. Greater experts than I sit on the Conservative Benches; I do not know whether an historical precedent exists for a country to operate a fixed exchange rate while having no control over capital movements.

Today, there are sight deposits in British and European banks. Money can be withdrawn and moved around without capital controls, at a moment's notice. I understand that sight deposits in British banks exceed Britain's reserves tenfold, and that the position in France is similar. How on earth can a fixed exchange system be operated, given the ease with which money can now be transferred from one country to another, and the fact that we have no capital controls? I do not believe that we shall return to them: unfortunately, the world has changed, and money can move very quickly. I do not see how we could operate such a system without becoming involved again in the battle that, eventually, we have had to face over the past few weeks.

I do not know why the Prime Minister did not know about the position, but I do not think that the Government should blame the Germans. I do not think that they should blame poor Helmut down in the Bundesbank. I feel rather sorry for Helmut: there he was, coming in every morning, wading through piles of esperanto money—kronas, pesetas, heaps of lire and a few pounds, but not too many; by then Helmut was beginning to learn—and possibly even francs. Meanwhile, at the back of the office, Helmut's lovely deutschmarks had been taken away to buy all that esperanto money.

I do not blame poor Helmut, and I do not think that we should criticise him. Apparently, under the Bundesbank Act, his job is to watch German inflation and to control the money supply, not to worry about the exchange rate; that is a secondary matter. There he was, buying all the flotsam and jetsam of European currencies and paying for it with German marks—putting German marks into the system and pushing up his money supply. Helmut already has problems with the money supply: last week, apparently, his monetary targets were exceeded by 4 per cent., reaching 9 per cent. instead of 5 per cent.

Poor old Helmut. I do not know what he will do. I hope that he does not set fire to all those currencies; we do not want a bunker mentality in the Bundesbank. I repeat—let us not blame Helmut: the system was flawed, because it was designed not for economic purposes but for the political goal of economic and monetary union.

For years I have listened to European debates. Sometimes words are used in a very strange way. Sometimes we are told that things have been done for this reason, or for that reason; treaties are debated, signed and discussed behind closed doors. No one admits what it is all really about. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) admitted it today for the first time: I do not think that he has ever done so before—at least not since 1972.

Why not tell the British people what it is all about? Why not say, "If political union is thought desirable, let us introduce measures to implement it"? Measures should not be introduced through the back door, by means of financial strategems that always go wrong in the end.

7.48 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): One of the problems of growing old in this place is the fact that many of the exciting new ideas seem to be ideas that have been tried before and have not worked very well. It was clear from the brilliant and entertaining speech of the Leader of the Opposition that Labour was about to embark again on the whole process of the "national plan". I think that older hon. Members realise that that wonderful idea simply brought great benefits to bureaucrats and the hotel and conference industry.

We should not complain, however. This is the first debate on European affairs in which we have seen a ray of hope that we can halt the slide towards an undemocratic single state. I must say that I felt a great deal of sympathy for the Prime Minister; there has been a huge change in Commons opinion. I felt sorry for him, because those who once urged him not to miss the Euro-boat are now shouting at him, "Do not jump over the Euro-cliff." All the organisations—such as the ridiculous CBI—that urged him to rush into the ERM are now saying that it was a disaster, and the whole business has blown up in his face. I hope that we can at least show a certain sympathy for a Prime Minister who has been faced with a huge change in circumstances and a substantial change in his party.

It is unfortunate that there has been a failure in the debate to appreciate the huge damage done to the United Kingdom and its people by the European Community. The Community is not a great growth enterprise; its share of world trade is decreasing and it has massive unemployment. We have done ourselves a great damage —the ERM is a perfect example. We have deliberately imposed unemployment, misery, housing repossessions and business failures for the sole purpose of maintaining the pound at an artificial level. Where is the logic and common sense in doing that? We have seen the policy explode in our face. What is the point? We are in exactly the same position as we were in September 1931, when we carried out the same exercise. The Government said that inflation was down to minus 7 per cent., but there was massive unemployment and misery—it was a mad policy.

In the same way, the common agricultural policy is doing huge damage to the economy. I wish that Treasury Ministers would start to look at what is happening to British jobs and prices due to that crazy policy. Some £513 million is being spent each month, largely on dumping, destroying and storing food. Nothing is done to stop that. As a consequence, the average family in Britain is paying £17·23 extra per week for food, which is bad for jobs in Britain.

Although we are always told that the cost of membership will go down, this year's membership is costing us about £240 million per month, which means £4 per week for British families. If the Government are worried about the economy, should not they ask what effect European enterprise has on jobs, living standards and trade in Britain? Our trade with Europe has shown not a great profit but a huge deficit. We all know that the rest of the world has suffered due to European protectionism; suffering increases as Europe becomes more protectionist. I hope that, as a result of the debate, the Government will consider the matter and ask whether, on balance, the policy has been terribly bad or terribly good for the British economy. Examination of any of the figures shows that we have suffered greatly.

I hope that the Government will not look for scapegoats or try to kid themselves. I thought that it was sad when the pound was falling. They first blamed the Danes and said that their referendum had caused uncertainty. Then they said that the French referendum was causing uncertainty. When it was pointed out that the franc was not falling but the pound was, they changed their tune and said that the Americans were to blame for the falling pound. They said that the pound's decline was due to the fall in the dollar. When the dollar started to rise, they had to find someone else to blame, and the poor old Germans were the target. They said that German gossip had caused the trouble.

The Government must know that if their country has a trade deficit of about £900 million a month, their expenditure and income are wildly out of balance and they are borrowing like crazy, clever people in the City who engage in speculation will be more interested in those figures than in the gossip from Germany. The same is true of inflation. We are told that the ERM has helped to reduce inflation. Even silly people in charge of Governments can reduce inflation if the price paid is three million unemployed. In addition, inflation throughout the world has been subsequently reduced.

We must stop kidding ourselves about the great British exemptions from the Maastricht treaty. We must consider the facts. The Government seem concerned about our exemption from the social charter. Everyone can see from the facts, figures and papers that the effects of the social charter are being felt through the Single European Act. Signing the social charter will make hardly any difference. The same is true of our exemption from a single currency. If we are to be tied to a single currency in a fixed exchange rate system, the effect on our freedom will be similar to having a Scottish pound note.

I hope that those who think that subsidiarity is a grand idea will read the relevant clause. They will see that subsidiarity applies only to sectors where the European Community has no competence. I challenge anybody to tell me where the EC does not have competence. I can think of only grammar schools and the council tax. Those who think that the statement of intent is important are kidding themselves.

The House of Commons must agree to a referendum on Maastricht. Not to do so would be a total denial of democracy. Of course, then face the electors who can say, "Yes, that is OK" or "No, we want to change the policy". But it is wholly wrong to hand over a massive amount of sovereignty and freedom without consulting the people to seek their views.

[Sir Teddy Taylor]

Some people say that Parliament is supreme, but there was no vote on the subject in the general election. Those who think that electors in the general election were voting on Maastricht should consider Southend-on-Sea where there were two Members of Parliament. One Member thought that Maastricht was rubbish and the other thought that it was great. The two results were almost identical. People were not voting on Maastricht. It would be wrong for the Government to go ahead with the treaty.

Where can we go? After the abandonment of Maastricht, for which I hope, the Government should promote a treaty on subsidiarity—a specified list of items that we wish to take back from Europe to the elected member states. That would be a step forward in a different direction.

For the sake of our economy we must come out of the common agricultural policy, which is damaging people—particularly the poor. We sometimes forget that, in a recession, the people who suffer most are the poor—pensioners and those with limited incomes. There is no way that we can improve matters without withdrawing from the CAP.

After the catastrophe of the ERM I hope that the Government will at least say that they are not prepared to return to such a system. Surely it is evident that if someone tries to pretend that money is worth what it is not, distortions will be created elsewhere. The previous splendid Chancellor of the Exchequer joined—unofficially—at the wrong rate in the wrong direction. We had to create artificial prosperity; now we have to create artificial inflation. Surely the huge costs of the collapse of sterling should have taught the Government not to go back into a fixed exchange arrangement.

I have always been in trouble in the House over EC affairs. It is embarrassing to find that, instead of the usual group of half a dozen Members expressing my views, there is an epidemic of them. People are waking up—not because of me or other Conservatives, but because the people of Europe have had their say. Despite the threats from Brussels and warnings that the country would be ruined, the people of Denmark had the courage to say no. French people who had the courage to do the same, despite warnings about the dangers that lay ahead and the threat of starting another war with Germany, have brought about change.

We should realise that the only way that we can defend ourselves against dictatorship and the collapse of democracy is through the people. That is why I hope that the Government will tonight at least say that they will not go back to a fixed exchange rate system. More importantly, we should give our people the same democratic rights as other nations. Unless the Government have the support of the people on the policy that they intend to adopt, the outcome will be horrendous.

7.58 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) deserves a measure of congratulation. He is right: he has ploughed a relatively lonely furrow on this issue, and now finds himself joined by an epidemic of Conservative Members. That does not make him right; it merely makes him less lonely.

The best prepared text for tonight's debate should be the debate that we had on 23 October 1990 when we debated our entry into the exchange rate mechanism. If we read that debate we see that it left some hon. Members in a relatively strong position to argue tonight and many more in a weak position—that did not stop the latter group arguing.

My biggest surprise was to hear the Prime Minister this afternoon say that the conclusion that he drew from the events of the past eight days was that he was right in the Maastricht negotiations. I do not think that I misquote him when I say that he stated that events of the past eight days had demonstrated that he had been correct. That was the most remarkable statement that I have heard for some time. I can only believe that his speech writer was the same gentleman who briefed the press about the pound replacing the deutschmark as the dominant currency in Europe.

The basic problem in this debate is the one that we argued about two years ago—the difficulty in any exchange system of having a strong and a weak investment currency. When sterling entered the ERM it was not merely another currency revolving around the deutschmark; it was a weak international investment currency—a banana currency, to use the jargon of speculators—and there was bound to be polarity between those two major currencies. That made the positioning of sterling within the exchange rate mechanism crucial. When some of us argued in the debate two years ago that the rate of DM2·95 was unsustainable and was not justified by anything happening within the United Kingdom economy, those arguments were brushed aside by the Government and were described as pessimistic or defeatist.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and the hon. Member for Southend, East on one thing. The underlying feature of the debate is not putting the blame on the Germans or even on those nasty speculators; it is the £12 billion annual deficit in the United Kingdom's balance of payments. When the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney argued that, I saw the Chancellor shake his head as if it did not matter that the country was running a £12 billion annual deficit in the trough of a recession. Plenty of Chancellors have been wrong about balance of payments forecasts and plenty have been wrong in their forecasts for economic recovery, but the present Chancellor is the only one that I know of who has simultaneously underestimated the balance of payments deficit and the length of a recession. According to the traditional rule, in the depths of a recession the balance of payments should be substantially in surplus.

We can all be amateur currency forecasters, but it does not take the most remarkable economic genius to realise that if an economy is running a £12 billion annual balance of payments deficit, its currency is probably not competitive with other currencies. The markets were therefore faced with a one-way bet on sterling and as soon as that happened the result was inevitable.

In a clever speech this afternoon the Leader of the Opposition said that he supported a realignment. It is a pity that we did not hear more about that before the crisis last week. He is absolutely right to support realignment within the ERM, which is what the Germans have been advocating for the past six months, but realignment within the ERM is a euphemism for devaluation. It is impossible to be in favour of realignment and against devaluation.

The Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Liberal party have a point. If they had advocated devaluation, doubtless Tory Back Benchers would have pointed the finger and said that they had undermined confidence in sterling, but last week, the shadow Chancellor would not have been in the ridiculous position of simultaneously arguing for the maintenance of sterling's parity against the deutschmark and for interest rate cuts. The counter argument would have gained credibility and would not have been undermined. It is more important to have a credible argument than to worry about being accused by Tory Back Benchers of being unpatriotic or disloyal.

One of the features of the debate that will cause some amusement—and I hope some interest in Scottish politics—is that during the economic debate in the general election campaign, a few months ago, it was said that if Scotland were independent it would have a plunging currency, unemployment and economic instability. It has all happened, and not with five years of Scottish independence but within five months of a continuation of the Union. If the Chancellor of the Exchequer has done any service to Scottish politics and to the Scottish people it is because he might be the Chancellor who has finally persuaded them that the men in the Treasury do not know what is best for the Scottish economy or about running the United Kingdom economy.

In a blithe and almost a throw-away remark the Chancellor said recently that monetary policy during the past few years has been too tight. He conceded that fact as if it were something that he had known all the time and had now revealed to the unsuspecting nation. What has been the result of that tightness? It has been paid for in tens of thousands of job losses throughout the United Kingdom—1,000 jobs a week in Scotland since the general election. Those people's jobs have been sacrificed and jeopardised to save the face of politicians who treat sterling as some sort of totem pole, to be defended at all costs, as long as it can be defended with other people's chips.

It would be appropriate if someone who was basically in favour of Maastricht and intended to campaign for a yes vote called for a referendum in this debate. I suppose that there is no ultimate argument in principle for referendums and the way in which they are dealt with in the House. Some hon. Members are in favour of a referendum on Europe but against one on Scotland. The Leader of the Opposition is nominally for a referendum in Scotland but against one on Europe. Some hon. Members are against both, which I suppose is quite honourable. I am for a referendum on Europe and on Scotland. We should have that opportunity because the failure to trust and consult the people about the European cause has been one of the things undermining that cause. If I get the chance, I shall vote for Scotland and for Europe in both referendums.

8.5 pm

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): If the people of Scotland were listening to the remarks of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), or if they read them seeking to find the Scottish National party's economic policy, they will be sorely disappointed. He seems to have said that he shares the general dismay that I and, no doubt, the Government feel about the events that obliged us to leave the ERM and led to the devaluation of the pound. It would be foolish to seek to suggest that this is anything other than a setback for the Government, the Conservative party, and for this country, which is what is of essential importance.

That does not mean that the Government were wrong to try to follow the policy involved in membership of the ERM as the means to create the conditions for steady economic growth in this country while holding inflationary pressures in check. As we all have good reason to know, those inflationary pressures are particularly strong in Britain compared with many of our competitor countries.

We must recognise that the discipline of the ERM was difficult, but that any of the systems on offer must involve discipline and pain if they are to be effective. One of the major reasons for entering the ERM was that the other paths that we had tried—the various Ms and medium-term financial strategy—began to lose their effectiveness, partly because of the sophisticated economic world in which we now live and because of the creation of credit.

One of the causes of the failure of our venture into the ERM was that we entered it too late. We should have adjusted earlier to the pressures of the ERM.

I question whether the much-touted argument that the pound entered at too high a rate was the major reason for the problems. I refer the House to *The Economist* of 19 September, which said:

> "According to the test of purchasing power, the pound was, by and large, 'correctly' valued at DM2·95, its central rate in the ERM since 1990; and at its ERM floor of DM2·78 it was somewhat undervalued."

We can all argue over the value of a currency, and speculators have their own views, but it is too glib and vacuous to suggest that the problem arose because of a highly overvalued pound.

The monetary system was up-ended by two huge pressures, rather like a boat being crushed by two enormous icebergs, the first being the impact of German unification, to which much reference has been made. In saying that, I do not join in the carping about the Germans that I have heard from some of my right hon. and hon. Friends. The Germans have their own national interests to follow. The problem caused by the absorption of East Germany is undoubtedly an issue.

The other iceberg was what was happening in the United States, with the cheap dollar policy. That set up so many pressures that I believe they would have caused problems and broken any system, causing the damage that has been done not only to the pound but to all the other currencies, which has been widely discussed by right hon. and hon. Members.

With regard to the objective criteria governing the level of the pound, a number of misapprehensions are abroad, some of which have been expressed tonight. By many of the normal criteria of the economic strength of the currency, the value of the pound was reasonably set within the ERM.

I shall mention three such criteria. First, we are often told that Government expenditure in Britain is too high, and that that is one of the causes of weakness. No one can be keener than I to go on pressing to reduce Government expenditure, but in terms of the percentage of GDP our Government expenditure is the lowest in the European Community. Secondly, we are told that one of the other major problems is our PSBR requirement—my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor)

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

mentioned that. But, again, expressed as a percentage of GDP, the United Kingdom borrowing requirement now runs at precisely the average of the European Community.

Finally, many Opposition Members have referred to the balance of payments. As a percentage of GDP our balance of payments is precisely at the average EC level. So according to all those criteria the British economy is by no means as badly situated as it has been painted. Certainly the objective situation did not justify what happened last week. None the less, we all know that in the frenzy of the exchange markets, objectivity seems to go out of the window.

What we have to do now is to stay calm and to say as little as possible. We must concentrate on getting the economy back on the track from which it has been disturbed. Our objective now must be to achieve the strong economy with which we all identify and which we all understand. Once we are moving back in that direction the decision can be taken whether to re-enter a European monetary union as it may obtain at that time—in three months, or however many months ahead it may be.

It seems likely that there will be a cohesion of the five, six or seven countries at the centre of Europe into a bloc —and, indeed, into a single currency. If so, when our economy is strong enough I would be doubtful whether it would not be in the British national interest to align ourselves with those countries and join in. The dangers of getting left behind are huge.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East has been splendidly consistent in his demands for Britain's isolation, but he preaches a dangerous doctrine. I believe that the rest of the country understands the danger that Britain may be left behind.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Have a referendum.

Mr. Whitney: I should be happy—we have had one referendum already, and when the people came to understand the problems that would arise if we were left behind an operating single currency, the answer would be very different from the one for which my hon. Friend hopes.

We have heard for many months from some of my hon. Friends about the need for lower interest rates. Now we have them. The three-month inter-bank rate is the most sensible rate to examine. If we set that against inflation we see that, among the seven leading European countries normally credited in the *Financial Times*, only the Netherlands has a lower real interest rate. Britain has the second lowest real interest rate.

If the panacea of low interest rates is to be realised, now is our chance. That chance must be realised, and we must adhere to what has been advised by many right hon. and hon. Friends, and not return to what we have seen time and again over the past 30 years: following the devaluation of sterling the belt is let out and off goes the inflationary spiral again. We must not let that happen this time. Too many of my hon. Friends seem to ignore that lesson in history, and to believe that simply to float the pound is a recipe for utopia and living happily ever after. In fact, it is a recipe for considerable danger, which we must recognise and avoid.

Finally, I agree with a nostrum long advocated by the Liberal party. I myself have long supported it, too, although I do not attribute to it the over-arching significance that the Liberal party does. That nostrum is to bring about the independence of the Bank of England. It is ironic that that was the first of the nationalisation measures of the Labour Government after the war, and the last move that the Government now seem prepared to contemplate is the reversal of that policy. It is not true, as was suggested by one of my hon. Friends, that had the Bank of England been independent it would have acted differently, and would not have taken the sensible measures adopted by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. However, an independent Bank of England would have more credibility.

Such a decision was reached by our noble Friend Lord Lawson after he had spent five years as Chancellor of the Exchequer. He advised such a policy in 1988, and in a noteworthy speech made on 31 October 1989 he said:

> "There is . . . one other way in which anti-inflationary credibility might be enhanced in the eyes of the market and that is why, a year ago, I proposed to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister a fully worked-out scheme for the independence of the Bank of England. But that would be a buttress; it would not be a substitute".—[*Official Report*, 31 October 1989; Vol. 159, c. 209.]

That, indeed, is true.

I shall certainly vote in support of the Government's economic policy tonight——

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): What is it?

Mr. Whitney: Nothing that I have heard, even from my hon. Friends, let alone from the Opposition, suggests that they have an alternative policy. The policy has to be to continue to bear down on inflation, to keep public spending under control. It will be more difficult to do that outside the ERM than it was within it.

8.18 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) is not in the Chamber, because I wanted to begin my speech by properly acknowledging a quotation. The Government went into the ERM at the wrong time, at the wrong rate and for entirely the wrong reasons. Over and over again we have heard Ministers trying to justify membership of the exchange rate mechanism on the narrow ground of controlling inflation. We have seen Minister after Minister wriggling on that hook of the Government's own making. If the fight against inflation was the primary purpose of the ERM, the Government's attempted explanations might have made some sense. However, the Government's real policy throughout our membership was to use the ERM as an excuse to justify their scorched-earth economics—high rates of interest leading to high rates of unemployment, leading to chronic homelessness.

It is no surprise that the crushing of confidence and the destruction of demand has resulted recently in a reduction in inflation. Healthy British companies have been forced to cut costs and reduce their labour costs in order to remain competitive with companies in countries where the cost of borrowing is significantly less.

Yet even on their central policy of controlling inflation, the Government cannot claim much success for their economic policy. An examination of the increase in consumer prices between 1987 and 1992 across the European Community should make disturbing reading for the Government. In the Netherlands the figure is 11·8 per cent., Belgium 13·7 per cent., Germany 14·9 per cent., Luxembourg 15·9 per cent., France 16·4 per cent., Ireland 16·5 per cent. and Denmark 18·1 per cent. I pause there to suggest that that is an emerging first division. Thereafter comes Italy with 32·4 per cent., Spain 34·2 per cent., and, in a disgraceful 10th place, the United Kingdom with 36·7 per cent.

That is a comment by the markets on the central feature of the Government's economic record—the fight against inflation. Having failed in that fight, it is no particular surprise that the money markets then judge that the pound is over-valued. It is over-valued against those currencies that have inflated less during those five years. Other European countries recognise that the ERM is concerned not solely with the fight against inflation but with providing and promoting stability between competing currencies. Thus again the Conservatives demonstrate how out of touch they are with other European countries.

The creation, or perhaps, more accurately, the restoration of stable exchange rates, is a central objective of Government policy elsewhere in Europe. By acting together to control currency values members of the ERM are seeking to provide a stable and consistent background against which international trade can take place.

Those involved in industry have a difficult enough task running their businesses, improving production processes, inventing new products and seeking new markets without worrying whether currency fluctuations will wipe out their profits in one day's frantic currency trading.

When the pound last floated small companies in my constituency were forced to resort to buying currency as a hedge against changes in exchange rates. Companies find it hard enough to stay in business to provide employment for their employees without their decision-makers spending a disproportionate amount of their time trying to guess at the value of the pound, whether it be tomorrow, next week or next month.

For that reason floating exchange rates are deeply damaging to industry. They are deeply dangerous for a country's economy. Yet again, at least for the forseeable future, a central feature of what passes for Government economic policy today will be embracing the discredited policies of Milton Friedman.

In 1953, Milton Friedman argued in favour of floating exchange rates. He suggested that if the value of a country's currency was allowed to fall, the price of exports would be made more competitive, which would in turn restore equilibrium to the balance of payments and confidence in the currency. But that theory fails entirely to allow for the practice of a Government who have run down our manufacturing capacity, undermined investment and left us ill-equipped to take advantage of any recovery, however remote that might be at present.

Which of our companies, particularly those making high-tech products, will be in a position to expand production after the lay-offs and redundancy have become an everyday item of economic news? They have simply lost the skills that would be required in a recovery.

Against that background the Government have sought to blame speculators, the Germans or anyone else who has come into their sights. Instead of taking the speculators on, they could have maintained our membership of the ERM as part of a general realignment, an offer which was apparently made to the British Government at the Finance Ministers meeting the weekend before last. That offer was churlishly refused. Like the schoolboy losing a football match and taking his ball home, the Chancellor rushed off to Brussels to try to persuade everyone else to stop playing the game. That was supposed to be an act of leadership from the President in office of the Council of Finance Ministers. When the other members of the ERM rightfully refused his request, the Chancellor's and the Government's economic policy was left in shreds.

Floating exchange rates have already led to a substantial devaluation in the value of the pound. That in turn will lead to higher priced imports. That will feed inflation in the economy and that inflation in turn will devalue our currency against those other currencies still in the ERM. That will produce a vicious spiral—depreciation, inflation and further pressure for devaluation.

That is the state of the Government's economic policy today. Having staggered from one bankrupt policy to another, the Government are once again at the mercy of speculators and the money markets. The price for that will be paid by the unemployed and the homeless, by those already struggling to repay mortgages on homes worth less than the outstanding balance of debt, by those who will continue to lose their jobs as the Government drive down the level of economic activity and impose still further expenditure cuts. That is the current state of the Government's economic policy. It is hard to see how a Chancellor who has presided over that can continue in office.

8.25 pm

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): Contrary to the almost universal predictions of the media, this has been a good-humoured debate. But no hon. Member should be in any doubt about the anger with which the British people regard the events of the last fortnight. Precisely because the leaders of the three main parties in Britain have been committed to a policy that has ended in failure and national humiliation, the British people are extremely angry.

I was in Washington attending the meeting of the International Monetary Fund earlier this week, but in the two days that I have been back in this country, everyone to whom I have spoken, from bankers and industrialists to taxi drivers and porters, have all expressed extreme anger and humiliation. The older men have all said to me that this has been the biggest humiliation for Britain since Suez.

There is no doubt in my mind that this has been the biggest economic crisis for 60 years, since we were forced off the gold standard in 1931 for similar reasons, because we had committed our currency to an over-valuation through linking it to the gold standard.

Winston Churchill, in his extreme old age, told me that he regarded his decision to link sterling to the gold standard as the biggest mistake that he had made in his life, bigger even than the Dardenelles, but he said that he did it on the advice of the Governor of the Bank of England, all the leading bankers and experts and financial specialists. They all advised him to link sterling to the gold standard. That contributed to the appalling recession of the 1930s which I am old enough to remember. One of my earliest memories as a boy is of standing in a dole queue with my father. I remember the humiliation that he felt at being in that dole queue.

[Sir Peter Tapsell]

All my political life I have been intensely opposed to policies which would produce mass unemployment. Do not let us assume that the British people will quickly forgive us for what has happened.

Mr. Radice: Do not include us in your denunciation.

Sir Peter Tapsell: I do, because more than anybody else the present Leader of the Opposition, when he was shadow Chancellor, was continually pressing for us to join the exchange rate mechanism. When we did so, he, along with the Liberal party, pressed us to narrow our band. It is no good either the Labour party or the Liberal party trying to shuffle off responsibility, because they were as fully committed, intellectually, morally and politically, to this disastrous policy as the Government. That is why criticism of the Government today has been so muted and why the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) was right when he said that this was an unrealistic debate which had not reflected feeling in the country. It is the job of the House to reflect the feelings of the country. We must ensure that such a thing never happens again.

The extraordinary thing about those events is their inexplicable nature. Everyone who takes a specialist interest in such matters had seen them coming for months. Usually there is some dispute among professional economists over such issues, but I cannot recall an occasion when there was such unanimity among monetarists, Keynesians, the Liverpool school, the Cambridge school, and foreign exchange dealers. Even I came to understand that these events were bound to end in devaluation and national humiliation. That is why I urged the Government in June and July to leave the exchange rate mechanism, float the pound, and cut interest rates to 8 per cent. I said in the House and on television that if we did not do so voluntarily, those actions would be imposed upon us. If we had taken such action in June or July, we would now be looking back on that decision as an act of economic statesmanship. As it is, we must make the best of today's unhappy outcome.

What should we do now? We must not allow the situation to arise again by rejoining the exchange rate mechanism in two or three years' time at a lower level, and recreate the same crisis. The argument whether or not we should have joined the ERM at DM2·95 is irrelevant and purely academic. I did not think that level was wrong at the time, but the point about the currency markets is that they change every hour. If one asked a currency dealer in October 1990 to guess at the appropriate exchange rate between sterling and the deutschmark in October 1992, he would have laughed. Dealers will not anticipate exchange rates 12 hours or even three hours ahead. Foreign exchange markets move every minute of the hour, 24 hours a day. Foreign exchange dealers will not often take even a two-hour view.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Does the hon. Gentleman recall the Prime Minister accusing the Leader of the Opposition of being prepared to confront any potential instability in the currency markets by pre-emptive devaluation? Is not the Prime Minister guilty of the same charge, and what is the hon. Gentleman's answer to it?

Sir Peter Tapsell: I am not advocating pre-emptive devaluation, and I did not do so in June and July. It is a big mistake to confuse the floating of sterling with devaluation, as many people have done. They are entirely different. Temporarily—for a few days or even for a few weeks—there may be a floating downwards, but we floated the whole time in the 1980s. At one point sterling was down almost to parity with the dollar, and at another it was worth almost two dollars.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: It went to $2·20.

Sir Peter Tapsell: As my hon. Friend reminds me, it went as high as $2·20. At no stage did anyone call that devaluation. It did not create a crisis, and no one took the view that some national virility symbol was being challenged. We should return to that technique now.

Mr. Radice: Did not industrialists in the hon. Gentleman's constituency tell him then, "We cannot cope with the pound going up and down in that yo-yo fashion. We cannot plan our businesses in that instability"? It was to meet that argument that many industrialists wanted us to join the ERM.

Sir Peter Tapsell: I remember industrialists saying that sterling was too high against the deutschmark, when it went as high as 3·10. That happened because my noble Friend Lord Lawson, who was then Chancellor of the Exchequer, was shadowing the deutschmark. That policy started in 1987, which was when things began to go wrong.

Another aspect of fixed currencies that I dislike is that they tend to devalue the reputations of the statesmen who must operate them. I make no criticism of my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Chancellor for repeatedly saying, in the weeks leading to the floating of the pound, that they would not in any circumstances allow it to float, realign or be devalued. A Prime Minister or a Chancellor has to say that. In the days before James Callaghan devalued in 1967, he was so careful of his honour and personal integrity that he refused categorically to deny that devaluation was coming. He was much criticised for that, because £800 million flowed out of our reserves in the next few days—which was a great deal of money at that time. We should not put Prime Ministers and Chancellors in the position of having to tell the world what they really know are unreliable statements.

We understand the reasons why that must be done, as do foreign exchange dealers and bankers, but the mass of ordinary people in this country do not. When political leaders make impassioned commitments and must then eat their own words a few weeks later, that is demeaning to the entire political process, and undermines the respect in which all constituents hold their Members of Parliament, irrespective of party.

I do not believe that our economic crisis is over because we have now floated the pound. That will take the heat off temporarily, but I have never suggested that floating was a soft option. There will need to be more severe cuts in public expenditure than would otherwise have been the case, and monetary targets must be set that are difficult to achieve. Above all, the Conservative party must rethink its attitude to industrial policy. The preoccupation with monetary solutions to our problems since 1980 is at the root of many of our present difficulties. We tried every kind of monetary target, and they all failed to be effective—and will be likely to fail again, because the deregulation of the financial institutions, abolition of capital exchange controls, and introduction of 24-hour markets using modern equipment such as faxes makes it virtually impossible to measure monetary instruments.

In the years before I retired from stockbroking, my firm had a small department staffed by clever young men who worked full time on inventing new monetary instruments. When they discovered one, they would hawk it around the banks of the world saying, "This is a clever new idea. This will not appear in your returns to your country's central bank for two or three years." It was a jolly good business —but it all helped to make monetarism, as I always thought of it in classical terms, a nonsense. Nevertheless, we will need broad money targets and to make the best of them. Above all, we must attempt to relate our future interest and exchange rates to this country's monetary position and not to those of a foreign country.

That brings me to the point that I wish to make about the Bundesbank. I was critical of it in this House in June and July, but that does not mean that I have a dislike of central bankers. Indeed, many of my best friends are central bankers. I spent 30 years earning my living advising central bankers.

Germany, like all great nations, will not change its personality. It has two great characteristics, which have been clear throughout its history. First, the Germans have an instinctive urge to dominate Europe; and, secondly, they set about that by appointing groups of élites which are not answerable to anybody. Between 1860 and 1945, that élite was the German general staff. Since 1950, following Professor Erhardt's brilliant policies, the élite that has replaced the German general staff has been the German Bundesbank.

It is understandable that the Bundesbank has pursued policies in the German national interest, as it sees it, but it has done so quite ruthlessly and with a total disregard for the effect on the remainder of Europe. No one can tell me that such extremely professional central bankers—and Dr. Schlesinger has been in the Bundesbank for 36 years—did not foresee the inevitable outcome of having interest rates of almost 10 per cent. in Germany when they were at 3 per cent. in the United States. Inevitably, Dr. Schlesinger was driving the remainder of Europe into recession and unemployment. Indeed, the probability is that it was a deliberate policy of the Bundesbank, not revealed to Chancellor Kohl, to smash the ERM of the Twelve and replace it with a much smaller currency unit, of which the Bundesbank would be in total control.

I do not believe that the Bundesbank did anything near as much to support sterling as we had assumed it would under the ERM. As it is going much further in helping the French franc, it is in effect turning the Bank of France into a regional office of the Bundesbank. That is precisely what it intended. We have had sufficient experience of dealing with the Germans over past generations not to try to mislead the British people, who understand the matter very well. The British people are in favour of European economic co-operation, but not of European monetary and political union. As the votes in Denmark and France have shown, the politicians in many European countries have become out of touch with public opinion. It is the job of the leaders of the Conservative party to get back into better touch with British public opinion and—to use the words of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor which I very much welcomed—to pursue a British economic policy from now on.

8.42 pm

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): Perhaps it is because I come from a different political generation that I find it hard even to connect with, far less understand, the sort of outlook and thinking expressed by the hon. Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell).

Nobody could underestimate the importance of this debate which, I hope, represents a turning point in the way that we debate economic policy and conduct our economic affairs. The events of last week had all the hallmarks of being a watershed for the conduct of economic policy in the United Kingdom. I hope that those events will lead to a change in policy and direction towards the development of an industrial strategy, such as that outlined by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), based on public investment. That is the only way to achieve the goal of non-inflationary growth, which we all agree must be our target.

Only public investment can tackle the bottlenecks in the supply side of our economy—the inflexibility of the housing market, the shortage of skills and the congestion of the transport system. All those throttle any attempt at growth and simultaneously lead to inflationary pressures in the economy and the collapse of the current account. Those problems must be tackled and only the Government, through public investment, can do that. In short, the medium-term financial strategy must be replaced by a long-term investment strategy. That is common ground among the Opposition parties and it is common ground in the rest of Europe. Only this Government march out of step with the rest of Europe, even in the way that they conduct economic policy.

I do not believe that this industrial strategy can be successfully pursued in isolation from the rest of Europe. The lesson of the socialist Government in France in the early 1980s shows that the narrow, national pursuit of growth, the pursuit of industrial strategy, simply does not work. The socialist Government in France found themselves compelled to work, within the framework of the exchange rate mechanism, in partnership with other countries in Europe in an effort to achieve long-term, steady, non-inflationary growth.

I do not believe that the industrial strategy that everyone on the Opposition side favours and that many in my party, who are opposed to Maastricht and the integration of Europe, favour can be carried out in isolation by one country alone. That is why it is particularly sad that in both the Prime Minister's speech today and the comments during the past week we have seen the Government try to shift the blame for this debacle, this crisis, on to the European institutions, the Community itself, the Commission, the Bundesbank and the ERM. But none of those institutions has been discredited by the events of last week. What has been discredited is not the Community, or the Commission, but the Government in their handling of economic policy and the market, and the way that the market operates—in particular, the ideology that the market is always rational, always right and always operates in the public interest. After the events of last week, nobody can say that again.

The lesson, then, to draw from the debacle of last week is not to abandon all our efforts to control the market but to do precisely the reverse. The markets, the speculators, the profiteers, must be brought under the control of Government, but not just under the control of any

[Mr. Calum Macdonald]

individual national Government. That is not possible. They must be brought under the control of Governments acting together in a co-ordinated fashion.

How is that to be done? My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) suggested that we need to consider going back to exchange controls of the kind familiar from the past. That may be a stop-gap measure that will have to be taken, but I feel that the era of exchange controls is now gone. Given the vast increase in capital movements around the world and around the markets of Europe, and given also the fact that we have moved away from exchange controls and contraints into an era of free capital movement, I do not believe that we can resurrect these controls credibly. In particular, I do not believe that we can do it in an economy such as that of the United Kingdom where the financial sector looms so large in comparison with economies such as Ireland and Spain that have resorted to these measures.

If national currency controls are no longer an option but we recognise the need to impose some control over the workings of the speculators and the market, the only way to achieve Government control in the interests of the public is through monetary union and a single currency in Europe. For any socialist or social democrat, the logic of monetary union and currency union remains strong—indeed, stronger after the events of last week. If we really want to be free from the one-sided influence of the Bundesbank, we need a new European central bank, of which the Bundesbank would be just one member and in which we can also exercise an influence over policy.

The way to kill currency speculation is by having a single currency. I can understand the political right rejoicing when markets, profiteers and speculators triumph over the public policy of a Government, but I am baffled when people on the left take comfort from such events. Floating exchange rates in a Europe of free capital movements is a speculator's paradise. Semi-fixed rates are certainly better, but in the longer term the only way for Government to beat the speculator is by abolishing him, and that can be done only in the European context by a single currency.

Mr. Winnick: My hon. Friend speaks about a single currency. Does he accept the view of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), the former Conservative leader, who conceded with enthusiasm that a single currency would mean a single state and that member states in the EMU should be organised on more or less the same federal lines as the states of the United States?

Mr. Macdonald: The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) said that that would lead to a single government. If by that he means only one level of government I would not agree, because there should be a place for different levels, regional and national. But there must also be a place for central, federal government.

There is a need to impose control on the markets and the only way for Governments in Europe to achieve such control is by moving towards currency union. That means that the Maastricht process is still valid and even more alive after last week's debacle. All aspects of the Maastricht process are valid, and not just those parts that deal with economic and monetary union. The logic of monetary union leads to the logic of a social policy, because one cannot be had without the other.

Regional and structural policies are necessary and proposals in the Maastricht treaty should be beefed up. If uncompetitive areas such as the United Kingdom have to dispense with their ability to manipulate the exchange rate, there must be a substitute, and it can only be a mechanism to arrange transfers of cash from the competitive to the less competitive parts of the single currency area.

What is the position after the events of last week and the referendum victory in France? We must face three facts. First, by Christmas every EC country except Britain and Denmark is likely to have ratified the Maastricht process and we shall no longer be able to seek comfort from plucky little Denmark. By that time, Denmark will have had to produce its own solution—either a protocol to clarify certain aspects of the treaty but which does not change it substantially, because the tail certainly cannot be allowed to wag the dog, or a Danish opt-out from sections of the treaty on citizenship, monetary union or common foreign or security policy which the Danes cannot abide.

The second fact that we must face is that the only parties that oppose the continuation of the Maastricht process are those of the extreme right and extreme left—the communists, the National Front in France and the republicans in Germany. All other major political parties on the continent of Europe are still committed to maintaining it.

Why do those extreme parties oppose the Maastricht process? It stretches credibility to think that communists are interested in greater democracy or greater decentralisation in Europe. It stretches credibility to believe that the National Front in France is interested in a more socially harmonious Europe. Those parties are feeding on fear, suspicion and prejudice. We must calm those fears, but we must never give in to prejudice.

The final fact that we must face is that France and Germany are intent on maintaining the process. France and Germany, with the Benelux countries, can move towards monetary union and press on regardless, with or without us. They will do so on monetary union, economic union, on a common foreign and security policy and on social policy. We must be part of that process, or the disaster and humiliation of last week will be as nothing compared with the trauma and impotence to come.

8.55 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I welcome the opportunity to put in a Scottish voice from the Conservative Benches. We must recognise that the United Kingdom Parliament, the monarchy and the United Kingdom's unwritten constitution are the cement that hold together the United Kingdom. Anything that we do to weaken that cement will effectively end the United Kingdom. We should never forget that.

We should remember that the past attempts of British Governments to enter into fixed single-currency arrangements have always ended in tears, and the most recent example is no exception. I agree with other hon. Members that the British people were humiliated last week and will not forget that quickly or readily. *[Interruption.]* It was the flaws in the system. *[Laughter.]* It is easy to laugh, but Conservative Members who have never supported fixed exchange-rate systems believe that experience shows that they end in tears. The recent example is a repeat of previous experience.

I support the Government taking tough fiscal policies to contain inflation, and I believe that the policies of the 1980s substantially achieved that with a floating exchange rate. I do not hold my right hon. Friend the Chancellor personally responsible, because he was carrying out policies within the constraints determined by the Government.

I remind my Treasury colleagues that some Conservative Members have been concerned for a long time that we have been taking our eye off the ball—what we can do in this Chamber to improve the United Kingdom's prospects in the real world: not the imaginary or theoretical world but the world of business. I remember saying that to colleagues in 1968 when we were talking about the great European dream. I was managing director of a company that traded at that time. I was supposed to know nothing about it, just as people who trade today are told that we politicians know best.

I sincerely believe that if we hand over more powers to Europe, especially financial powers and eventually political powers, we shall bring forward the demise of what I came into Parliament to defend—the Union, the United Kingdom.

I recognise, as, I am sure, does the Chancellor because he too comes from north of the border, that the Scots' interests are best served in this House. Under our unwritten constitution Members have the right to ask questions and to have them answered here, and that is the citizen's guarantee against malpractice and other problems. That guarantee will not exist if we enter a system in which redress is achieved through the courts where only the wealthy can be certain of having their wrongs righted. We must consider that carefully when thinking about economic matters. We have political control as long as our Chancellor makes the decisions. I welcome his comment that we will now act in Britain's interest. That means that we are back where I have always wanted to be.

I find that I can support the Government's policies tonight, but I warn them that when it comes to Maastricht, what I have said about the Union this evening will remain valid, and they cannot then count on my support.

9 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): The motion this evening asks us to support the Government's economic policy. As this debate has already made clear, this is the first time the House has been asked to vote for something that does not exist. If the Government are to carry any conviction with their Back-Bench supporters this evening they must ask us to support not one Government economic policy but two. First, there was last week's policy, which Ministers told us was good for Britain but which is this week, we understand, bad for Britain. Then there is this week's attempt at a policy—one which was once, according to the Prime Minister, a betrayal of Britain but is now supposed to be our salvation.

Small wonder that in the other House tonight, where the Government cannot always command an enthusiastic payroll majority, their Lordships are being asked not to support the motion but only to note it.

We heard today a prime ministerial speech with no information of substance, no explanation, no justification and certainly no apology to the people of this country. So the first thing the Chancellor will have to do this evening is apologise. He should apologise to the millions of home owners who were told that three years of high interest rates were essential to bring us nearer zero inflation and who are about to suffer higher inflation as a result of his new policy. He should apologise to the thousands in business who were told that stability was the essence of the Government's macro-economic policy and who have said, as the CBI has said in the past few days, that the Government have a responsibility urgently to restore certainty to the financial markets. They have said that the absence of clear guidance will further weaken business confidence. They have said, as the president of the CBI has said, that they do not need or want a devaluation of sterling but find that they cannot plan ahead with any real confidence because there is no basic framework within which to do so.

Most of all the Chancellor should apologise to the people whom the Government have made unemployed, thousands of them in the past few days—3,000 at British Aerospace, 1,500 today at Ford, many more this afternoon and many more still this week and this month. These people were told by the Chancellor that their unemployment was a price worth paying to reduce inflation. Now they find that both unemployment and inflation are likely to rise.

Our argument this evening is that the Government have failed and are no longer credible, that they are pursuing policies which are the opposite of promises they made at the election, and that they have failed to correct the underlying weaknesses of the British economy. Let us be absolutely clear about what the Government have done. There have been two full years of recession in which output, investment and employment have fallen faster than in any similar country in the European Community. There have been two full years of recession in which more businesses have gone under than in any other two-year period of British history. It is now five months since the election in which the Government promised a recovery—five months in which unemployment has risen and investment, output, bankruptcies and confidence have continued to worsen. In these five months it has become clear not only that there is no end in sight to the recession but no Government strategy to bring the recession to an end.

At the end of all this—bad enough in itself—failure has been compounded by humiliation. First, the Government have withdrawn us from the European exchange rate mechanism—something they said was a necessary framework and something they said they would never do. Secondly, the Government have abandoned what they called the cornerstone of their anti-inflationary policy—something they said they would never do. Thirdly, the Government have wasted billions of our reserves for an eventual bill of nearly £1 billion that was described by one of the speculators as a once-in-a-lifetime gift. Money that could have built new hospitals and new homes and repaired our schools and infrastructure, money that should have been used for the people of Britain was instead given to the speculators of the world.

Fourthly, the Government have devalued the currency—something they said they would never do—and, even afterwards, interest rates are 9 per cent. It is a humiliation

[Mr. Gordon Brown]

made likely by the weakness of the currency which is itself the product of the weakness of the economy and that is the product of the weakness of this Government.

Our argument is that the Government can blame neither the Germans nor the exchange rate mechanism nor extraordinary events for the scale of what has happened and the abandonment of promises they have so freely given. They have no one to blame but themselves. At every point in this developing and now deepening recession, the Government have made the wrong decisions, and the Prime Minister and the Chancellor have been deeply implicated at every stage from 1988 to 1992. They were wrong, first, when, at the Treasury, they created a consumer credit boom that was unsupported by an industrial policy and created the worsening imports figures, the rise in inflation and the rise in interest rates that led to recession. They were wrong again, but to blame, when they compounded the recession by applying a one-club policy of high interest rates without an underlying plan to improve the real economy. Even in recent days, they have been to blame when they have taken what they themselves call the soft option.

Does the Chancellor deny information that we now have from within the Italian Government that realignment, including a realignment of the British currency, was possible during the events of the past two weeks? Does he deny the statement of a German official quoted in the newspapers of 19 September that, while the Germans were prepared to move and accept realignment, in the event, the others were not ready for it? Does he deny the statement of Mr. Pöhl, the former head of the Bundesbank, that it was a mistake by Governments not to get together last week to agree a broader realignment? As Mr. Pöhl said, that would have been accompanied by a more significant cut in base interest rates and the whole thing could have been avoided.

Will the Chancellor confirm that it is wrong to say that there was no alternative to the events that unfolded? I hope that he will specifically answer those questions when he replies to the debate.

The Government should admit their mistakes and their failure to tackle the problems of the real economy. Secondly, they should admit that a return to the excesses of monetarism with all the public spending cuts and misery that that would entail would simply be a repetition of the mistakes of the past. Thirdly, they must agree that they should change course and address the problems of the real economy with a national recovery programme. They must introduce a new industry policy and they must call Government Departments together today to formulate an emergency employment programme to remove the fear of unemployment which is paralysing the economy.

The Government should reaffirm their commitment to exchange rate co-ordination and secure European co-operation for a joint programme to expand the European economies. They should take action against speculation by widening the scope for intervention and by increasing the scale of potential intervention to end the situation described yesterday by one speculator who said that not every deal is as easy as making money out of the Bank of England. Does the Chancellor deny that one Bank of England dealer has reputedly been disciplined for admitting that he alone picked up £10 million in profits in one day?

Let us be absolutely clear. The big difference in policy is this. The Government feel that nothing need be done to tackle the underlying weaknesses of the economy; we believe that any membership of the exchange rate mechanism must be accompanied by an industrial policy for Britain.

The Government's argument, as I understand it, is that on Wednesday morning they were swept aside by a tidal wave—something that could not be foreseen—in response to which they did the best they could: although in normal circumstances they would not devalue or waste reserves, on this occasion they had no choice. Our argument is that economies do not weaken in a single morning, and that the Chancellor must explain the origins, the causes and the development of the crisis. He must explain why the British and Italian economies became so weak that they could not withstand the pressures; why nothing came of the Government's boast that, under their management, the British economy was now strong enough to withstand every pressure; why no preparations were made to deal with the crisis—in particular, why the reforms in the ERM that the Chancellor supposedly now seeks were never mentioned before he left it—and why the alternatives that I suggested were not considered, although we know that they were available.

Is it not the case that the basic weakness of the currency was a result of the basic, underlying weakness of the economy? Did not the Prime Minister—who has absented himself from this part of the debate—tell the Treasury and Civil Service Committee on 26 July 1990:

> "It is always extremely undesirable to devalue. In my view, you should follow policies to make sure it does not happen"?

What is the Government's policy now—or, rather, what are the Government's policies? Let us recall the Chancellor's words on the steps of the Treasury, spoken in 45 seconds. Those 45 seconds cost the Bank of England millions. We may accuse the right hon. Gentleman of having done too little over the summer, but think of the cost to the country had he spoken for three minutes or even longer!

What did the Chancellor say from the Treasury steps about devaluation? What he said, in 45 seconds, was this:

> "There is going to be no devaluation, no leaving the ERM. We are absolutely committed to the ERM. It is at the centre of our policy. We are going to maintain sterling parity, and we will do whatever is necessary. I hope there is no room for any doubt about that at all."

There are seven statements in that, the only speech that the Chancellor made during those hectic weeks of the summer —the "no devaluation in our time" speech, unrivalled and unsurpassed for mis-statements and misjudgments. Everything that he said was consistently wrong. The Chancellor is entirely consistent: we can rely on him always to get it wrong.

Does the Chancellor still agree with what he said in the debate on the economy that took place before the summer? He said then:

> "The idea that we can help the country's economy by depreciating the exchange rate is pure illusion, pure fool's gold."

Does he still believe what he told Conservative Newsline on 2 September? He said that devaluation would not help recovery; that it would lead to a collapse in market confidence. Does he still agree with his previous view that if we left the ERM we would see a huge fall in the pound and an explosion in inflation? Does he still agree with what he told Brian Walden a few months ago, when he said that devaluation would be "the most foolish thing"? Does he now reject the statement that he made to the *Daily Express* in a question-and-answer session? When asked:

> "Are there any circumstances under which you would consider leaving the ERM?",

the right hon. Gentleman's answer was

> "No. As I have said, devaluation is fool's gold."

Why is it that the policy that the Chancellor thought foolish—the policy that would bring about a collapse in confidence, that was pure illusion and that, in one month, was fool's gold—is good for Britain this month? [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer now."] I may have to give the Chancellor more time in which to complete his answers to the questions that I shall put to him.

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree with what he said before: that many who advocate floating—that is the word that he has been using—know full well what the consequences would be? According to him,

> "They intend a devaluation of the pound, and they would certainly achieve it."

Does he agree with what he said about the effects on the currency in the long term? He said:

> "When currencies devalue against the deutschmark, the markets do not expect them to be revalued up again. As I have said, this has never happened."

Does he agree that a premium will have to be paid—that is his view—when currencies devalue against the deutschmark? To quote him:

> "Markets expect a further devaluation and demand higher rates. They expect a further devaluation and demand higher —not lower—interest rates in order to compensate for the risk."

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree with what he wrote in an academic article only a few months ago, entitled

> "UK Economic Policy—Lessons from History"?

It was a learned article in the aptly named "International Economic Insight". He said:

> "Devaluationists have failed to grasp the psychology of markets. If the pound sterling is devalued, those holding sterling assets suffer a highly visible loss. The inevitable consequence is that sterling is marked down as a risky currency to hold and people have to be paid more to hold it."

It is tragic that, after all those remarks and turning round his policy absolutely, the Chancellor shows no shame, makes no apology and gives no hint of remorse for damaging the stability of people's lives up and down the country. Does he still believe that the effect of his policy is, as he said in the articles and interviews, higher inflation, further devaluation and higher interest rates than would otherwise be necessary? We are speaking of the man who said, on 10 March, that his Budget was a Budget for recovery. On 31 December last year he said the "recession has technically ended".

There are two possible explanations for the Chancellor's behaviour; the Chancellor can choose between them: he has been seriously wrong for the past two years or he has been seriously wrong for the past two weeks. The Chancellor is inflicting on an economy that he has already left in recession for two years without doing anything about it policies that he thought until a few days ago were bad for Britain, inflationary, made conditions difficult and were liable to involve an interest rate premium for the future. The problem is that his future statements will have no credibility.

What is the Chancellor's position this evening? The Conservatives have a traditional way of managing situations such as that in which the Chancellor finds himself. First, they will cut down his appearances in the media: sightings of him will become rarer and briefer as the Trade Secretary and the Home Secretary begin to take over. Then, the Prime Minister will repeat that the Chancellor is wonderful, marvellous, brilliant and courageous. The Prime Minister will say that the Chancellor is an air raid shelter. I understand that that is the Prime Minister's way of suggesting that the Chancellor is unassailable. Given the problems of repossessions in this crisis, it is just as well that the Prime Minister is not saying that the Chancellor is as safe as houses.

Next, the Chancellor will go to the Conservative party conference and, despite all the efforts—perhaps an interest rate cut to make the Chancellor's speech more acceptable —the ovation will be shorter. Some people will not even stand; some will crouch and some will even remain sitting. Next, another meeting of the 1922 Committee will be called—of course, just to take stock. Everyone knows what happened to Sir Leon Brittan and perhaps to one other person as a result of such a meeting.

Finally, newspapers will be told that the Chancellor has become semi-detached. The Downing street press office will ask newspapers to focus less on the Chancellor's successes, and more on his eccentricities and excesses such as singing in the bath on the road to an announcement that he is about to spend more time with his family. The procedure is well known in the Conservative party. It is not a question now of "whether" but "when".

There is no point in the Chancellor setting monetary targets other than in negotiations with the publishers of his memoirs. There is no point in him worrying about the money supply except if he is negotiating a salary for the City board that he is about to join. There is no point in him thinking about foreign exchange rates unless he is asking about the surcharge on next year's package holiday to Italy. His diary secretary may be planning his appearance in November at the Lord Mayor's banquet, but probably at table 94. All that is left to be done in the changing of the guard is to book the day for the removal vans from number 11 and to hand in the keys of his country house at Chevening.

So what has the Chancellor been doing all summer? The only report of his activities in Downing street that I could find in the cuttings that I have so far examined was of the night of 25 June. Was he talking to manufacturers, business men or industrialists? Had he brought back the building societies that he was so keen to talk to before the election? No, the Chancellor was celebrating in style, at the biggest Downing street party for years, perhaps for decades. I understand from a report in the *Evening Standard* that the highlight of the evening was the honourable Petronella Wyatt, author of the only recent eulogies of the Chancellor, amidst the flamenco dancing, singing a carefully chosen song that the Chancellor wanted to hear, one of the best known marching songs—a German ditty running through Downing street, "Lily Marlene". Perhaps that is what he was singing in his bath the other day, or perhaps it might have been "Deutschmark, Deutschmark uber alles". That is the Chancellor in a summer in which——

Sir Peter Tapsell: Does the hon. Gentleman have any views on economics that he would like to share with us?

Mr. Brown: I spoke more about economics in my first 10 minutes than the Prime Minister in his whole speech.

Let us consider the Prime Minister's role in all this. The Prime Minister took us into the ERM. His new year message to the Conservative party said that one of his greatest achievements was that he had led us into the ERM with success. In the Conservative party election manifesto the Prime Minister said:

> "Membership of the ERM is now central to our counter-inflation discipline."

It was the Prime Minister who said:

> "Let me tell you what you need to stay in recession. You need a weaker pound. Let me tell you what you need for a strong recovery. You need stable exchange rates."

Will he tell the Conservative party conference next month, as Prime Minister, that the very people who stood and cheered at his success in taking Britain into the ERM in 1990 were wrong and that they should have been sitting instead? Does he still agree with the view that he stated two weeks ago about political and economic pressures? Let me quote the Prime Minister, who said:

> "All my adult life I have seen British Governments driven off their virtuous pursuit of low inflation by market problems or political pressures. All too often in the past the solution was the same—to let the exchange rate go . . . or later the result was the same—rising property prices, rising wages, rising inflation and a long-term deterioration in Britain's competitiveness."

Can the Prime Minister promise that that will not happen now? When it is clear that there was an alternative that should have been explored during the past few weeks, and that I have already set out, I challenge the Prime Minister to tell us why the unilateral devaluation that he considered 10 days ago, when he spoke to the Confederation of British Industry in Scotland, was a "betrayal of our future" is now the right policy for the Government.

Does the Prime Minister still believe that devaluation damages long-term competitiveness? Does he still believe, as he said, that

> "there is no subtler no surer means of overturning the existing basis of our society"?

Does he still believe that it is a "soft option"? Does he still believe that the ERM is "the discipline" and "the framework" and that it is a "cold world" outside it?

I challenge him to tell us why the policy that he thought good for Britain one week is now bad for Britain this week. I challenge him to tell us why the policy that he called a "betrayal" one week is now our salvation.

Mr. John Marshall: Earlier this afternoon the Leader of the Opposition refused to say whether he would take us back into the ERM. Can the hon. Gentleman tell us?

Mr. Brown: The difference between the parties has become clear during the debate. The Chancellor cannot even tell us—nor could the Prime Minister—whether they support floating or managed exchange rates. Our policy is for managed exchange rates. What are the policies of the Government? What has happened to zero inflation? What has happened to the boast that Britain was a miracle country, envied by Germany? What has happened to the boast that we would get inflation in Britain below German levels and keep it there? What has happened to the boast mentioned by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) this afternoon —that we would have a currency superior to that of Germany?

Who do the Government blame now? Is it the ERM, which the Prime Minister said a few days ago was not to blame? Is it the Germans, whom two weeks ago, in his speech to the Scottish CBI, he praised as a model to emulate for their anti-inflation record? Or do the Government blame the markets themselves, which the Prime Minister now calls irrational? The Prime Minister's response to the greatest test of the markets is not to uphold his faith in them but to call them irrational. Whoever heard of a seventh-day adventist choosing judgment day to declare himself an atheist? That is what the Prime Minister has done.

The case against the Prime Minister is not simply what he has said—that is now inoperative—but the consequences for the British economy of what he has admitted. Can he now lead our economy in Europe, after everything that he has said, which he has now had to turn on its head? Will there not always be a credibility premium now, which will have to be paid, whether in interest rates or in something else, so long as we have a Prime Minister and a Chancellor who promised that there would be no devaluation and who promised to stick with the ERM but who cannot now guarantee that they will not again change our economic policy completely?

The last time that the Prime Minister spoke in the House about the economy, he said that the real risk of leaving the ERM was that interest rates would rise rather than fall. I wonder whether, over time, the interest rate premium to which he and the Chancellor have drawn attention will have to be paid so long as they are in power.

All this time we have had the worst growth, the fastest rising unemployment and the lowest investment of any country in the EC. We were bottom of the league in Europe two years ago, we were bottom of the league last year, and we are bottom of the league now. Now the answer to the problems seems to be to return to the monetarist targets of the Thatcherite era—M3, M4 and the other monetary targets which the Chancellor himself said a few weeks ago provided

> "a poor guide to interest rate policy".

and that he could not remain indifferent to the problem of the exchange rate. All those monetary targets—the right hon. Gentleman is nodding his head. If he is targeting the exchange rate as a means of deciding interest rates, how does he assess it? Is he now shadowing the deutschmark again? How? If he says that he has an exchange rate target, he must explain what he is doing. That is another question that he will have to answer if the House is to be satisfied.

The Chancellor now says that we are not returning to cuts in interest rates, leaving the ERM and using only monetary targets. He says that he will target the exchange rate too. Conservative Members will do well to question him on what that means. After two full years of recession in which total output has fallen significantly, and five months after an election victory in which the Government promised a recovery that never arrived, we are still at the bottom of the league.

Our case is still that the weak currency which arises from a weak economy can be dealt with only by measures taken here in Britain to deal with the fundamental weakness of that economy.

At the election the Government said that they would bring recovery. They did not. They said that they would reduce unemployment through employment action, yet the promised places are 25 per cent. short. The Government guaranteed every school leaver a training place or a job. They have not delivered. They said that most repossessions would stop. Repossessions have continued. During the election campaign the Government prophesied that they could keep all their public spending promises, but they never will. They said that they would never devalue and leave the ERM—and they have done so.

The tragedy is that at this stage it is not the Government who will pay for the problems that they have created. Instead millions of British people will pay, after being hammered by the recession, with another round of public spending cuts.

The Government blame the problems on the ERM. They blame the Germans. They even try to blame my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East. They say that there is a fault line. Indeed there is a fault line in British politics, and it starts in No. 10 Downing street, passes through No. 11 Downing street, takes in every Government Department, and leads inexorably to Conservative central office.

The Government did not stay the course; they did not honour their promises. They did not yield the economic miracle. They have lost all claim to economic competence and credibility.

The Conservative party ran a general election campaign on the slogan "You can't trust Labour" and has shown itself completely unworthy of trust itself. The party that already for years has been the party of unemployment and of poverty is now the party of devaluation; the party which has abandoned the British economy with one hand to the speculators and with the other hand to our competitors so that even the pound is no longer safe in its hands. Ministers who continue to hold responsibilities now cannot command respect. They may hold office for five years, but even after five months they have lost all authority to govern. They have failed the country and they will never be trusted again.

9.30 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on taking up his position as shadow Chancellor. I look forward to debating with him on many occasions in the future.

Parliament has been recalled to discuss the events of the past fortnight. Provided that I can be given a hearing, I want to answer the questions that the hon. Gentleman has asked. I want to describe the background to our decision to leave the ERM and I want to describe how policy will operate in the new environment. Before I do that, it is important to remind ourselves why my noble Friend Baroness Thatcher and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister took us into the ERM in the first place.

In the 1980s, we brought inflation dramatically down from the catastrophic levels that had prevailed in the 1970s, but that progress was not consolidated. It was not just the Government who were keen to join the ERM; business was particularly attracted because of three advantages that it had seen the ERM bring its competitors in the 1980s—greater exchange rate stability in what had become our major trading zone, the chance to get interest rates down to levels more in line with those faced by our competitors, and, most important, its strong anti-inflationary framework and proven track record.

The ERM had demonstrated that it could deliver lower inflation. It had existed since 1979 and it had delivered for countries such as Holland and France that had not enjoyed low inflation in the past. Even my noble Friend Baroness Thatcher was convinced, at least for a day. There appeared at that time to be a consensus in favour.

Of course, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) was an early supporter of the ERM, whether because he understood it or because he simply wanted to make some difference between his policy and that of the Government of the day who can say. I cannot, and he probably cannot himself.

ERM membership brought considerable benefits to the United Kingdom and nowhere is that more evident than our inflation record. Inflation fell from 11 per cent. in the autumn of 1990 to nearer 3·5 per cent. last month. For the last year, United Kingdom inflation has been below the European average. In sum, we took sterling into the ERM because it was right for Britain, and for almost two years it worked.

But whatever the successes of the ERM in the past, it is clear that in recent weeks it has been under enormous strain. That has arisen because of two unique events. The first was the French referendum which gave the foreign exchange markets something that they had never experienced before—a fixed and definite date against which they could speculate. As the weekend approached, the market became ever more convinced that Sunday would bring with it a major currency realignment. A circumstance more conducive to market instability is difficult to imagine in a market where daily turnover is not, as someone suggested, $1 billion but $1 trillion—a million million dollars.

The more fundamental underlying cause, as some of my hon. Friends said, was the far-reaching consequences of German reunification and the conflict that that engendered between German policy needs and those of most other countries. Reunification has meant higher German interest rates than many countries need to control their inflation. That is not a criticism of Germany but merely a statement of fact.

A further consequence of the position in Germany—as my hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) said—is that the generally high level of European interest rates led to a considerable appreciation of all European currencies against the dollar. That was quite unrelated to fundamentals, and further intensified recession and deflation in Europe. Until last Monday's cut, as my hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey also said, German interest rates were at a post-war high. At the same time, American interest rates remained at a 30-year low. That is clearly neither a normal nor a sustainable state of affairs.

That unique set of circumstances not only affected Britain but set off a chain reaction across Europe, starting in the Scandinavian countries. Finland was forced to abandon its link to the ERM, then Sweden was compelled to raise interest rates three times to astonishing levels—75 per cent., 500 per cent., and 700 per cent.—in an increasingly desperate attempt to cling to its ERM link.

Italy was forced to raise interest rates, then to devalue, and finally to leave the system altogether. Contrary to its stated actions, Spain had to devalue and then to reimpose exchange controls. In every case, Finance Ministers found themselves taking the very actions which they hoped to avoid and which they once publicly set themselves against.

[The Chancellor of the Exchequer]

Still the storm has not subsided. Only yesterday France had to raise interest rates to 13 per cent., which is the last thing that the French economy, with 3 million unemployed, needs at this moment.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): The Chancellor implied that other Finance Ministers hoped to avoid those strategies. There was no mention of hope when the right hon. Gentleman spoke on the steps of the Treasury, when he said for definite that he would not leave the ERM. He said for definite also that he would not devalue—and he has. Who can trust what he says tonight?

Mr. Lamont: I am sorry that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman, but I will deal with his point later.

We always knew that the period leading to the French referendum would be difficult, and we drew up careful plans to protect sterling's position. We took steps to strengthen our foreign exchange resources—an operation which, contrary to the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition, was widely commended in the markets at the time and which led to a significant strengthening of sterling.

In conjunction with our European Community partners, including France, I repeatedly pressed the German authorities on a number of occasions not to go against their own policy in Germany but to ease tensions in the ERM by reducing interest rates. That eventually led to what was admittedly a small cut in German interest rates the weekend before last. The initial impact was helpful. At the beginning of last week, the markets seemed to think that sterling might get through the week without further trouble. Unfortunately, at that critical moment the markets were thrown into renewed turmoil by remarks about the need for sterling devaluation attributed to the president of the Bundesbank, Dr. Schlesinger. Those remarks were never convincingly denied, and they triggered the final, irresistible assault on sterling.

The very next day, the markets opened with sterling right at the bottom of its ERM bands. The House will appreciate that, under the terms of ERM membership, when a currency reaches its floor the country in question is obliged to buy back unlimited amounts of its own currency at that parity. For a currency as widely traded as sterling, that meant that our position became extremely serious. I responded at once by raising interest rates. I raised them again that afternoon. After consulting my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and senior colleagues, I concluded that Britain's best interests demanded its immediate suspension from the ERM.

I have read much about those events and I have listened to what people have said and to what has been said in today's debate. I can only say that, after all that, on the matter of the events of last week and the week before, I have not heard of anything that might have been done or handled differently that would have produced a different outcome.

Many Opposition Members advocated a concerted interest rate reduction across Europe. That is precisely what I, the French and the Italians sought to achieve, but it could never come about without a significant cut in German interest rates and that was not forthcoming. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East made the accusation this afternoon that the Government could have avoided the suspension of sterling from the ERM if only we had sought a general realignment of European currencies. I think that that is what he said——

Mr. John Smith *indicated assent.*

Mr. Lamont: The right hon. and learned Gentleman confirms that. What did he mean? Realignment covers a multitude of sins. At one end of the spectrum there is a unilateral upward revaluation of the deutschmark. He says that he is against devaluation, but I must tell him that a unilateral deutschmark revaluation was simply never available. The Germans never sought it, and while the French, the Dutch and others were not prepared to devalue against the deutschmark, the option that he claimed as his solution did not exist. The only option on the table was a sterling devaluation, perhaps in combination with the Italian lira.

I can hardly believe that the right hon. and learned Gentleman had the cheek to suggest that the way to have avoided a sterling depreciation last Thursday would have been to devalue on Sunday. His suggestion was not only naive; it was extraordinary. He said that it was the obvious solution, but it was not so obvious to his hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East. Just two days before the lira was devalued, he wrote in *The Guardian:*

> "Our policy is not one of devaluation, nor is it one of revaluation or re-alignment . . . One of the things the Germans may wish to propose is whether a re-alignment of the currencies will bring interest rates down. There is no guarantee that that would happen and it is not our policy."

There seems to be some difference between the hon. Gentleman and the right hon. and learned Gentleman. So much for his case—his remedy to cure the problem was expressly rejected by his shadow Chancellor.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East and the right hon. and learned Gentleman made much of what I said in my speech about devaluation about being opposed to devaluation and of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's speech to the Scottish CBI. At the time that I made my statements the strains were beginning to appear in the ERM. There was repeated speculation in the press and in the markets that the Government were not wholly committed to the existing parities. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I repeatedly rejected the idea of a devaluation or a withdrawal from the ERM. I believe that we were right to do so. As long as there was the chance to keep sterling in the ERM, I had to reaffirm the agreed policy of the Government, and in the strongest possible terms. To have expressed myself ambiguously or less strongly would have exacerbated the pressures that were building up.

I implemented every measure that I could to defend sterling's position. I backed my words with action and so did my Finance Minister colleagues around Europe, but we faced a unique and ultimately irresistible set of circumstances. History might have been different had we not been subjected to a constant stream of half-leaks and rumours emanating from certain sources. The days immediately prior to the referendum required extraordinarily sensitive handling and for the authorities to take great care in their public statements. That is not what happened and that is a matter for the profoundest regret.

Mr. Beith: Why, then, despite all these efforts, did the markets expect that it would be sterling—not the franc or, of course, the deutschmark, or the Belgians, or the Dutch—that would be vulnerable?

Mr. Lamont: The remarks by the president of the Bundesbank were specifically directed to sterling. I do not want to do a Dr. Schlesinger on the French franc, but it is perfectly apparent from reading newspapers that there is quite a lot of pressure on that currency.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I have made it clear that a number of important conditions need to be fulfilled before Britain could rejoin the ERM. First, there can be no question of resuming our membership until the current tensions within the foreign exchange markets have subsided. Secondly, I have made it clear to our European partners that we need to have a proper review of the whole way in which the ERM works, the intervention rules, the co-operation procedures and the obligations that it places upon the those currencies at the top and the bottom of the exchange rate mechanism bands. Thirdly, and most fundamentally, as I have already made clear, the root cause of the current turbulence has been the unique event of German reunification. My preference would have been to stay in the system and to see through the problems that this posed, but now that we have left I do not believe that it would be right for me to recommend that sterling should re-enter the ERM unless and until the German economy and ours are more in step and unless and until the Germans are in a position to bring their interest rates down to levels which are more compatible with sustained, non-inflationary growth.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Does the Chancellor not recognise that when he listed the culpable persons, none of whom is, apparently, in the British Government, who were responsible for devaluation, it amounted to a staggering confession of the vulnerability of the British pound? People will ask why, when there are problems over uniting east and west Germany, it is the pound that is hit, why, when the French go to vote, it is the pound that is hit, why, when the German Bundesbank, or members associated with it, give leaks, it is the pound that is hit. How does the Chancellor intend to insulate himself from those developments in Europe, apart from shadowing the rouble?

Mr. Lamont: One quick answer to the hon. Gentleman is that sterling is, of course, a currency which is traded five time as widely as most of the other ERM currencies.

The decision to take the pound out of the ERM was a setback, but it does not and will not make any difference to our determination to bring inflation down to the lowest levels in Europe. Although this was not the outcome I sought, the events of last week have, in some ways, presented us with an opportunity. As a result of the strains I have described, we have over the past months been forced to pursue a policy that was tighter than was required in order to get inflation down in Britain. The Government were prepared to accept that while sterling remained within the ERM, because of the long-term gains that we wanted to get from low inflation, but now that sterling is floating I have been able to take advantage of the greater discretion we now have to make what is a prudent reduction in interest rates and which is wholly appropriate to Britain's own domestic situation.

I know that the 1 per cent. cut that I announced on Tuesday was welcomed by businesses and those with mortgages. It means that British interest rates are now among the lowest in the European Community, but I must emphasise to my hon. Friends that I have been able to make this move only because of the remarkable success we have had over the last two years in reducing inflation. I would have no hesitation in putting up interest rates again if I thought that our inflation objectives were in jeopardy.

I want to make one thing crystal clear. No one should fool themselves that a floating exchange rate regime is a soft or easy option. I do not believe in a weak currency; I do not believe in devaluation; but we will have a British monetary policy tailored to the needs of the British economy. I will not throw away the gains on inflation that we have made over the last two years.

We cannot allow Britain to become an island of high inflation, drifting away from a European zone of price stability. In the early 1980s we showed with a floating regime that it was possible to reduce inflation, as we did from over 20 per cent. to under 5 per cent., while the pound floated. I am determined that we shall achieve that success again.

In setting interest rates over the period ahead I shall be guided by a range of indicators. We shall maintain our current target of 0 to 4 per cent. for narrow money. We shall also follow broad money, and asset prices as well as the exchange rate itself. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East seems to be astonished that one cannot set interest rates without taking the exchange rate into account. It has nothing to do with targets. It must be taken into account because it is part of the tightness or looseness of monetary policy in the economy, and we shall take account of exchange rates in setting interest rates. We shall also continue with our policy of fully funding the PSBR.

I shall shortly set out in more detail in another speech the precise, more detailed monetary framework that we shall follow. Monetary policy will continue, as before, to be supported by our tight fiscal stance. In this new situation it is all the more important for the Government to stick rigorously to our public spending objectives. The strictest control of public expenditure, including public sector pay, is at the top of my policy agenda. Without tight control of public expenditure, interest rate reductions, such as the one that I announced this week, would not be possible. Rapid growth in Government spending would require high interest rates to finance it and to restrain inflation, and that is the greatest divide between Conservatives and the Labour party.

Neither in the election campaign nor since have the Opposition been able to control their addiction to spending, and that means that they would never have had a hope of cutting interest rates this week or at any stage in the future. Their attitude is to parrot calls for lower interest rates, and they want spending programmes that would send inflation sky high. Let no one be in any doubt: only tight restraint on public spending can assure us of low inflation and low interest rates and only this Government are able and willing to deliver that.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Will the Chancellor confirm that, despite a promise a mere five months ago that the Government would commit money to housing and housing associations, money for housing is to be reduced in the present round of cuts by £2 billion? How is that holding to his promises? Is not he reneging on them?

Mr. Lamont: We have recently vastly increased resources to the Housing Corporation.

Mr. Gordon Brown: During the election campaign the Chancellor said that he would hold to all the public

[Mr. Gordon Brown]

spending figures in the various statements, and that was confirmed by the Prime Minister. Can he give an absolute undertaking that that is still the Government's policy?

Mr. Lamont: I have announced the remit for public spending and we are sticking to our published plans for next year. That is crystal clear.

Mr. Gordon Brown *rose*——

Mr. Lamont: No, I must get on.

I fully understand the difficulties faced by many businesses and families. The Leader of the Opposition said that since the election every economic indicator had declined. Does he not know that manufacturing output increased in both the first and second quarters of this year? Has his hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East, who, no doubt, has to advise him nowadays, not told him that retail sales rose in the second quarter and continued to rise in the latest three months to the highest level for almost two years? Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman not been told that in the second quarter manufacturing investment rose by over 3 per cent. and that business investment was up in the first and second quarters of this year? Most of all, he did not seem to be aware that, in the quarter following the election, non-oil GDP actually rose. Every one of those developments is good news, but, of course, we could not expect to hear about them from the Opposition.

The reaction of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East to the cut in interest rates to 9 per cent. broke all records for gall. He appeared on television and criticised me for changing interest rates five times in four days. What on earth does he mean? Since he supports the ERM, was it wrong to increase interest rates to defend the ERM? What did he mean by saying that he is committed to the ERM? Would he have caved in at the first sign of trouble or would he have increased rates just once and then caved in? Is he saying that once we had left the ERM it made sense to keep interest rates at 15 per cent? Surely he could have welcomed the reduction in interest rates to 9 per cent.—the lowest level since the summer of 1988.

Only last week, as soon as the Bundesbank announced that German rates would be reduced, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East was jumping up and down like a dervish, as he seems to be doing now. Even before hearing by how much German rates would be reduced, he rushed to the nearest television studio and called on me to slash interest rates. I received a lot of advice last week, but that was undoubtedly the dumbest that I received.

The hon. Gentleman's position on interest rates lacks any credibility. He spent his first few weeks as shadow Chancellor calling on me to maintain our position on the ERM but to slash interest rates at the same time. As the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) wrote in the *Evening Standard:*

> "I do not reveal any new economic law when I say that this is simply nonsense."

The Leader of the Opposition and the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East have tried to maintain that what happened on the foreign exchange markets had something to do with the fundamentals of the British economy, but Britain has a lower rate of inflation than the Community average, has one of the lowest debt-to-GDP ratios in Europe and few European countries have a stronger underlying financial position. Are they seriously saying that what the markets are doing to the French franc is due to fundamentals? Do they think that the 13 per cent. interest rate dictated by the French markets is what the French economy fundamentally requires? Is that their view of markets?

Fortunately, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) knows better. Only last week he said in *The Guardian:*

> "It is misleading to say that it is the recession which caused the problem of the pound."

If he were here, perhaps the hon. Gentleman could explain that to the Leader of the Opposition.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East talks about the need for a long-term strategy for the British economy. We know that his idea of a long-term plan is thinking up tomorrow's soundbite a week in advance.

Mr. Gordon Brown: The Chancellor's case this evening is that there has been no alternative. Will he answer directly and specifically one question that I put to him: was a realignment discussed?

Mr. Lamont: I have answered that question. I have said that a unilateral German—*[Interruption.]* That is what the word realignment means. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East shows that he does not know what he is talking about. I cannot disclose confidential discussions. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah".] The hon. Gentleman is asking me to disclose the position of other countries whose currencies would be affected by that, which shows how little he understands.

Sound money, free enterprise, light regulation and less government are the principles on which we fought the election. Nothing that has happened in recent days changes our commitment to those objectives or the fact that we are the only party that bases its policies on them. We will continue with those policies, which have brought record living standards to this country, the reform of industrial relations, the privatisation programme, which has returned two thirds of nationalised industries to the private sector, and the reform of company taxation, which has given this country the lowest level of corporation tax in the European Community.

Whatever the difficulties of the past week, our determination to achieve our goals remains unshakeable. We have set them for ourselves, we will stick to them, and I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to support them.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 288, Noes 330.

Division No. 72] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*

Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronald *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Speller, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ray Powell and
Mr. Thomas McAvoy.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James

Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rucl'ff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom-Ewell)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N-Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Nicholas Baker

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 322, Noes 296.

Division No. 73] [10.15 pm

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard

Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rucliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter

Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom-Ewell)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
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Hordern, Sir Peter
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Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
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Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*

Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas

Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*

Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John

Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek

Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron

Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce

Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Jack Thompson.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved.

That this House expresses its support for the economic policy of Her Majesty's Government.

The House, having continued to sit to twenty-nine minutes past Ten o'clock, adjourned till tomorrow, pursuant to the Resolution this day.

House of Commons

Friday 25 September 1992

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BILLS PRESENTED

TREATY OF MAASTRICHT (REFERENDUM)

Mr. Tony Benn, supported by Mr. Peter Shore, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. Austin Mitchell, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Bernie Grant, Mr. Ken Livingstone, Dr. Lynne Jones and Mr. Malcolm Chisholm, presented a Bill to provide for the holding of a national referendum, and for the procedure for the subsequent decision of the House of Commons, on the question of British ratification of the Treaty of Maastricht before Her Majesty's Government may lawfully adhere to that Treaty on behalf of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; and for purposes connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 23 October and to be printed. [Bill 63.]

RECALL OF PARLIAMENT BY MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Mr. Graham Allen presented a Bill to give a majority of Members of Parliament so requesting to the Speaker the right to require the recall of the House of Commons to discuss a named topic: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 23 October and to be printed. [Bill 64.]

United Nations Operations

Motions made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

[Relevant documents: Minutes of Evidence before the Defence Committee on 22nd September 1992 relating to recent and proposed deployments in the Gulf Region and in Yugoslavia, HC 188.]

9.34 am

Madam Speaker: Order. Before we come to the debate on the Adjournment, I must tell the House that I have imposed a 10-minute limit on speeches between 11.30 am and 1 pm. I hope that I shall receive the same co-operation that I had yesterday regarding speeches outside that time, for which I thank hon. Members very much.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The large number of hon. Members in the Chamber today shows the support in all parts of the House for a debate on foreign affairs. There is considerable concern that we do not have more time available. I suggested yesterday that we should continue today until 4 pm.

The terms of the motion are rather narrow and do not allow any debate on the middle east crisis, the position in South Africa or British aid to Pakistan following the flood disaster. We now understand that the debate is to be punctuated by a personal statement by the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor).

Bearing all that in mind, will you, Madam Speaker, display your customary tolerance and understanding if in any interventions—I stress the word "interventions"—the Foreign Secretary is asked for some explanation on the matters that I have raised?

Madam Speaker: Order. This is an Adjournment debate. Although I would not wish hon. Members to stray too far from the words on the Order Paper, I think that I might agree to a limited question or two on the matters raised by the hon. Gentleman. I hope that hon. Members will understand that and will keep to the procedures that we always uphold in the House.

9.37 am

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I congratulate the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on his arrival, if that is the word, to the position of shadow Foreign Secretary. I very much look forward to working opposite him—I am not sure whether with him or against him; only time will tell—for a long time to come.

I apologise to the House for the fact that I cannot stay until the end of the debate. I have two meetings at the United Nations with the Foreign Ministers of China and Iran and neither meeting is routine, as hon. Members may guess. I have already rescheduled them to a later time today, but I fear that I cannot shed them altogether. Indeed, it would be a pity to do so.

Two years ago, the end of the cold war appeared to promise a better world—and for some months all the news appeared to be miraculously good. Matters appeared to have taken a change for the better almost overnight. Now, we see matters differently. The world post-cold war is in many ways a better place, but in others it is more unstable.

[Mr. Douglas Hurd]

International order is threatened by problems left as a result of the cold war—older problems and challenges to the rule of law.

The three subjects identified for debate today—Yugoslavia, Iraq and Somalia—are, perhaps, the three most tragic examples of that. I want to take stock of developments in all three areas during the summer and to look forward to where we go from here.

Yugoslavia is a crisis in Europe and for Europe. There are few—we have heard a voice or two in the House in the past—who feel that, on the whole, we should pass by on the other side, because our essential interests are not at stake and because our chances of doing anything useful are slim. I understand that point of view, but I do not agree with it. Many more people inside and outside the House, faced daily with the horror of Yugoslavia as presented in the press and on television, say that something must be done but are not specific about it. We must be specific in government and in the House. The killing and the suffering are on our doorstep and I do not think that we can detach ourselves from a sensible, realistic effort to bring that killing and suffering to an end.

Let us step back for a minute and examine the background. Yugoslavia was created in 1919 to cope with a particular problem—the fact that 12 million people with very different histories were mingled inextricably in the north-west of the Balkans.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): It was the common market of its day.

Mr. Hurd: Oh, it was the common market, was it? I look forward to the hon. Gentleman's speech about the common market in 1919, and the creation of Yugoslavia.

For 70 years the problem was not solved, but it was at least dormant—first under the monarchy, then under the communist regime of Marshal Tito. People were not free, but at least during those 70 years—except during the second world war—they were not killing each other. As the communist regime disintegrated, an effort—a worthwhile effort—was made to preserve Yugoslavia by consent. Sadly, that effort failed disastrously. Then the EC was persuaded by others, and by its own instincts, to try to help prevent total civil war and total collapse. The EC, however, is not a military power and it is still not fully equipped for joint action in foreign policy.

How far have we got with that effort? Clearly, not far enough. We have kept at bay the old rivalries between the great powers of western Europe: the rivalries that helped to produce Balkan wars in the first decade of the century and culminated in the bloodiest war in all history—the great war. Now, at least, different European powers are not backing different clients in the Balkans. That is a negative achievement, but nevertheless we have avoided what might have been worse—more killings and more refugees. We have managed so far to prevent the conflict from engaging a wider area than the former Yugoslavia and setting back the clock of history.

As I have said, however, that is a negative achievement. How are we positively helping to achieve peace? I feel that I must put in a realistic word at this point. We cannot dictate peace in Yugoslavia; none of us—Britain, France, Germany, the Community or the United Nations—has been in a position to sweep into the different republics, tell them what their frontiers are, tell them who should govern them and instruct them in how they should behave to each other. We cannot act as a colonial power in eastern Europe. Bosnia will not be a protectorate of the Community.

After the collapse of Yugoslavia, what remained were the six republics. They were the only surviving political entities. Their boundaries were not perfect, but anyone who looks at the map and sees the way in which people live together in that part of the world will know that there cannot be perfect boundaries. That is why the EC, followed by the UN and the London conference, quickly laid down two principles: no alteration of boundaries by force, and established rights for minorities within boundaries.

It was on that basis that Lord Carrington began, on behalf of the Community, his thankless task as a peacemaker. That task was thankless because he and his team constructed ceasefires, and obtained signatures to ceasefires, that were never honoured. Nevertheless, they carried out a good deal of detailed groundwork, which will certainly be the basis for an eventual settlement. Their work is being continued today and I am sure that in the end it will provide the foundations for peace. During that period a fragile peace was established in Croatia, with the deployment of a UN force—UNPROFOR—containing 14,000 men, of which the British component is a field ambulance of 300.

We cannot be assured about the position in Croatia. Some of my hon. Friends have visited the country recently and they will know that it may become increasingly shaky—particularly as the mandate of UNPROFOR nears its term in the early part of next year. That is why we must press ahead in Croatia with local arrangements and confidence-building measures.

When I was in Zagreb in July, President Tudjman of Croatia mentioned to me the importance of securing an agreement that would demilitarise the Prevlaka peninsula and raise the siege of Dubrovnik. I pursued the matter in Belgrade and we arranged discussions and negotiations between the local commanders on board HMS Avenger in the Adriatic. There have been setbacks, but it now looks as if that local arrangement may actually take shape. I cite that as an example of what can be done.

We now have 150 EC monitors throughout Croatia, under a British leader. I have seen for myself, as have other Members of Parliament, how effective those unarmed monitors—mostly young ex-army officers—can be in, for example, establishing confidence between village and village so that people can get back to rebuilding their houses and their lives.

I do not need to tell the House how the storm then shifted to Bosnia. I shall not go into it, because we and our constituents have seen, night by night, that storm blow up into tragedy throughout the summer.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Bosnia was predictable and predicted; Kosovo is still predictable. What is the international community now doing to prevent the tragedy in Bosnia from proceeding into Kosovo?

Mr. Hurd: I am going to mention Kosovo later in my speech. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will bear with me until then.

Once again, in the summer, ceasefires were called in Bosnia and once again they broke down or were never implemented. The UN and EC therefore decided, with wide international support, to bind their efforts more closely together. That is why my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Secretary-General of the United Nations marshalled the support and the machinery of the wider international community in support of the effort.

This was not a once-and-for-all conference. It did not aim at a ceasefire with immediate effect, because such ceasefires had proved in the past to be illusions. What it did was establish certain agreements and a framework for carrying them into effect. That new process—the international conference on the former Yugoslavia—continues its work, mostly in Geneva, under the co-chairmanship of Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen. I am sure that the House will join me in expressing thanks to those two particularly energetic gentlemen for assuming what is undoubtedly a frustrating but indispensable task.

The conference is not about something abstract or bureaucratic; it is trying to do something humanitarian—to alleviate the suffering of victims of the conflict—and something political—to bring the conflict permanently to an end. Contrary to some predictions by the cynical press, it was agreed by all at the London conference that Bosnia Hercegovina should not be partitioned between neighbouring states. It is a country with recognised frontiers and it is entitled to work out within those frontiers how the different communities in Bosnia—Serb, Croat and Muslim—can in future live peaceably together.

A wide range of undertakings were given and published in London, covering such matters as speeding up the delivery of aid, corraling heavy weapons, the cessation of military aggression and the holding of constitutional discussions. There has been some progress in carrying out those undertakings, but it is not adequate.

In such circumstances, diplomacy obviously does not work without pressures. We believe that the main pressures still need to be applied against Serbia and Montenegro. That is not because other participants in the fighting—either the Croats or the Bosnian Muslims—are free from blame for some of the suffering, but, according to both our analysis and that of the international community, it was the Serbs, with encouragement from Belgrade, who started the fighting in Bosnia. It is they who carry the largest responsibility for the continuation of that fighting. That is why, whereas there is an arms embargo against all the republics, the United Nations mandatory trade embargo is directed against Serbia and Montenegro.

The sanctions are having an effect. We believe that industrial production in Serbia has been roughly halved, overall trade is down by 50 to 75 per cent. and oil imports are down by more than 80 per cent. Those sanctions must be comprehensively applied. That is why we have ships in the Adriatic, including HMS Gloucester, which deter sanctions-breaking by sea.

There has been a specific problem along the Danube. The Governments involved have asked for monitors to be stationed along their borders to help them to apply sanctions, which they say that they are determined to do. During the next fortnight, the European Community and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe will send three teams of experts, including customs officers, to Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania to advise local customs officers, pass on information about any breaches of sanctions to the sanctions committee of the Security Council and, by their presence in key positions, help to deter individuals who might cheat.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): As my right hon. Friend said, it has been agreed that the Bosnian state should be upheld and it has been recognised that its existence should be maintained. Is it also right to uphold the rights of the so-called Bosnian Government—predominantly, Bosnian-Muslim—in their claim to rule the whole of the district?

Mr. Hurd: They are the legitimate Government of the whole region. We urge them to enter discussions with the groups that are not fully represented in the Government, so that out of the discussions taking place in Geneva may come an agreement on how Bosnia can be governed and how the three communities can live together in peace. The Bosnian Government have replied that they can do that only if efforts are made to bring about a cessation of hostilities. Those two issues must be tackled together, as neither will work without the other.

A powerful political debate is under way in Belgrade. I pay tribute to the courage and persistence of Prime Minister Panic in arguing for and taking steps towards a saner policy. I had a long talk with him two evenings ago. I do not doubt his courage and sincerity, but he has an uphill task. I am convinced that we need to maintain and increase the pressures on Serbia and Montenegro until that change of policy is an established fact.

We are also anxious about the position of Kosovo. We accept that it is part of Serbia, but it contains a heavy preponderance of people of Albanian origin whose rights are not properly recognised. We are trying to get people into that part of former Yugoslavia. As the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) knows, the CSCE is in the lead on that and has managed to get some people in. However, I am not at all happy or sanguine about the position.

We have emphasised in Belgrade that the denial of the sort of rights that the Kosovons enjoyed before 1988 creates the danger of another explosion that could set back all the efforts and the progress that is being falteringly made in other parts of former Yugoslavia such as Croatia.

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): Has the Foreign Secretary seen the *Financial Times* today? It contains a report that the Croations are seizing territory in the south-west of Bosnia and preparing its partition. The Foreign Secretary has not mentioned that issue—will he comment on it?

Mr. Hurd: I have mentioned the principle, which President Tudjman accepted—at Zagreb when I saw him in July, and in London—that Bosnia Hercegovina is a state with established frontiers. There is Croatian military activity in Hercegovina, just as there is Serbian military activity in other parts of Bosnia. There have been previous stories in the press about partition, but both the Governments involved have ruled that out—it is important that that should be so or we face the prospect of endless civil war in Bosnia. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I have answered the question twice. I answered it before the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) asked it and I have now answered it again.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): The right hon. Gentleman has made no comment on the malign influence of Greece on the non-recognition of Macedonia. Will he comment on that, as it is another extremely dangerous spot?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. I cannot cover every aspect of the issue, but he is right about the problem of Macedonia. We came to a conclusion at the Lisbon Council, which was obviously welcomed by Greece, but unacceptable to the Government in Skopje, as I found when I went there in July. I have asked one of our former ambassadors, Mr. Robin O'Neill, to try to work out an agreement that is acceptable to everyone by shuttling between Athens and Skopje. That is what is required, and we have not forgotten the problem.

Suggestions have been made for military intervention on a bigger scale and for a different purpose than is now proposed. It is natural that people watching the atrocities on television, seeing the bombardment of Sarajevo and the emaciated figures emerging from the camps, should urge military action by air or land against those responsible.

Personally, I felt and said that such action would have been morally justified if it could have been effective in bringing those atrocities to an end. Air strikes were the option most often put forward, and we and others considered that suggestion more than once. However, given the terrain, the weapons being used for most of the killing—which were not heavy weapons—the way in which civilians and military—Croats, Muslims and Serbs—live side by side and the likelihood that such military action would immediately bring to an end the humanitarian activities of the Red Cross and United Nations agencies, we and our allies and partners have come down against that option each time it has been considered. It would be easy to increase the casualty list without stopping the conflict—something which we must avoid.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I am grateful to the Foreign Secretary and I am sorry to interrupt him in the middle of his speech. However, in view of the continuing use of aircraft by the Serbs for attacks on Sarajevo and other defenceless civilian targets, are the Government at least prepared to support the recommendation put forward, I believe, by the Americans that there should be an enforced no-fly zone over the contested territory of Bosnia?

Mr. Hurd: There should be a no-fly zone. One of the undertakings given in London was that there should not be military flights, but there are. We are considering what sort of no-fly zone would make sense. I believe that Lord Owen and Mr. Vance hope to be in Banja Luka today. I certainly agree that the concept of a no-fly zone must be carried forward. It may be—this is Lord Owen's present view—that the best way of ensuring that is to have monitors on the ground, which is a suggestion that we are pursuing.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I do not think that the objective of those who advocated additional military action was to escalate military war in Bosnia. The objective was to hit lines of communications and munitions factories in Serbia, to leave the Serbs in no doubt that any escalation or extension of their activities into neighbouring Kosovo or Montenegro would bring about an instant and harsh reaction from western powers.

Mr. Hurd: That was the specific proposal made by my hon. Friend, with whom I have been in touch on the subject and to whom I am grateful. At present, we are not seeing huge movements of troops or tanks from Serbia to Bosnia. We are seeing in the possession of Bosnian Serbs in Bosnia aircraft and artillery that has been left behind—a different position from that earlier in the year.

In recent weeks there has been some occasional slackening of the level of fighting in Bosnia and Hercegovina. We cannot take much comfort from that, because it has simply allowed the humanitarian problem to emerge in all its bleakness.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has registered more than 1·9 million refugees of the former Yugoslavia. Of those, 1·2 million come from Bosnia Hercegovina. She estimates that there are 700,000 refugees in Bosnia, 600,000 in Croatia and 400,000 in Serbia. Those are merely figures and they do not portray the physical suffering and misery which is being endured and which will worsen rapidly as winter descends.

There has been a discussion and the international community is broadly agreed that refugees should be looked after as close to their homes as possible. That is not a do-nothing policy and it is certainly not a cost-free policy. It is a policy which the agencies, as well as most Governments, consider has the best chance to get people back into their homes to lead normal lives. It is not the absolute and, of course, there are exceptions, as we saw last week with the 68 seriously ill people who were brought to Britain from the camps in Bosnia. In those cases we have to act as swiftly as we can, but in the main we try to help people to stay as close to their homes as possible.

In the past 12 months, Britain has given more than £14 million in bilateral humanitarian help to the former Yugoslavia. Again, that is merely a figure, but the vast majority of medicines being used in Sarajevo hospitals come from supplies sent by Britain. If we add to that figure our help through the European Community, the total figure for British aid to the former Yugoslavia comes to more than £35 million.

However, it is not merely a matter of money and supplies. The main problem has been getting aid through and that is why, after much thought, we have endorsed the extension of the UN forces mandate under Security Council resolution 776. The force now has a mandate to get aid to all the people in Bosnia who need it, and not merely to those in Sarajevo, as in the original mandate. The decision to offer up to 1,800 British troops to help with that task was clearly not an easy decision to take. The British Government should never deploy British troops without careful preparation and assessment of what their role and objectives should be.

That is a humanitarian task to help cope with a humanitarian disaster which will get worse. No one can have seen the pictures from Bosnia of the sieges of Gorazde, Bihac and Tuzla without realising the extent of the suffering and the need, and without realising that some military assistance is needed. For example, while UNHCR was distributing the first consignment of aid to Gorazde the convoy's route back to Sarajevo was mined. French soldiers with blue helmets cleared the path to allow the convoy to complete its mission. It is a sad and a bad thing, but the relief agencies have concluded that they need military help or they will not be able to relieve the disaster. The British contribution will be up to 1,800 strong and that includes about 800 support people.

The Select Committee on Defence has naturally asked questions and received answers this week on the details of the deployment. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will say more when he winds up the debate.

Command and control and the rules of engagement must be got right. That is why we have a military team in Zagreb sorting out those details. The discussions are rightly in the hands of people who understand what soldiers need. Adequate arrangements have to be in place in advance of the arrival of the main party of British troops in early November.

As we have made clear to the UN, the offer is for convoy protection only. We would not allow our forces to be used for other duties not covered by the present mandate without a pause for further reflection, and on the basis of a clear and effective concept of operations.

As my right hon. and learned Friend will elaborate, our forces have to be able to defend themselves. Their guidelines will be clear. The Secretary-General and the Security Council have agreed that, in providing protective support to UNHCR organised convoys, the UNPROFOR troops concerned would follow normal peacekeeping rules of engagement. They would thus be authorised to use force in self defence. In this context, self defence is deemed to include situations in which our personnel are attacked by force to prevent UN troops from carrying out their mandate.

Again after much discussion, NATO is providing many of the necessary assets in personnel and logistics to support the operation. Both NATO and the Western European Union have been involved in contingency planning for those operations, and they have co-operated well.

I would not pretend to the House that we have seen the end of trouble in Yugoslavia or even a sure beginning of the end. Once old hatreds have been aroused, they are hard to put to sleep again. Stories of atrocities—some true, many false—enter deep into the consciousness of all concerned and influence actions.

In the European Community we have recently learnt to reconcile differences in western Europe.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): Is not the most important thing at this time somehow to stop the shelling of towns and villages? My right hon. Friend is right to say that the people of this country are appalled at watching that night after night, with UN observers doing nothing other than count the shells as they are fired. Are we really saying that no matter what happens in European countries quite close to our own, no matter what atrocities occur, there is no military action that we, the Community or the UN can take to stop the daily carnage taking place under our noses?

Mr. Hurd: I have tried to analyse the military options. I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that they have been considered often, not merely by us but by the Americans, by our European partners and by the UN. There are several options and I have not been through them all. I mentioned the possibility of air strikes against the hillsides around Sarajevo or, as my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) suggested, in Serbia. The difficulty with all the military options, as opposed to the relentless and increasing pressure of sanctions against a country which is not equipped to endure them, is that in such terrain, with the intermingling of military personnel and civilians and of Serbs, Bosnians and Croats, it is hard to work out a practical scheme which would not merely add to the number of people killed without ending the fighting. There is an added difficulty, which has been emphasised to us again and again; if we began to take that course of action, the humanitarian aid, which is now getting through, would stop and could not be continued. That is a damning factor against all those ideas.

I am not saying that those ideas should not be considered from time to time. The position is so bleak that I do not believe that such ideas should be excluded indefinitely, but I have tried to set out the analysis until now. Neither we nor the CSCE nor the UN yet have the aptitude or the powers to sort out problems within central or eastern European countries or the countries of the former Soviet Union, and we must remember that what is happening in Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia is being repeated in two or three countries of the former Soviet Union to the east of Europe, where there are no television cameras and only occasional visitors.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: No, I must get on. The tragedy of Yugoslavia came upon the international community just as it was beginning to realise that the end of the cold war did not mean the end of the problems of eastern Europe; it was simply the beginning of a new chapter. As I have tried to say, that does not excuse us from the effort to help, and I have sketched out how our country is responding.

Other, older crises are still with us, and show no signs of final settlement. Two years ago the House was recalled from recess to debate our involvement in the Gulf. There the problem was simpler in many ways. Iraq had occupied Kuwait by force. It was a case of one sovereign state obliterating another and its aggression had to be reversed, which of course was done. Other problems remained and recently have escalated.

Saddam Hussein continues to defy the resolution of the UN. He has obligations under Security Council resolutions; I am thinking of resolution 687, which deals with the inspection and destruction of his weapons. The UN special commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency have made significant progress in finding and destroying Iraq's chemical and nuclear weapons programmes, but there is much work still to be done and we believe that significant ballistic missile capabilities remain to be discovered. Therefore, we shall press ahead with those inspections under resolution 687.

Saddam Hussein continues to repress his own population. Here again, there is a Security Council resolution—No. 688. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House have expressed concern and been effective in helping with the humanitarian problems in both north and south Iraq. If I single out one hon. Member I do not mean to be invidious, but I should like to pay tribute to the tireless efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), especially in the south.

I shall return to that subject soon, but I do not wish to leave out the personal tragedies which have befallen two British citizens—Paul Ride and Michael Wainwright—who have been given grotesquely severe prison sentences for minor immigration offences. As far as I know, there was no suggestion at either trial that the men were being accused of anything more than immigration offences—entering Iraq irregularly by mistake. The sentences imposed are out of proportion.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I thank the Foreign Secretary for his remarks about the prisoner Michael Wainwright who, in my opinion, is being held disgracefully. My colleague the MEP Dr. Barry Seal met the EC ambassador and I raised the matter with the Foreign Secretary when I met him with Michael Wainwright's family. Apparently, nothing will be done about the two men unless we release some assets. Is it possible that funds for the purchase of medicines could be released to the Iraqis so as to allow some form of negotiation for the release of the two men and end the torment of their families?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Lady made that point when she came to see me with Michael Wainwright's family. There is no problem about sending food and medicines to Iraq. As the House knows those are outside the UN sanctions. However, the problem about releasing assets is that there are many claims on those assets, and we might get into severe trouble if we started authorising the release of assets on which there are British claims. That is a difficult road to tread.

Regardless of that, I believe that the House will condemn the way in which the Iraqis have behaved. They will not shift our policy by such action against individuals. That was ascertained and established during the Gulf war. None the less, we are doing everything possible to secure the men's release in different ways. I explained some of those ways to the hon. Lady, but there have been others since I saw her. We are especially grateful to the Russians who, through their embassy in Baghdad, have visited Paul Ride and Michael Wainwright in prison during the past few days and have established that, although the men are unhappy, they are not in poor physical shape.

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the extraordinary humanitarian gesture made by my constituent Phil Ride, the brother of Paul Ride, who has offered to change places with his brother, because of his medical condition? Is he also aware of the family's deep gratitude to Her Majesty's Government and to the Russians, for the access visits, which have considerably reassured them about the conditions in which the men are being held?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend; I know of his keen interest in the matter. Those concerned will have no great cause to be grateful either to us or to the Russians until the men are out of prison. That is our aim, and we shall seek to achieve it.

The British have not been singled out for such treatment. Similar grotesque sentences have been imposed on three Swedish citizens who should also be released.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: No, I am sorry. I must press on.

We continue, with our coalition partners, to keep up the pressure on Iraq to carry out in full the resolutions of the Security Council. Where it seems sensible we back up pressure with action. That is why on 27 August, with our American and French partners, we set up a no-fly zone in southern Iraq. That was clearly necessary because of the risk of a serious humanitarian emergency among the civilian people there. Although, as my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West has said on the radio, the no-fly zone is not a complete answer, we shall continue to operate it as long as it is required. At least it inhibits the air attacks on the Shias in the south which have done so much harm in the past. Six RAF Tornados are operating over southern Iraq as part of the no-fly zone exercise. Our business is to monitor what is happening there. We shall not take further action to build on that without returning to the Security Council, but we shall return there if it becomes clear that Iraq has not stopped its campaign of repression. So far, Iraq has not challenged the imposition of the no-fly zone, and so far there have been no incidents. So far, firm action seems to be achieving results. The underlying message that I am sure the House would want to leave is that Iraq, like every other country, must comply with all the Security Council resolutions which bite.

Last but not least, I shall speak about Somalia. All right hon. and hon. Members who have visited that country in recent weeks have come back feeling strongly that what they have seen there is unique, even among all the horrors of a disorderly world. Although I was in Somalia for only a short time, I am glad that I, with the other two EC Foreign Ministers, went there.

The city of Mogadishu shows that it has lived through a war, with rubbish and rubble on most streets, no electricity or other power, no water and no police. Makeshift graves are being dug in open spaces far too close to the wells; people are digging graves all the time. We were in Mogadishu where the conditions are the best, not the worst. Large numbers of children have been fed there for many weeks now. The city is the centre of heroic efforts by many agencies. We were told everywhere that what was happening in the interior, further up land, was far worse. My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development and many other right hon. and hon. Members have been up land and seen worse.

In Somalia we see the collapse of a state and of a society —a collapse of all the services that we take for granted. In that situation the UN agencies and the International Committee of the Red Cross and all the myriad other non-governmental organisations are doing an herioc job. They are very hard pressed. We spoke to the representatives of those organisations, who talked about the situation elsewhere in Somalia. For example, they told us of the situation in the north, with which Britain has particular historical links. We have already provided help to Somalia's second city, Hargeisa, in the north, which was systematically destroyed and mined by Siad Barre's forces in 1988.

What is happening in Somalia is to some extent a natural disaster shared throughout the Horn of Africa and all the areas of sub-Saharan Africa affected by the drought. However, what makes the plight of the Somali people so tragic is the behaviour of their so-called political leaders, who connive at the murder of their fellow citizens and the looting of their food and property.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): The Foreign Secretary seems to be sleep-walking the House through three ghastly crises. Time and again I am reminded of a senior civil servant giving a report, not a world statesman who has the power to do something about the situation. When will the Foreign Secretary show some leadership and do something about ethnic cleansing and about the tragedy in the Horn of Africa?

Mr. Hurd: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has just come in, but he cannot have listened to what I have said. I have explained to the House what is being done in terms of money and men. I have been talking about hundreds and thousands of British people who, with our encouragement, are in all three of the countries which I have mentioned. Volunteers, Army officers and humanitarian workers are implementing the help provided by this country with money supplied by the House. In all three countries that represents a very substantial effort, undertaken with others. I have set out in full the details of what we are doing.

Of course the tragedies persist. If the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) believes that suddenly, by voting extra money or sending extra men, we shall solve all those problems in all those territories, it is he who is sleep walking. I set out at some length—and I hope that I have not wearied the House—what we are actually doing in terms not of declarations, words or speeches but by people on the ground, on our behalf. The hon. Gentleman's intervention is not worthy of the Opposition Benches.

Faced with the collapse of a society, it was right for the Security Council to set aside all the traditional arguments against intervening in the internal affairs of a country and to authorise the dispatch of UN forces to protect the distribution of relief supplies. We make it clear that the warlords who impede those efforts cannot be regarded—any of them—as representing the legitimate authority in Somalia.

We have been providing emergency help for Somalia ever since the fall of its former president—long before tjhe situation came to the attention of the media. Since January 1991, British aid has been worth more than £31 million, including our contributions to EC activities and the additional £7·5 million announced by my noble Friend Lady Chalker on 14 September. We were among the first to provide aid. Others have been equally forthcoming. The EC collectively is much the biggest supplier of food, and has made available more than 200,000 tonnes and 15 million ecu in non-food aid this year.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): The right hon. Gentleman gave the clearest indication of the recognition by the British Government of our special relationship with the north-west, and that is welcome. Earlier, the right hon. Gentleman referred to other parts of the world, where lack of television coverage means that things remain hidden. Will he give the reassurance that is hoped for by Somalis in Britain and throughout the world that the British Government will give special recognition to our special relationship with the north, and that the right hon. Gentleman will take a personal interest in ensuring that the Republic of Somaliland is not allowed to decline into the situation that exists in the south?

Mr. Hurd: I am conscious of the force of the hon. Gentleman's remarks. I do not want to give the people who live in the north of Somalia—in what used to be the colony of British Somaliland—the idea that we favour the country's partition. That is a different point, and not an easy one. As to ensuring that the help given by the international community, including our own, does not forget the people in the north simply because television coverage is centred on Mogadishu, I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman. I undertake to keep a personal eye on that aspect.

I was speaking about the arrival of UN security forces. I welcome the arrival in Somalia of the first detachment of UN troops—Pakistanis—to secure the port and the airport. Securing the port is crucial, because the volume of supplies that can be taken in by air, however well publicised, is small compared to that which can be taken in by sea if the port is functioning properly, when it is all in harbour. The trouble is that the goods are looted on the dockside, and to some extent the port has been in the hands of protection gangs. I hope that the arrival of the UN's Pakistani forces will bring that situation to an end.

To those who say that it is simply a matter of bringing in a lot of UN forces as soon as possible—the Security Council has voted for an extra 3,000 troops to go—and of their fighting their way in, I point out that that would completely interrupt the humanitarian effort. That is why it is necessary to introduce more forces into other parts of the country than Mogadishu. I do not doubt that, but it must be done in a way that enables humanitarian efforts to continue rather than disrupt them. That point was strongly made to me by Ambassador Sahnoun, who is the Secretary-General's representative in Mogadishu. In my view, he is a wholly remarkable man—brave and wise. His judgment of what is happening in the country is one to which we must always pay close attention.

I do not doubt, not just because of the collapse of the state but of the whole system and society in Somalia, that the task of rebuilding the country—not just of feeding the children—after the crisis has passed will rest with the international community for some years to come.

I have spoken too long, and I apologise to the House. I have tried to deal with interventions, but I will now cut short my remaining remarks, except to say this. In all such situations, people look to the UN and occasionally to regional agencies and to others that can help, such as the European Community. The UN is seriously at risk of overloading. Its Secretary-General made that clear, and it is obvious from much that has been going on in New York this week. That is because of the impulse that everyone feels that something must be done. The implications are huge.

The best way of preventing demands on the UN from getting out of hand—whether one is talking of peacekeeping forces, demands on member states, or money—is to practise preventive diplomacy. I hope that one day the CSCE will be effective in the prevention of conflict throughout Europe, but the UN will still be crucial. Preventive diplomacy is quicker, and brings more help to people about to be embroiled in conflict than the most successful peacekeeping or peacemaking operation that follows the outbreak of violence. That is why I encourage the UN Secretary-General to make more use of the powers given to him in article 99 of the charter.

The international community must get involved earlier as crises develop. We must make more far-sighted efforts to avert crises—and if that fails, to prevent a crisis from escalating and spreading. The international community must learn to be more coherent and serious. That is why my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister called a summit meeting of the Security Council in January. The solving of problems that have their roots in centuries past is a slow, frustrating and dangerous business. We do not have all that time when crises arise. We must learn fast and absorb new lessons quickly. As the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) said in his point of order, this subject, in all its aspects, is one to which the House will return from time to time. I know of no subject more important.

10.26 am

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I thank the Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for his kind remarks about my appointment. I hope that he does not find himself this afternoon appointed as Secretary of State for National Heritage.

There is an old adage about diplomats, in which they are described as honest men who are sent abroad to lie for their countries. That description cannot be applied to the Secretary of State—though I might apply the first half of it to him, if not the second. I would describe the right hon. Gentleman as a man who can effectively and comprehensively tell one to go to hell and make one look forward to the journey. That was reflected in the right hon. Gentleman's speech to the House today.

It is a privilege for me to hold my present responsibilities and to speak for Labour on foreign and commonwealth affairs. My present role takes me back to where I began in the early 1970s, when I worked in a modest capacity for James Callaghan—first in opposition and then in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. When he became Prime Minister in 1976, I was fortunate to work for him at 10 Downing street, before joining my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) at the Department of Energy, which also involved many European and wider international issues.

I value all that experience. Although much has changed since those days, I was surprised that many of the younger people around at that time are now in senior positions in Britain and in other countries. I was surprised also to receive many letters containing good wishes from them, following my appointment to the shadow Cabinet by my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition. It is clearly somewhat easier to make progress to the top in the diplomatic world than it is in the world of politics.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) also gave me some advice in a tour d'horizon, courtesy of *The Independent*, for which I thank him. I realise that my appointment is a great challenge and that I have much to learn. In my work during the 1970s with the United Nations on Cyprus and in central and southern Africa—Zimbabwe and Namibia—I found that there are no easy solutions to complex and endemic international difficulties of the kind that the Secretary of State described this morning. There are no easy ends to conflicts or brutal civil wars. I believe profoundly—I know my view is shared by my right hon. and hon. Friends—that we live in an ever more interdependent world in which not just continental but intercontinental, indeed global, co-operation is essential for peace, security and more effective and more equitable relations between north and south.

Events being debated in the House today illustrate graphically the need for improved policies and arrangements, particularly, as the Foreign Secretary said, in respect of the United Nations. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary has had some interesting and rather surprising things to say about the UN recently. I shall return to them later. Like the right hon. Gentleman, I shall deal first with events in the territories of the former Yugoslavia. I understand that, for good reasons, the Prime Minister is anxious to leave the Chamber. He was kind enough to write to me to tell me that he would have to leave and I take no offence at his departure.

The appalling series of human conflicts, human degradation, deceit—there has been much deceit—and racial and religious hatred in the republics of the former Yugoslavia continue to shock Europe and the rest of the world. I acknowledge that there are difficulties, but I have to observe that events have not always been handled well by the EC or, indeed, by the Foreign Secretary in his role as president during the past few months.

We support the aims and conclusions of the London peace conference, although the appointment of Lord Owen was regarded as somewhat eccentric by my right hon. and hon. Friends and myself—he is known for many qualities, but not as a mediator. Indeed, he has balkanised a few political parties himself, but of course we wish him well. We realise that, in his work with Cyrus Vance, he has an important role to play.

We support the deployment of British troops under UN auspices. They have our good wishes in the difficult and dangerous tasks before them and our good wishes for a safe eventual return home.

We support the excellent work of Mrs. Sadako Ogata, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in tackling the largest refugee crisis in Europe for decades. We support wholeheartedly the mandatory United Nations sanctions against Serbia. Those commitments do not mean, however, that we endorse the Government's record or that we are uncritical of the Government.

The EC has not been evenhanded in its response to requests for recognition by the republics. The premature recognition of Croatia, in which Britain acquiesced following pressure from Germany, was and remains in marked contrast to the refusal to recognise Macedonia. That was despite the fact that the Badinter commission found that, while Macedonia and Slovenia met the requirements for recognition, Croatia did not. The repercussions of these confused decisions also led to uncertainty about the security of Bosnia, of which the Serbs and Croatians took ruthless advantage. They continue to do so. We have learnt from the press today that President Tudjman's forces have consolidated their hold over parts of independent Bosnia. We condemn that without reservation. We condemn the continuing violence in Bosnia and the appalling practice of ethnic cleansing.

The joint United Nations and EC London peace conference in August agreed a framework for a negotiated peaceful settlement, which is more urgent now than ever. We support the objectives of that agreement. The Foreign Secretary rightly ruled out military solutions to these complex problems, at least for the moment, but he and his European colleagues have got us into the worst of all possible worlds. The only realistic alternative to military intervention is effective implementation of the United Nations mandatory sanctions, particularly against Serbia and, perhaps, in the developing circumstances, against Croatia. We all know that the Community has been lax when giving effect to United Nations decisions about sanctions. It is weeks since the Romanian ambassador told us on the BBC of the Danube being an open waterway to Serbia. We know that convoys cross the Greek frontier carrying supplies into Serbia. It was with sadness that we learnt recently—I do not know whether it is verifiable, but it was widely reported—that the Iranians, under the guise of humanitarian aid, are flying armaments into Bosnia.

If we are to resolve such problems or to have some significant effect on them without resorting to military intervention, sanctions have to be made to work. We need much more effort from the Foreign Secretary in his role as president in the Community and from the Community as a whole to give effect to UN decisions. We support the call for a cessation of armed conflict in Bosnia, the immediate lifting of the sieges of towns and cities, the international supervision of heavy weapons, a ban on all military flights and the identification of all armed units. We want a massive increase in humanitarian aid and more effective delivery of it. We want all detention camps to be closed at the earliest practical opportunity.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): My hon. Friend will recall that, during the recess, he met my constituent Mr. Abdul Malida and a delegation of community representatives from the midlands who gave him a copy of a video recording Mr. Malida had taken of horrific scenes in Bosnia. My hon. Friend knows that Mr. Malida took £30,000-worth of goods to Bosnia to distribute to people in real need. Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government should put much greater emphasis on how humanitarian aid is being co-ordinated to save constituents such as Mr. Malida the risk to their lives of flying to the area to disperse aid themselves?

Dr. Cunningham: I accept my hon. Friend's point, but I am sure that humanitarian aid is welcome from wherever it comes. My hon. Friend's constituent has made an effective and practical contribution. I, too, was horrified by the scenes on the video tape made during his stay in Bosnia.

We want the mandatory sanctions against Serbia to be enforced rigorously by more effective monitoring of river traffic on the Danube and by more effective monitoring of the states bordering Serbia. The Government and the Community have failed properly to implement those decisions and they have just to work harder at it.

It is clear that fighting has continued on all sides. The UN peace conference must assert its aims more strongly. An enduring and peaceful solution must ensure that internationally recognised borders are fully respected and that no gain can be achieved by force. Any solution must be based on human rights and ethnic and religious pluralism, not some division of Bosnia which is a state in its own right, recognised and a member of the UN. Its integrity must be upheld.

It is vital that peace be established before the belligerents extend their war into Kosovo and perhaps even into Macedonia which, as some of my hon. Friends have said, might happen. Europe again—the British presidency, the Foreign Secretary acting through the United Nations and with the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and NATO—must do all in its power to end the potentially explosive circumstances that prevail in Kosovo and Macedonia.

Macedonia is surely entitled to recognition by, and guarantees of its integrity from, the international community. I know that there is a dispute and that Greece is, apparently, blocking this in the European Community because of a dispute about the name, but we are surely not going to let an argument about the name of a territory lead to our allowing the situation to descend into conflict and war, which could spread throughout the Balkans. It would be outrageous if that were allowed to happen. Therefore, I urge the right hon. Gentleman to act in his role as president to resolve the problems about the recognition of Macedonia.

I share the concern about the situation in Kosovo. The United Nations and the European Community should get monitors into Kosovo now. As the late John F. Kennedy once said:

> "Lofty words cannot construct alliances or maintain them. Only concrete deeds can do that."

If we are to resolve the dangerous circumstances that exist in Kosovo and Macedonia, we need action now. I urge that upon the Secretary of State. Mr. Panic should be committeed to guarantees for the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo now. The record shows, sadly, that President Milosevic is unlikely to give such guarantees. The majority Albanian population, for example, has not been able to attend schools and universities for more than a year. Autonomy for Kosovo has been severely eroded. The United Nations and the European Community should intervene now to prevent conflict, which would inevitably send refugees into Albania and Macedonia, countries which could not remotely cope with an influx of people. Further serious unrest could easily involve Greece.

In May, the United Nations voted for mandatory economic sanctions. I emphasise yet again, before I move on to other matters, that the Secretary of State and the British Government, in the role of presidency, have a major responsibility in the European context to see that that United Nations resolution is given real effect. I understand that some people are calling for a relaxation of sanctions against Serbia. I say that there should be no such relaxation until the Serbians use their undoubted influence in Bosnia to help to bring about a ceasefire.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that in all three of the tragic cases that we are discussing this morning, there are individuals—the so-called political and military leaders—who have committed grave crimes against humanity in the name of state policy? Is it not time that the United Nations conferred criminal jurisdiction on the International Court of Justice so that these individuals will know that if and when they are caught they will be brought to justice and personally punished for their crimes?

Dr. Cunningham: We certainly support moves through the United Nations to establish war crimes procedures so that people acting in the barbaric and inhman ways to which the hon. Gentleman refers are held to account when they are brought to book.

Will the Secretary of State persuade his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in the coming round of inevitable cuts following the crisis in our economy not to cut our aid programme or to reduce support, in particular for the aid work that is going on not only in Bosnia but in Iraq, which I shall come to later, and certainly not in Somalia? Will he ensure that the programme that Mrs. Ogata is developing to deal with the huge refugee crisis will have the full support of Her Majesty's Government? And will the Government respond generously to any further requests for cash and material aid that Mrs. Ogata may make? I understand that she is likely to do just that. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will respond effectively and generously on behalf of Britain. Again I say that we have a particular responsibility in these matters during the term of our presidency of the European Community.

I believe that Parliament should have been recalled some weeks ago to discuss these issues. In particular we wanted to discuss the decision to deploy British troops. Some important questions need clarification. It is

[Dr. Cunningham]

interesting that there have been, I believe, 17 occasions since 1939 when the House has been recalled to discuss emergencies or crises of one kind or another and that eight of those occasions have involved foreign affairs. It was remiss of the Government to postpone or, at first, to reject the request of my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition for the recall of Parliament before now.

What are the objectives of the United Nations in the deployment of our troops? The right hon. Gentleman had something to say about that. I hope that his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence does indeed keep to the commitment that he will expand upon it when he replies to the debate. Will the operation, in effect, be under NATO control? Who will be in command? Who will take overall charge? There certainly appears to have been considerable confusion so far about the current deployment, under United Nations auspices, in Bosnia. Are the rules of engagement absolutely clear to our commanders? My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) will wish to go into more detail about these matters before the Secretary of State for Defence replies to the debate. Nevertheless, I hope that we shall have very clear replies to these important questions.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): My hon. Friend mentioned the use of NATO forces. The Foreign Secretary also mentioned the use of certain NATO forces. Does my hon. Friend agree that the deployment of NATO forces outwith the territories defined in the North Atlantic treaty would be a grave violation of articles 4 and 5 of that treaty and that such a radically rearranged role would require the sanction, the support, of all the member state Parliaments?

Dr. Cunningham: It is for clarification of these questions that I am asking the Secretary of State to reply. I do not know the answer to my hon. Friend's question and I am not going to pretend that I do, but I know that it is an important question to ask. That is why I have asked it. I understand that although these forces will be from NATO, they will be under the command of the United Nations, but we need to have that question clearly answered in the course of this debate.

I emphasise again our absolute support for all British personnel involved, and our hopes and good wishes for peace and a safe return home, but the reality is—again I quote the late President John F. Kennedy—that

> "Peace does not rest in charters or covenants. It lies in the hearts and minds of people."

Sadly, it does not yet lie in the hearts and minds of many people in war-torn Bosnia and elsewhere in Yugoslavia. Nor, indeed, does peace lie in the hearts and minds of the people of Somalia, as the right hon. Gentleman rightly said. We have historic links, particularly with the north of that country.

I support the intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) in seeking an assurance, which I was pleased to see the Secretary of State give, that people in the north of Somalia will not be ignored as the humanitarian aid programme develops. My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) has just returned from Somalia. An earlier visit was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington). Their graphic reports of a lawless, broken country make desperate reading. Their praise for the heroic work of the non-governmental organisations is unstinting and their condemnation of the failure of the international community to act much earlier in the case of Somalia is, frankly, damning.

There is considerable feeling in Britain and beyond that the European Community and the United Nations have been far too slow to respond to the developing tragedy in Somalia. Even now, their efforts are insufficient to make a significant or early impact on the nature and scale of the problems. Hundreds of people die daily while food that is already in Mogadishu cannot be more effectively distributed because of armed clans and the complete absence of government at any level. The United Nations must deploy more troops in Somalia and more aid and support for non-governmental organisations, especially for the International Red Cross, should be urgently provided.

In the Horn of Africa, including Somalia, 23 million people face severe food shortages and starvation. In southern Africa the worst drought in living memory has devastated crops, affecting a further 18 million people. Given the huge need, it is a matter of grave concern that the European Community, of which Britain holds the presidency, and the Government are threatening cuts in next year's aid budget. As Oxfam and others have said, while African nations continue to be drained to pay off their debts, the G7, the IMF and the World bank again recently failed to agree measures to help write off some or all of that debt. For years, Europe's leaders have been promising to do something to tackle the problems of the third world and poverty, but somehow there always seems to be something more important to do. There is a widespread fear that if action is not taken soon to relieve debt and increase aid many more lives will be at risk and Africa will face decades of instability.

We should have a quite separate debate in Government time as soon as possible after the House resumes to discuss more fully aid and development, poverty, drought and famine, especially in Africa but elsewhere in the world. While the world must continue to bend its efforts to end the local wars which cause mass starvation in Somalia and elsewhere in Africa, we must look to South Africa's progress because that will eventually provide the key to progress and development throughout that continent. While the undoubted energy and resources of South Africa's people and its land remain locked in internal political struggle, they cannot be unleashed to thrust the economy forward. In that comparatively rich region of the continent, economic prospects are plummeting as the welcome political developments of two years ago regress into ever-greater violence.

The Government of South Africa were internationally applauded, too quickly by this Government, for their modest early conciliation, but they now simply demand too much from the still disenfranchised majority of black Africans. There is good news today about talks between the state president and Nelson Mandela. Those welcome talks are crucial to the multi-party Convention for a Democratic South Africa. For the ANC, Nelson Mandela is asking for movement on three key points. They are the release of people who are still in prison for alleged political offences, the fencing and securing of the hostels from which single migrant workers from the cities emerged to wreak violence on their neighbours, and the early banning of the carrying of dangerous weapons. He seeks that movement, and especially on the latter two matters, to prevent any repetition of what happened in Boipatong and Ciskei.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman has strayed on to South Africa. I do not criticise him for that, but I did not do it because I thought that it would be out of order. However, as he is in that territory I can tell him that I share his pleasure about today's news. Yesterday, I spoke on the telephone to Nelson Mandela and the South African Foreign Minister. Each explained the narrow difference between them at that stage on the issue of political prisoners. I am delighted that it has been resolved. We are backing the peace accords and the work of Mr. Goldstone, with whom I had a long talk in South Africa a few weeks ago, by sending people from this country and other European countries as monitors to support the peace accords and the new peace structures on the ground in the townships.

Dr. Cunningham: I am grateful for that intervention. It is clear that the right hon. Gentleman is actively involved and we appreciate that and applaud it. The Government have many channels through which to urge President de Klerk to move more swiftly on these crucial matters and I am pleased to learn that the channels are being used.

I shall now deal with the situation in the Gulf. I thank the Foreign Secretary for his letter about Paul Ride and Michael Wainwright and for his quick response to the representations by my hon. Friends the Members for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) and for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) about those two unfortunate gentlemen. I urge the Foreign Secretary to continue to do all in his power to seek their early release.

When I wrote to the Foreign Secretary in August, I expressed Labour's support for an air exclusion zone over southern Iraq with the object of giving some protection to the Shia Muslim communities of the marshes. I reiterate that support. The air exclusion zone introduced last year to protect the Kurds in northern Iraq was justified and successful. It had the authority of UN Security Council resolution 688 as well as the justification of general humanitarian protection. The zone was rightly given wide all-party support and, as the United Nations Human Rights Commissioner recently stated in his report that a major further series of threats to the Shias was imminent, the same action is clearly in order.

I also make clear our position about any proposed military attacks on ground targets in Iraq. Such attacks cannot be justified and should not be made unless and until the United Nations Security Council has considered and approved them in advance—if they are necessary at all. We certainly make it clear to the House and to the United States of America that we will not support any adventurism in Iraq by President Bush in aid of his re-election.

Finally, I shall deal briefly with what the Foreign Secretary said about the United Nations. It is clear that the UN is overloaded and that Britain is nowhere near meeting the United Nations target for aid programmes. It is also clear that the Conservative Government's contributions to many multilateral agencies of the United Nations are lower in real terms now than they were in 1979. Hopes of a new world order have not been fulfilled and many people, including the Opposition, place more and more demands on the United Nations.

The Foreign Secretary said that the UN should have an imperial role. No phrase could be more calculated to offend the non-aligned countries of the third world. He quickly changed the phrase and spoke instead about good old-fashioned diplomacy when he spoke at the UN. He should have used such diplomacy much earlier this summer in his relations with Dr. Boutros-Ghali, and if he had perhaps an unseemly and unhelpful row could have been avoided. The United Nations needs restructuring, but, above all, it needs more finance and more personnel. Many millions of dollars are outstanding in contributions, principally, I regret to say, from the United States. If the Foreign Secretary wants the UN to work more effectively, as we do, he should ensure that it has adequate resources and should give it more support and help so that it can more effectively tackle the important tasks that we are discussing.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Long after the circumstances that give rise to the personal statement that is to be made are forgotten, people will surely ask how, on Monday, Pitchford hall, an almost unique 16th century timber-framed house, was allowed to come under Christies' hammer. During this personal statement, may we have a personal explanation of why——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should wait until we have heard the statement. I have taken his point.

It being 11 o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings).*

Personal Statement

Mr. Dalyell: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I have attended many personal statements; explanations are in order. Why was the advice of Lord Rothschild and of the National Trust——

Madam Speaker: Order. I respect the hon. Gentleman as a longstanding Member of the House, but he must respect the views of the House, too. He is not putting a point of order to me; he is simply making a statement, and I cannot hear it. The House and I are ready to hear the personal statement.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am asking the hon. Gentleman to let the House proceed and to hear the personal statement.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. I ask the hon. Gentleman to respect the Chair and the views of the House.

11.1 am

Mr. David Mellor (Putney): I should like to thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for your courtesy in permitting me to make a personal statement. I apologise to those who are engaged in a serious debate on real tragedies in the world for interposing my altogether rather smaller matter, but I thought it right, having resigned, to give an account of myself to the House, rather than doing a round of press conferences.

I want to make it clear to my colleagues and Members of the House that, while I have my regrets, this is not a sad moment for me. After what my family and I have been through over the past two months, it is with almost a sense of relief that I make this statement. There were times during that period when one wondered whether one was living in Ceausescu's Romania rather than John Major's Britain, with bugged telephone calls and the other things that came out.

I want to make it clear to the House that I resigned for what I hope the House will agree was the best of reasons. I could not expect my colleagues in government or Parliament to put up with more of the ceaseless flow of stories about me in the tabloid press. Having grown heartily sick of my private life myself, I could hardly expect others to take a more charitable view.

When the first of this stuff started to appear in July, I made it clear that I was willing to resign from the Government. The Prime Minister, who has been a constant friend and has shown his personal qualities to the full throughout, decided not to accept my resignation, and that was the view of my colleagues. That offered me the opportunity to do two further months in my Department —an opportunity which I shall never regret having—in which we were able to do some important work on the Green Paper on the BBC, preparation for the national lottery Bill and so on. From then on, I regarded myself as, in effect, the servant of the Government and of the party and believed that if the time came when my presence was an embarrassment, that was the time to go, and the time to go was yesterday.

To those who think that I could have resigned sooner, I say that it was legitimate for the Prime Minister and other senior colleagues to take the view that in this day and age—sorry and distressed though I was at the revelations of this affair, and despite how cheap and sordid it must have looked—this was not a reason for a Cabinet Minister to resign.

Inevitably, there were other stories as it became clear that this matter would not be allowed to rest. I am glad to be able to leave office with its having been made clear that there has been no breach of ministerial rules. That is not to say that people are not entitled to challenge my judgment on the other issues that have been raised. I have to accept that, in the jobs that we do, one has to take a view and I do not resent the fact that some say that they would have taken a different view, just as others, in the same situation, would have done the same as me. It is clear that there is no question of impropriety, and I hope that I can leave office with that fact clearly established.

It will be for others to decide the rights and wrongs of this business. I certainly was the author of my own misfortune, which permits me to make this statement today. Perhaps of all the many good, bad and indifferent things that have been said to me, the one comment that I prefer was from the friend who said to me, "There is no self-pity". We make our decisions and must accept responsibility for what we do, and I can assure colleagues that there is no more heavy responsibility than laying down a burden of office that one enjoys in order to take responsibility for one's actions.

It will be for others to decide the role of the media. I have always been very relaxed about the media and have never taken the view that statutory interventions would be the answer. To be fair, most journalists and newspapers have behaved in the professional manner that one would expect in the circumstances in which they found themselves. Some hon. Members have been through the experiences that I and my family—who have been a tower of strength throughout all this, particularly my wife—have been through, but it has been an illuminating episode for me. Endless hordes of people appeared not only outside my home but outside the homes of relatives, friends and acquaintances. Extraordinarily offensive things were said in the context of those visits, and a lack of respect was shown for age and infirmity when pressing the point home. Legions of cameramen took 10 or 12 pictures knowing that none would appear and rushed around as if they were in a Rambo film, banging against the side of the car, and even stayed outside our house last night until the wee small hours, long after it was obvious that all we were trying to do was get a good night's sleep.

Perhaps that is the way in which an alternative criminal justice system, run by the media, should work, but when the criminal justice system, which we have all played our part in creating, was established, it had checks and balances and principles of fairness. Some will want to reflect on chequebooks being waved for stories, however lurid, on people being offered at the beginning of a conversation, "We would like to talk to you; we will make it worth your while", and on bugged telephone calls, which we now have to accept. That does not apply only to me. I should not play any part in that because I would be parti pris. I was determined on leaving office, just as when I held it, never to allow my own experiences to interpose themselves, but I think that they are relevant and interesting.

It is a paradox that, as the BBC said today, some tabloids—and it is only some—have expressed unrestrained glee at what has happened because of the sense that they have exercised power, but the issue is whether they exercise power with responsibility. The paradox is that the only basis on which this could be justified is that a greater public good is thereby being served. But can anyone explain the paradox that in serving a greater public good one is entitled to bug and buy and abuse and use methods that are, therefore, themselves amoral or at best morally neutral? At some point the House will have to consider that issue.

I do not want to detain the House much longer, but I have two or three further points. The first is that I have had 11 years as a Minister. I have thoroughly enjoyed them. I have been fortunate in that I have served in many interesting Departments, some of them in the cockpit of party-political debate and some of the more interesting ones giving me the opportunity to work with colleagues in all parts of the House on legislation that was important, relevant and non-partisan. I think of the Broadcasting Act 1990, the Children Act 1989 and the work on the misuse of drugs. I shall treasure these 11 years. My great sadness is that having had the opportunity to establish the Department of National Heritage, I will not now have the chance to carry on with that task, but I blame no one but myself for that.

Amidst the welter of charge and counter-charge, the one thing this morning that is of great comfort to me is the extraordinarily nice things that have been said by the people who have worked with me in my Department and by the interest groups that I have tried to serve. There is no doubt that I have had a genuine passion for what we have been trying to do in the Department, and, although it is entirely my own fault, I deeply regret that I shall not be able to carry on that work. In one of his last songs John Lennon wrote the following line which is always relevant to all of us:

> "Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans".

As to the future, I hope and intend to be an active Member of the House. I intend to continue to serve the interests of my constituents. The people of Putney have been kind enough to increase my majority at each of the past four elections. They have stuck by me through this sorry mess, and I owe it to them at least to redouble my efforts on their behalf. That is what I shall endeavour to do as I try to fit in with the life and work of the House as best I can.

I should like to tell colleagues and friends here that last night, coming into the Division Lobbies to vote, I was offered tremendous acts of friendship by Members on both sides of the House. The House is at its best on these occasions, and that certainly made me feel a lot better about myself after what has happened.

Finally, as I leave the warmth of Government for the icy wastes of the Back Benches I want everyone to know that there is precedent for this: Captain Oates was born and raised in my constituency.

United Nations Operations

11.11 am

(Question again proposed, That this House do now adjourn.

Madam Speaker: I call Mr. King—*[Interruption.]* Order. I ask hon. Members who are leaving to be kind enough to do so more quietly so that we can hear the next speaker.

11.12 am

Mr. Tom King (Bridgwater): I rise to speak for the first time in 17 years from the Back Benches in these rather extraordinary circumstances. It is traditional not to intervene in personal statements, but I should like to add, as a former colleague of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), that it was with the greatest sadness that I heard the news of the past 24 hours. I entirely endorse his comments on the exceptional tributes that have been paid to him by many in the arts world for the work he was seeking to do. These may be icy wastes, but there are some friendly faces here on the Back Benches and I assure him that the journey that he is about to make is not an entirely disastrous one.

The motion on the Adjournment concerns British support for the United Nations in Yugoslavia, Iraq and Somalia. I am surely not the only hon. Member who believes that that list is capable of significant extension in the months and years ahead. As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said in his important review, we have arrived at the end of the cold war, a period in which the super-powers imposed discipline on their client states using both acceptable and unacceptable means. Those client states made up a considerable sector of the world. All that has now gone. The Soviet Union has imploded into separate republics, and the whole system of client states that it supported has disappeared. It is no coincidence that we are debating some of its former client states today. All of them depended to some extent on Soviet support in the past.

As this system of client states has collapsed, the United States has understandably imposed a limit on its willingness to become involved—it has no desire to become the world's policeman. That, in turn, has introduced a role for the United Nations—a role formerly inhibited by veto throughout our life times but now, since Iraq and due to subsequent developments, full of new responsibilities.

What should the UN's role be in future? What should our contribution to it be? The United Nations can authorise and support internal intervention in the affairs of disorderly countries, but when it does so, how should it be done and who will carry it out?

I was involved to some degree in discussions of the possible military intervention in Iraq and subsequently in Yugoslavia. Such military intervention, if contemplated, must always be seen as the last resort. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is always the first to emphasise the essential and demanding role of diplomacy, since such conflicts must if possible be solved without military intervention. One of the less welcome by-products of the superb professionalism displayed by the military in the Gulf war was that the skill, speed and success of the liberation of Kuwait and the ending of Iraqi aggression encouraged in some minds too ready a feeling that we can

[Mr. Tom King]

always call on the military to solve our problems. The Ministry of Defence is just across Whitehall—it can deal with the problem. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary was always sympathetic to my warnings against such a view.

Today we again face the difficult decision whether to put young men and women, to use President Bush's phrase from the Gulf war, in harm's way. About 30,000 of our fellow citizens, men and women, are in Northern Ireland helping to protect the community, to keep the peace and to prevent the success of terrorism.

Two years ago we sent 45,000 of our young men and women into Iraq as our contribution to the United Nations effort there. Subsequently I had the opportunity, with my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay), to see at first hand the remarkable humanitarian effort carried out by 1,000 Royal Marines, providing air cover and helicopter support in Operation Haven. I am proud that that effort saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of Kurds who would not be alive today had we not been prepared to take the difficult decision to do something against which many arguments could have been advanced. It stands to the eternal credit of our country that we played such a positive part in that operation.

We all take pride in the success of Operation Haven. It is a sombring and interesting thought that our Jaguar aircraft have now flown for more than a year from the Incirlik air base in Turkey. They are continuing to provide that air cover and to impose a no-fly zone in northern Iraq, as undoubtedly they should. Although the situation is far from perfect, we have, in a real sense, created, through the removal of Saddam Hussein's additional asset, a more level playing field in northern Iraq from which the Peshmerga can more readily defend their Kurdish countrymen. I welcome also what is, for obvious reasons, no longer called Operation Southern Comfort but Operation Jural—the sending of the Tornados to the south similar to Operation Provide Comfort in the north. This is helping with the problems of the Shias in the marshes and I welcome the Opposition's support for that.

Those have been welcome interventions. They continue and they have no fixed time limit. I could not advise the House with such knowledge as I have when those efforts may be withdrawn. The great difficulty in such peacekeeping activities is whether one can ever get out; all peacekeeping activities involve such a warning.

By any military standards, the situation in the former Yugoslavia is a textbook example of what Britain should not become involved in. It is difficult to imagine a more appallingly difficult situation. There are no clear objectives. There is every prospect of getting sucked into an open-ended commitment, starting with humanitarian aid and the escorting of convoys and released prisoners from the detention camps—all the most worthy and desirable objectives. Yet there is the greatest risk of a spread of the conflict.

In 1964 we went into Cyprus and we are still there. The history of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in different corners of the world, whether still on the peaceline in Korea, whether the UN interim force in Lebanon or in Sinai and across its other activities, shows the great difficulty of withdrawal. An understandable intervention in this debate has been the warning that after Bosnia, what next? Reference was made to the predictable and the predicted Bosnian conflict and now Kosovo, then the real risk of an implosion in Macedonia involving Serbia, Albania, Greece and Bulgaria. We know that the potential risk is great.

We also run the real risk, as we know sadly all too well, not just from Northern Ireland, of being accused of taking sides, of going in for one purpose and then finding that our purposes are disbelieved——

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. King: I would rather not. I understand why the hon. Gentleman seeks to intervene, but I want to be brief and not to abuse my situation.

There is also the clearest possible risk of casualties. To use another analogy with Northern Ireland—the House has been horrified at the suffering and the real tragedy of Northern Ireland—it is a sobering thought that already in what was Yugoslavia within six months three times more people have died that in 25 years of trouble in Northern Ireland. The scale of the viciousness and fanatical hatred has been there on our television sets for all of us to see. The sad news today of four more injuries to the UNPROFOR is a clear warning of the dangers that are run. As the Opposition spokesman said, we see in United Nations activity the risk of potential confusion of command, the difficulty of establishing clear rules of engagement and, as casualties happen, as sadly I fear they will, the difficulty of presenting them to the country to explain what national interest there is in our involvement.

There is also the difficulty in explaining why there are so many abstainers from the initiative. Germany's situation is understood. The problem of its constitution and its past involvement in the territories make this a particularly difficult matter. The United States, we know, does not feel that this is an area in which to make a contribution of the same significance at this time.

Those were my views, which I sought to ensure were represented clear in government. I was clear, on the advice that I received, of the great dangers that we faced. Yet I always said that there could come a time when we could no longer walk by on the other side. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary used precisely that phrase in his speech.

The scale of man's inhumanity to man that we have witnessed in the appalling incidents introduces an element in which it is no longer acceptable for us as a leading member of the European Community, holding the presidency at the present time, as a permanent member of the Security Council and with our role in the United Nations to say that we shall simply stand back and do nothing.

It can be argued, perhaps some of my right hon. and hon. Friends will do so, that all the disadvantages that I have clearly rehearsed, of which I am not unaware—I know that my right hon. Friends are acutely aware of them —should not be overlooked. But government is about taking difficult decisions and taking responsibility, no matter how difficult and awkward that may be.

I believe that there is a national interest. Obviously there is a clear national interest by virtue of the role of the United Nations and the importance of the United Nations making a contribution and our being a willing and strong supporter of the United Nations in its work. But there must come a time when the conflicts spread, when we see the risk of the brush fire that has spread already from the initial problems of Serbia and Croatia, then involving Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia, and the problems in the ex-Soviet republics, when we see the risks of this involving Slav and Muslim, Turk and Greek, when our past history shows that we will inevitably at some stage be sucked in, that we still have a national interest in trying to intervene in any way that we can, first, because there is a moral case for humanitarian aid, but, above all, to do everything that we can to try to prevent further conflict.

Mr. Trimble *rose*——

Mr. King: Will the hon. Gentleman excuse me? I want to make progress.

If we ask our young men and women to stand in harm's way, we must insist on certain conditions. The first is that it must be right that we work under United Nations auspices and authority. We have a duty to see that we have the clearest possible rules of engagement that are fair to our forces. They must have the authority and the opportunity, without qualification, for self-defence, and self-defence interpreted not in the most immediate and narrow way of whether a weapon is being fired at them, but a sensible and flexible approach to the problem. We must ensure that they have the right scope. My right hon. Friend's decision, put to Cabinet, was to send a self-contained unit of some 1,800 men, with the Cheshires, the Warrior armoured personnel carriers and their own logistics. They would be self-contained with the very real intention that if the worst came to the worst they could look after themselves and would not be dependent on other, perhaps less adequate, elements of what may be a United Nations force.

There must be in that force the maximum contribution from the maximum number of nations. I have already referred to the abstainers—the no-shows in this situation. I note that we are proposing to send 1,800 men and I support the reasons for deciding on that figure. I note that the Canadians form the next largest force with 1,200, then the French with 1,100. The Benelux countries are sending smaller contributions. There must be maximum contributions from the maximum number of countries. There must also be some rules about, or some opportunity to set, a time limit on the contributions of individual countries, and certainly of individual units.

I welcome the announcement in today's newspapers of the proposal to use, wherever possible, NATO structures and logistic systems that are already in place and operational. We owe it to our forces to ensure that they have the best possible support that we can give them. Above all, we owe it to them to accept that in no sense can we pretend that this is the solution. In asking them to undertake such a very dangerous task, we owe it to them to ensure that they go there in the knowledge that every possible effort is being made in the political and diplomatic areas to find a solution. I warmly support what the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said about sanctions. We must make those levers that are not military work in support of our forces.

It is as difficult a decision as Ministers could ever be asked to make. It is a sombre position. I do not think that any hon. Member is under any illusion about the dangers and the difficulties. We have all seen television pictures of the terrible horrors. In my judgment that we cannot simply stand by, I am also influenced by the fact that no one could fail to have been impressed by the fortitude of the people of Sarajevo and the many suffering such appalling hardships. This debate is taking place at the end of September and we know that, in the months ahead, those people face the prospect of falling temperatures, no water, probably no power and no heat. The risks to life, the possibility of death, the casualties and the suffering could be enormous.

Against that background, and within Europe, we have a responsibility to play our part. We must do what we can, but we must do it with the world. As we take this decision we pray for our forces as they undertake a challenging and vital task.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I remind hon. Members that there is a 10-minute limit on speeches between now and 1 pm.

11.32 am

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Like the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), I find this a timely debate. Like the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), I congratulate the Foreign Secretary on his courtesy, although I cannot commend him on his brevity.

The debate is basically about the future role of the United Nations and the extent to which, in the new position, post-cold war, it can enable the international community to set standards of human rights and to move from peacekeeping to peacemaking by direct intervention in regional and national conflicts throughout the world. The Liberal Democrats are quite clear that we want the United Nations to develop such an interventionist role. As I have said a number of times in the House, we are also clear that the old precepts of non-interference in domestic affairs and the inviolability of borders must, in certain cases, be overridden in the interests of justice.

I shall begin with Somalia. My right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), the former Liberal leader, was yesterday at a refugee camp on the northern Kenyan border with Somalia. It held about 45,000 people—about the population of Inverness, to put it in context. He was full of praise for the activities of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights, which had gained control over a position which, until June, was horrific and involved countless deaths. Even in June they ran at about 60 a week, but now the figure is down to about 10. A corrugated iron hospital has been constructed to replace the tents.

My right hon. Friend reiterated our view that earlier intervention, post-President Barre, would have prevented a large-scale tragedy. It is impossible enough to handle the drought; it is even more difficult to handle the drought and the civil war. My right hon. Friend stressed the need to organise the purchase of arms from bandit groups in return for food and/or money, an approach which I commend to the Foreign Secretary. He even found a man with a British passport issued in 1957 in British Somaliland, which highlights the historical responsibility for the area that we share with the Italians.

It is tragic, but the appalling position in Somalia is only the beginning. The hon. Member for Copeland mentioned

[Sir Russell Johnston]

that. Civil war, drought and ecological disaster are resulting in famine not just in Somalia but in the whole of south-eastern Africa. In the Horn of Africa alone, 23 million people face severe food shortages. In addition to famine, drought and an enormous debt crisis, almost the whole of central and southern Africa faces a devastating AIDS epidemic, which will reach such a level that hardly a family will be unaffected by the end of the century.

Again, we agree with the hon. Member for Copeland that it is both wrong and shocking that, in the midst of all those crises, the Government are reportedly threatening to cut overseas aid still further. At a time when the United Kingdom holds the presidency of the European Community, there is a proposal to cut the Community's aid budget by £200 million. That would destroy the possibility of creating a much-needed emergency aid reserve to cope with disasters. Quite frankly, it is a scandal that during the 1980s the United Kingdom's aid disbursements have declined both absolutely and relatively. Our overseas aid should be approaching—or at least should be committed to reaching—0·7 per cent. of gross national product, rather than standing at just 0·27 per cent. More than anything, Somalia needs food and the European Community stores should be opened to it, together with active intervention to ensure distribution.

As the winter approaches in Iraq, the suffering of the Kurds and of the Shia Muslims in the south will become intolerable if there is not United Nations intervention. Again, for any aid programme to be successful a considerable increase in funding will be required. The Foreign Secretary may say that there are limits, and that is true—but it is a problem that we must all face. If we expect the United Nations to do more, the advanced countries must pay it more.

The international community's approach to events in what was Yugoslavia has been in marked contrast with its action in Iraq. As we heard from the right hon. Member for Bridgwater, attitudes are different. The House is aware that my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and I went to the Serbian-controlled area of Bosnia last month at the invitation of the Bosnian Serbian leader, Dr. Radovan Karadzic. He invited us because he felt that we had been unfair in criticising the Serbs as the principal aggressors—although not the only aggressors—in the bloody war in Bosnia. We had said that they had used heavy weapons such as guns, tanks and rockets, which the Yugoslav national army had left them, to kill people indiscriminately in the great city of Sarajevo and also in Gorazde and Bihac. Our visit coincided with the revelations of the existence of appalling prison camps. We also saw a ghastly refugee collection point—it could not be called a camp—where men and women thrown out, or perhaps I should say cleansed out, of their homes gathered in the open without cover, sanitation or effective medical arrangements. I do not think that we have been unfair. We were on the heights above Sarajevo and we saw the guns.

We have been making those points for some time, as the Foreign Secretary knows. I shall quote again from a letter that I wrote to *The Times* in November 1991:

> "At different times over the past months I have asked Douglas Hurd to consider urging the countries of the Western European Union, if they were unwilling, which I understand, to commit land forces"—

—the same problem was touched on today by the right hon. Member for Bridgwater—

> "to consider a naval and aerial blockade. In the time scale, economic sanctions are both useless and as harmful to the attacked as to the attacker. He has refused. I think the time has come to think again . . . If I were in a decision-making position, I would say to the Serbs, 'We want a cease fire by midday tomorrow and if it doesn't happen aircraft will attack your positions round Osijek'".

I think that action should have been taken then. It was certainly possible; indeed, it is still possible, although I accept that it would now be much more difficult. If action has been taken, Milosevic and the Serbs would have been compelled to comply. They rightly felt that no one had the will to stand up to them. We continually said that we would not use force, and anyone who tells a bully, "I shall never use force" allows him to let rip.

I was astonished to hear the hon. Member for Copeland refer to the over-early recognition of Croatia. I do not think that there was any alternative to the recognition of Croatia at the time.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Of course there was.

Sir Russell Johnston: I do not agree.

Mr. Hardy: The hon. Gentleman voted for it.

Sir Russell Johnston: Yes, I did. As I have just said, I did not think that there was any alternative.

Dr. Cunningham: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Russell Johnston: I only have three minutes left. Normally I would give way to the hon. Gentleman.

When my right hon. Friend and I returned from Bosnia and Serbia, we both wrote to Dr. Karadzic. He replied:

> "We have undersigned the agreement with the UNPROFOR on the supervision of our heavy artillery. We have been taking many other steps to establish and reinforce the cease-fire and end this war."

We all know what has happened since: the war has not ended.

I have not much time left. Let me ask four quick questions. First, how safe is the UNPROFOR mandate? I am told that Tudjman is against extending it beyond the timetable. Secondly, Serb aircraft were flying this week. The Foreign Secretary said that no-fly zones were being considered, although only five or six weeks ago the Prime Minister said that the idea was impractical. What is going to happen?

Thirdly, little has been said about refugees. Will Britain reconsider its rejection of the quota arrangements, which are not fair to the countries nearest to the former Yugoslavia? Fourthly, like the hon. Member for Copeland and others, we are most concerned about the rules governing the involvement of our troops. I hope that the Secretary of State for Defence will make it clear what the rules of engagement are.

If we are to develop a global emergency system to anticipate and prevent conflicts such as those that we are now witnessing in Somalia, Iraq and Bosnia, we must develop the institutions within the United Nations to organise rapid negotiations and take rapid action. We need a global enforcement arrangement setting out clear rules for sanctions and, if necessary, military enforcement. We need the reinstatement of the United Nations military staff committee, which will require a good deal of money.

Those are large, difficult and costly objectives, but if we are to have a realistic new world order—which I am sure is the aim of hon. Members on both sides of the House—they are the objectives which we must pursue.

11.42 am

Sir Michael Marshall (Arundel): I accept immediately what my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said in his peroration. He suggested that a common theme could be found in the tragic circumstances affecting Iraq, Somalia and Yugoslavia: the role of the United Nations in facing the challenges involved.

What are those challenges? I believe that they can be summed up in three areas of the work to which the UN is dedicated—preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and disaster relief. I feel that, in the countries we are discussing, preventive diplomacy must inevitably be seen as something which has been sadly missed in the past and to which we must now turn in seeking to prevent future tragedies on a similarly appalling scale elsewhere.

My concern is that the UN has been hampered, and is still being hampered, in its work in these countries, especially in peacekeeping and—above all—disaster relief. I believe that, in the past, there has been a failure to recognise the convergence of those two challenges. The evidence is clear. In Somalia we have 3,500 armed troops to protect essential supplies. The no-fly zone in Iraq is there to protect the Kurds, in implementing UN resolutions and in response to the report of the United Nations Human Rights Commission. In Yugoslavia, the convoys of food and medical supplies and the work of the UN protection force in Bosnia show again the interrelationship between the military presence and disaster relief.

What can Parliaments do in such circumstances? I use the plural advisedly, and I refer to the work of Parliaments as well as to that of Governments. I know that the House will understand if I draw on consultations undertaken by Parliaments this month on a wide scale. Earlier this month, the IPU conference in Stockholm was dominated by the debate on the role of Parliaments in enhancing the work of the UN. I am also able to draw on the deliberations of the AIPO regional conference of ASEAN Parliaments, which was skilfully hosted by Indonesia and involved fellow-members from Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand—as well as many other observer countries. The conference continues this week, and I returned from it yesterday, thanks to advice that I received from the pairing Whip.

At these conferences, important opportunities have been provided for many parliamentarians to take part in appropriate debate. It was interesting in this regard to note that 33 members of the European Parliament were active on this subject during the conference that is still proceeding in Indonesia.

I do not claim that I can speak for more than 100 Parliaments, but I can claim to have heard from their representatives, and I believe that there is widespread agreement on common themes. They can be summarised as follows. The first is the necessity for the United Nations to adapt and change in a new world situation. Those who have met the UN Secretary-General in recent months recognise the remarkable efforts that he has made to make the structure more effective. That has led to some difficult decisions, which have had a painful effect on, in many cases, long-serving members of the United Nations staff. However, it has also provided an opportunity to move away from some of the worst aspects of the bad old days, when, for example, communist trusties were appointed to the UN as part of the "Buggins' turn" principle. The new Secretary-General is clearly in the business of appointing those who are best qualified to carry out the work. In that regard, he deserves—and, I believe, is receiving—the support of the House and the Government.

Let me also say, on a personal level, that I much appreciate the Secretary-General's clear commitment to a strengthened relationship with parliamentarians. He is a former parliamentarian, and he understands the advantage of bringing a wider constituency to the work of the UN. Many of those who have spoken recognise that, in the matter of financial resources, Parliaments around the world have a key role to play.

It follows, therefore, that I strongly support what the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said about direct support for the UN, in the form of both finance and other resources. I want to add my voice to those that urge the debtors to pay their $1·8 billion dues, and I welcome the sharing of the load in regard to resources on the ground as evidenced recently by Japanese military support and by President Bush's commitment in his speech to the UN earlier this week to increase the UN peacekeeping role in consultation with NATO.

I also strongly support the general thrust of the Secretary-General's proposals in the new agenda for the UN—an agenda which covers preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and disaster relief. It follows the initiative taken by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in the Security Council summit in January. We should now consider how we can seek to implement the agenda. It is in that area of implementation that I must express some of my final anxieties. I am glad to see my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence in his place, because some of my chief concerns lie in his area of responsibility.

It is no secret that UN resources are stretched almost to breaking point. If I concentrate on disaster relief and mention it in a military context, it will not be news to my right hon. and learned Friend, who knows of the concern felt by many of us about how we can bring resources to bear earlier in the process. The history of recent events shows time and again that, in addition to its peacekeeping role, the military is inevitably drawn into disaster relief. I am anxious to trigger that process much earlier in the piece.

The United Nations has decreed that the 1990s should be the international decade for national disaster reduction. Recent events have shown that there is a convergence in which distinctions between natural and man-made disasters, and between peacekeeping and disaster relief are meaningless in the face of massive cries for help. The United Nations Secretary-General has invoked chapter 8 of the charter in urging geopolitical groups to provide military resources for peacekeeping and, by extension, for disaster relief on a regional basis. It is clear that much remains to be done if there is to be international agreement on the large-scale earmarking required to take full advantage of not only the military command structures, but the key infrastructure that they can provide, involving transport, telecommunications and medical resources—nobody does it better.

[Sir Michael Marshall]

Surely, the time has come to set aside the old parrot cries about internal intervention and the presence of foreign troops. The presence of UN forces in blue berets, supported by Parliaments and Governments such as ours, should be universally welcomed in the fight for human survival. There has been a reluctance to do so in the past. Those who have tried to encourage that process have found a structural problem in terms of NATO, national resources and the UN command structures. I recognise some of the work that has been done to break down such problems, but there are still difficulties and a time lag. In addition, many people who already serve in our armed forces have written to me to say that they thirst to be involved in the new peacekeeping oppportunity and disaster relief work which is there for all to share. Outside, in a changing world there are many ex-military personnel, such as those who in their former communist role gave service to their state, who can be deployed to work to the world's mutual advantage.

I hope that we can seek further support for the breaking down of the various demarcations that make it difficult for us to respond, as I know that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary would wish. It is not always easy. When resources are to be committed, budgetary considerations apply. But the scale of the human tragedy that we are discussing today—which is not confined merely to three areas—is huge. There is a potential threat in Angola and Cambodia, where the electoral process and the electoral observation required of United Nations are trembling on the brink of events that require the support and protection of the United Nations, and the support and resources from the House and the country. Therefore, I urge my right hon. Friend to throw his weight behind the process in which we can play a vital part.

11.52 am

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): The hon. Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall) identified, as does the Order Paper, one of the common factors in the otherwise disparate societies of Bosnia, Iraq and Somalia—the vital new role expected of the United Nations. There is another common factor to all three completely different societies: guns and weapons. The level of arms has become part and parcel of the problems in each of the three territories. The other factor common to all three is the huge number of arms and weapons available to promote the conflict, alongside the terrible natural droughts and disasters facing societies such as Somalia.

I hope that the House will not mind if I take a trip down memory lane to when I was a Foreign Office Minister directly involved in the re-establishment and restoration of our diplomatic relations with Somalia after a breach of more than a decade in the 1960s and 1970s. Somalia does not fit into the concept of a nation state; it is a society of nomads who cross boundaries and whose views on life and society have not been traditionally confined by territorial lines. I do not know whether this is still true, but the Somali Government laid claim to territory in almost every one of its neighbours as a result of the historic, nomadic movements of its people.

In the 1960s and 1970s, some of the Somali leaders such as Siad Barre were caught up in the east-west rivalries. There was a scramble for Africa in the 19th century, and in the 20th century a new one emerged. It was a scramble for influence played out by the super-powers and east-west rivalries, of which Siad Barre and Somalia were part and parcel.

Somalia had become a client state of the Soviet Union, which built naval bases at Berbera and enthusiastically embraced the internal security system. Unfortunately for Siad Barre, the Soviet Union found another client next door, Mengistu in Ethiopia. The tragic consequence of that was that the most hated rivals of the Somalis became the neighbouring Ethiopians. Any society that neglects the hatreds of history does so at its peril. Such hatreds form the third factor common to all three territories under discussion today.

Siad Barre turned and sought to release himself from the power of the Soviet Union. He turned west and, in a variety of ways, sought to replace his relationship with the Soviet Union by his relationship with the west. He came to Britain and other countries but, sadly, he did not ask us for aid to replace the comprehensive aid programmes of the Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s—which were almost Cuban-style in the way that they helped to provide goods and then bought them. Instead, when the Soviet Union was thrown out, the production lines were stopped in their tracks. I visited a factory where the cans were still on the production lines, such was the speed and ruthlessness of the change. Siad Barre did not ask us for aid or support, but for more and more arms. We flirted with the policy as part and parcel of the drama and horrible excitement of re-establishing western influence in a territory formerly dominated by Soviet influence.

We are now wringing our hands in the House about the tragedy of a mixture of drought, war, bitterness and violence in Mozambique, Ethiopia and Somalia. However, those are the harvests reaped by indiscriminate arms sales through the international community. The western world sold arms to the Shah in the 1970s and to Saddam Hussein in the 1980s. I understand that the Bosnian conflict is capable of being sustained irrespective of arms embargoes, due to the supply of huge quantities of arms to Yugoslavia before it fell apart.

The sale of arms is the oldest trade in the world, and nations and companies are inevitably part of it. We all know that it creates jobs and money, and provides influence. No one pretends that we can wave a magic wand and solve the problem. However, we should try to learn a couple of lessons from such a horrifying experience. The indiscriminate selling of arms by successive eastern and western Governments in the post-war world, leads to disasters as drastic as those that we are discussing today. We should work out how to apply the lesson that we have learnt.

One exciting factor of the way that the United Nations has been involved in Iraq is that it has sought, through the power and support of the international community, to dismantle the nuclear capacity of Saddam Hussein. It was one of the most vital breakthroughs in the concept of a United Nations role.

Again, we are struggling in Bosnia to try to corral the arms, which is how I think that the Secretary of State described it. Like everyone else, I find it difficult to watch helpless as people bombard the UN headquarters in Sarajevo. Something has to happen, something more has to be done and we could try to make this debate mean something more.

Earlier this week, I had the privilege of meeting Bishop Dinis of Mozambique. He is an Anglican bishop who has played a significant part in brokering what might be a ceasefire—as the churches in Mozambique have done—in another country which faces the terrible problems of drought and the most violent and evil of civil wars. I asked him what would happen if a ceasefire occurred and expected him to say that they would want more aid, seeds and so forth. He said, "Help us to get the guns in." He asked why we could not offer incentives for people to bring guns to be destroyed on the spot and to be given money and seeds in return. I told him that I could think of a thousand good ministerial reasons why that was not possible. I can well imagine the Overseas Development Administration funding the purchase of guns in Mozambique and can envisage the minutes flying back and forth. I thought that it was a hopeless concept.

However, if there were a ceasefire perhaps one could give incentives to people to stop carrying guns as a means of getting food—as the Secretary of State said—and to offer them an incentive to grow food in return for their guns and thus restore the natural activities of the countryside and villages. Perhaps a dramatic gesture—turning guns into ploughshares—is a meaningful solution in Somalia or Mozambique. That policy will only work if we can stem the flow of arms. That is the great lesson which we all must learn from the three territories that we are debating. All three have been the subject of some form of arms race during the past 20 years. We must try to establish a new international order, and part of that should surely include some control on the arms race and arms sales, which the world has so flagrantly abused with the result that we are reaping such a terrible harvest.

12.1 pm

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): The House is considering three of the major catastrophe areas of the world, areas to which we shall have to pay great attention if disaster is not to occur. Each merits a speech, each merits a debate, but I am mindful of the 10-minutes rule and therefore propose to focus my few, brief remarks on Bosnia and on what is happening in the ex-Yugoslav republics. They probably present the greatest dangers of the three areas that we are considering and I welcome the comments made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, when he said that this is a crisis for Europe and in Europe.

There has been a temptation for us to sit back and wash our hands of what is happening in Yugoslavia. Because it was a communist state for about 40 years and because it was different from the rest of Europe, there was a temptation for us to ignore it and to feel that we were sufficiently apart not to have to take an active role in events there. That would be abject folly. Yugoslavia is close to the heart of Europe, both geographically and historically. There is no question of our being able to ignore it, or being able to allow the appalling suffering being inflicted on its peoples without taking some part in bringing matters to a satisfactory and peaceful conclusion.

We have to do everything in our power to alleviate the suffering in Yugoslavia. We must ensure that United Nations relief aid supplies get through to the people who are besieged in so many parts of Bosnia Hercegovina. I agree with everything said by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King). We must avoid the temptation to be dragged into a military peacekeeping role, which would lead to our troops becoming a target for the Croats, Serbs and Muslims. There is no question of our being able to take any party role for any one of those groups within Bosnia.

As hon. Members will recall, Bosnia consists of about 43 per cent. Serbs, 34 per cent. Croats and about 17 per cent. Muslims. All those people have an equal right to live in Bosnia, and many have been there for generations. The ethnic rivalry between the groups is hundreds of years old and no attempt at creating a unified country has yet succeeded or could succeed—except under Marshal Tito, who imposed it by force for about 40 years. It would be a grave error if the United Kingdom, the European Community or even the United Nations were to send a military force of such size or intent that we were also attempting to impose a military solution on the problems in Yugoslavia.

However, the crimes being committed against humanity in that country by all groups, not overwhelmingly by any one group—crimes against the hapless civilian population—cannot be allowed to pass without comment and censure by the international community. Nor do I believe that they can go unpunished in the long term. It will be difficult to bring those responsible to justice, but it must be a prime purpose for the Government and for the UN to ensure that at some time those responsible for perpetrating the outrages that we have seen on our televisions and in the video sent to hon. Members are brought to justice.

Many hon. Members may not have watched the video. It is a painful experience. To pick out one of the nastier scenes, a woman and her unborn baby, which has been ripped from her womb, have been left lying in the street and have bled to death. The story that goes with it is that a group of Serbian soldiers had had a bet on the sex of the baby, had ripped the mother open to find out and left the mother and child to die when the bet had been solved satisfactorily. The picture showed a mother and baby recently dead and having bled to death; I have no reason to disbelieve the story that went with it. It is one of countless horror stories coming from that part of the world. No pretence by the European Community to be able to impose and continue a civilised society can stand silent and aside in the face of such horror.

I welcome the military support being given to the aid convoys in Yugoslavia, without which I have no doubt that they would be unable to proceed. How much military aid can be given is a matter of balance. It is a question of how much can be given without running the risk that I mentioned of again turning the Balkans into a catalyst of European conflict and international involvement on a wider scale. My hon. Friends in the Government have got that balance about right. It will be a matter for constant review.

The Select Committee on Defence, which I have the honour to chair, met on Tuesday and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces and a team of advisers gave us answers to our questions. I am glad to be able to tell the House that that resolved many of the anxieties that I and my colleagues felt about what is happening in Yugoslavia. There remain problems to be solved, and I know that my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench are as conscious of the dangers that those problems present as I am.

The main problem that concerned us was over the terms of engagement and we received a good answer from my

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right hon. Friend the Minister. He assured the Committee that our troops would be able to defend themselves and that they would not be contained to returning like with like in so doing. If someone snipes at them they can use heavier return fire, if necessary, to secure their safety and that of their convoys. That is essential. It is not usual United Nations procedure and it is of vital importance that that freedom of action is given to the troops that we have sent.

I am keeping an eye on the clock, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I must share with the House several other outstanding problems to which I hope my right hon. Friend will turn his attention. The first is the great difficulties that we shall face because of the area that we have been given to cover —an area which contains two towns, Tuzla and Doboj, which are among the most dangerous parts of Bosnia being covered by United Nations aid. Last week United Nations representatives had still not made contact with the guerrilla leaders in that area. Doboj is Serb-held and Muslim attacked; Tuzla is Muslim-held and Serbian and Croatian attacked. For our troops to get the convoys through they will have to pass through not one but two war zones and will have to deal with a complex network of leaders both of Serbian forces and guerrilla forces at work. That will be a major diplomatic problem for the United Nations observers assisting us and for our military leaders there. I hope that we shall make certain that all necessary advance work is done before we commit any convoys into that area.

Secondly, the roads into that area are used by all the warring forces, and are likely to come under attack and be mined—not as a deliberate attack on United Nations representatives but as part of the internal struggle. Our people are bound to become involved in the differences of opinion between the warring factions. I fear that we shall find ourselves increasingly unpopular with all those involved in the fight.

I am worried, too, that the artillery available to the warring factions could be turned on our troops, and that we may not be adequately armed. We have mortars, Milan, and 30mm. cannon on the Scimitar. The fact remains that under heavy artillery attack we have no back-up or additional means of response. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will keep closely in mind the need for adequate reserve forces to bring our people out if they get trapped under such an attack. I should like him to consider the possibility of sending to somewhere in the region a detachment of RAF or Royal Navy air command fighter planes, so that we could at least put in some kind of air cover if our people were pinned down and unable to get out.

We have been assured in evidence given to the Committee that the training given to the Cheshires and to the 9th/12th Lancers has been adequate—and I have no doubt that it was, but it was short and rushed, and I doubt whether it will bring them up to the level of ability that I should like to see in an ideal world. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will make certain——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

12.11 pm

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): It is all too clear that post-cold war talk of a new world order was premature, to say the least. Indeed, this debate, brought about by events in the former Yugoslavia, Iraq and Somalia, and by the world's continuing difficulties in dealing effectively and promptly with them, is a fair measure of the precarious and complex nature of any such operation.

Yet at the Rio Earth summit and the new world order seminar in Tunisia, which I attended, it was clear that many in the third world see the opportunity for positive change. They look to the developed world for commitments to advance peace and security, development, respect for international law and human rights. The question remains: are we living up to their, and our own, expectations?

Let there be no misunderstanding. If the United Nations is to take an enhanced role in world affairs—an even-handed role sensitive to the needs of both the rich and poor nations and one which commands genuine respect and support, both political and financial—the part that the UN and its member states play in events in Iraq, Somalia and the former Yugoslavia will be a major factor in achieving that.

Throughout the crisis in Serbia, Bosnia, Hercegovina and Croatia, the Government have shown incompetence and prevarication. Holding the presidency of the EC, they could and should have been leading efforts to tackle the problems. Furthermore, the initial efforts of the EC and the UN at sanctions against Serbia were accorded insufficient importance. At no time has there been adequate monitoring of their implementation. Allegation after allegation has come to light regarding sanctions busting. Supplies, including oil, have been regularly transported by the Danube to Serbia; the former Soviet Union has been a source of supply throughout the conflict. According to *The Guardian's* investigations, over $10 million worth of trade has entered Serbia through Cyprus, including food, lorries and machinery.

Where are the results of the monitoring announced by the Foreign Secretary this afternoon? Perhaps he will tell us how effective the monitoring has been on the Danube. How many times has there been intervention which has stopped supplies getting through to Serbia?

It is widely acknowledged that the UN relief agencies are buckling under the strain of responding to the Balkan tragedy. The costs of this and any UN operation must be met in full by UN member states. The Foreign Secretary claims that British medicines are supplying hospitals in Sarajevo, but nightly television pictures show a gross lack of provision of medical care. That is something else that the Government have to tell us; they must explain the gap between what is claimed to have been provided and what we see on our television screens each night.

If the developed world ever needed a chance to prove to its poor and suffering neighbours that its commitment to the new world order is real and deep-seated, Somalia should be the proving ground. It has become literally impossible to deliver aid to the millions facing starvation and death without the permission of the warlords and the paid protection of their henchmen.

The super-powers' failure with Somalia is shown not only by the masses of dumped weaponry which feeds the clan feuds, but by the manipulation of tyrannical leaders for short-term political aims. Most importantly, it is shown by the failure to realise some time ago that the situation in Somalia was deeply wrong and was destined to bring about civil war and massive famine.

It would be pointless to delve now into the corrupt political mess in Somalia to seek solutions. Independent international action is desperately required. The Somalis cannot solve their problems alone. However, all the aid agencies working there are constrained by the lack of an overall plan for relief action. The United Nations humanitarian operation remains at the level of general statements and pious plans.

The reason is simple enough. In an area of such deprivation, food and medicine have become strategic weapons. Until the UN and non-governmental organisations have sorted out proper attitudes to humanitarian aid they will struggle against impossible odds. It is clear that there is a greater role to be played by the UN. Indeed, if the new world order is to be effective it must be interventionist.

The crisis offers the United Nations an opportunity to develop new ways of bringing decency and security to all parts of the world. The present limited mandate for UN forces is insufficient. If the UN could put large numbers of forces into the former Yugoslavia to aid the suffering population there is no moral argument for refraining from similar action in Somalia. A United Nations military presence, with the same rules of engagement as in the Balkans, will deprive the warring factions of the opportunity to steal relief food and medicines. At the same time, all parties could be encouraged to the negotiating table and pressured into seeking a peaceful solution to their arguments.

The Foreign Secretary spoke recently of an "imperial" role for the United Nations. Indeed, there is a possible problem of UN military intervention seeming like an invasion, but therein lies the true acid test of the new world order. Nations such as Britain, the United States and Russia, which espouse humanitarian ideals and have the financial means to pay for their extension to poor and afflicted nations, should take the lead and ensure that that freedom is extended. Instead of reneging on aid payments and United Nations debts, they should carry their fair share of financial burden.

As was said recently in *The Independent*, with insight and will it may be possible to develop a new pattern of intervention in the humanitarian nightmares of the world, with the aim of bringing relief to people who are victims of their Government's neglect or oppression.

The debate allows us to speak in favour of such a commitment as we had when it was decided to deal with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. It was decided that with the end of the cold war there could be a new world order, and that the UN could begin to play the role which those who brought it into being sought, and agreed that it should have. However, that will come only if we accept that the structure of the UN itself has to change. We must re-examine the make-up of the Security Council and those who hold millions of pounds who seek financial short cuts to compensate for deficits owed to them. The United Nations has a chance, particularly in Somalia, to play a major role in ensuring that we are not seen to be attempting to impose some form of colonial intervention on the affairs of other countries. In fact, we are responding to the real needs of real people.

Anyone who has watched the television coverage of Somalia must be concerned that now that the rains have started, the aid effort will naturally be slowed and even more young children are likely to die in the days ahead. The situation demands more than just hot air from this Chamber. We must start to play the role that we have described—of wanting to be part of a new world order. We must start to make that a reality. I hope that what has been said today will be the beginning of genuine concern and a determination to make the United Nations perform the role that it should have played from the very start.

12.20 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack: As I was a chairman of the advisory committee of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), perhaps the House will permit me to express good wishes for the future, following his moving address to the House just over one hour ago.

I will concentrate my remarks on the former Yugoslavia. I begin by expressing genuine respect and admiration for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and his ministerial colleagues for all that they have sought to do. At the same time, I make it plain that I have for months been haunted by the words of Edmund Burke, who said that nothing was necessary for the triumph of evil but that good men do nothing.

I am not suggesting that good men have done nothing —far from it—but we are certainly seeing the triumph of evil because good men have not done enough. Anyone who doubts that should view the video to which reference has already been made. Tabloid newspapers are not exactly the flavour of the month at the moment, and I confess that I have never read the *Daily Sport*. However, I watched the video that the editor sent to every Member of Parliament. Any right hon. or hon. Member who has not watched that video should do so as soon as possible. It makes dreadfully tragic viewing, but it brings home just what is being done to snuff out all humanity and humane values in that part of the world.

My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) referred to one appalling incident. In another, one sees someone carrying a tray of young men's genitals that were hacked off by Serbian soldiers. I will not go on, but I urge right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House to watch that video and to ponder it.

Day after day, week after week, and month after month for the past year or so we have seen some of the most unspeakable atrocities committed—first in Croatia and then in Bosnia—since the end of the second world war. In fact, they are among the most unspeakable atrocities ever committed in Europe. Let no one doubt that. I do not for a minute believe that all the atrocities have been committed by one group against another, but it is plain —as the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) emphasised in his speech—that the aggressor for the most part is the Serbian, and Serbia is responsible for the majority of the carnage.

When Dubrovnik was being shelled and Vukovar was raised to the ground, I was one of those who urged that we should take some action—air strikes into Serbia. We seem to be perfectly willing to wound by sanctions but reluctant to strike. I understand why, but this is not a civil war, because we in the west decreed that the countries involved are nation states. One can argue about the wisdom of whether that status should have been recognised. I believe

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that it was right to recognise Croatia, although I was not so persuaded about Bosnia. The fact remains that they are now recognised as independent states, yet they have been denied the means of effective self-defence and the benefit of a defensive alliance.

We are all involved because what is being torn apart are the values and decencies on which European civilisation and democracy are based. At risk is the credibility of the United Nations and of the European Community, and if that is not maintained, we will become even more aware of the two spectres that haunt the region. There is the spectre of an all-out Balkan war. Kosovo has been mentioned several times. One has only to reflect on the scenes on television this week, showing children being barred from school and teachers locked out, and on the consistent repression of the Albanian majority within Kosovo.

Macedonia was also mentioned. Whatever the Greeks may say about names and titles, a guarantee should be given. What would happen if Albania, Bulgaria, and Greece and Turkey—two NATO members—were drawn in on opposing sides? The other spectre is that of Muslim fundamentalism. Last month, I addressed a rally in Trafalgar square, and it was a shattering experience. The hon. Members for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clywd) and for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) also spoke. We were loudly abused by a group of Muslim fundamentalists merely because we made some acknowledgement of what the British Government are seeking to do in trying to recognise some of the difficulties. It is a sobering thought that Muslim fundamentalism might soon be on the march in the heart of Europe.

I do not doubt the good intentions and good will of the Government, the European Community, or the leaders of the United Nations and I do not underestimate the difficulties. I certainly do not want to see British troops drawn into a ground war. That, however, is a real danger. I wish Lord Owen every possible success in taking on the labours of my noble Friend Lord Carrington, to whom I also pay tribute. There is no point in bemoaning lost opportunities.

If action had been taken last November or December we might not be having this debate, but it is still not too late for ultimatums to be issued to Serbia and to give the decent people in Serbia, of whom there are many, an opportunity to get away from their appalling communist dictator. We are prepared to take further action in Iraq, and we are right to do so. Why the double standards? I regret that we did not finish the job in Iraq, but that is another story.

On trial are the point and purpose of the United Nations and the EC's effectiveness in maintaining the first objective of its founders, which was to ensure that war would never again tear Europe apart. Part of Europe is tearing apart and we must contain the conflict. If what is now being done by Lord Owen and Cyrus Vance does not lead to a fairly early and proper ceasefire, I urge my right hon. Friends—once again—to consider an air strike into Serbia itself.

I know that my right hon. Friend will forgive me if I end on a slightly parochial point. It has been said that the Cheshires are going to the region. I am delighted about that because they are a fine regiment but I hope that my right hon. Friend will note that this is yet another example of the need to have infantry which is well trained, easily deployed and of adequate size.

Because I am deeply worried about the proposed merger of the Cheshires and the Staffords and because I believe that merger could undermine the effectiveness of the British Army, in which we all take such pride, I urge my right hon. Friend to think again about numbers and deployments.

12.30 pm

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Less than three weeks ago, I was in Yugoslavia and managed to have two hours of talks with Slobodan Milosevic and one hour of talks with the president of the new federal Government of Serbia and Montenegro—the rump Yugoslavia as we might call it. I was able also to meet some of the Hungarian minority leaders in Vojvodina and to see the refugee camp in Palic, which houses 540 inmates, most of whom are Bosnian Muslims.

The hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) described what has happened during the past year. Some of the horrendous things that have happened have made me despair of any solution, but I now believe that I can see a glimmer of hope. I made the same journey last year. At that time, the federal Government seemed impotent, although interesting to talk to. They seemed to be on the fade and President Milosevic of Serbia and Tudjman—whom I also met last year—of Croatia were on the up and up. I now feel that there is buoyancy in the leadership in Belgrade. The Foreign Secretary said that Prime Minister Panic should be encouraged. We should give every possible assistance to Mr. Panic—he is the Prime Minister of the new state of Serbia and Montenegro and seems to have overwhelming popular support.

I travelled to Yugoslavia on my own. I notified the Foreign Office, but I did not receive any assistance and I was not contacted by the embassy in Belgrade although I appeared on television. I was able to wander the streets and talk to ordinary people. I know that Mr. Panic has the support of people in Belgrade and there is no reason to believe that that support does not extend beyond the capital. We need to support him, but how? I challenge the idea that increasing sanctions on Serbia will help him in his combat with the more extreme nationalists in Serbia. One must bear in mind that Mr. Panic recently survived a vote of confidence in the Assembly in Belgrade when he was under attack from the Šešel radicals, the group that is sometimes referred to as the Chetniks, who are the extremists. They may still be a danger because they could come to power in the rump Yugoslavia, if we do not establish and assist Mr. Panic in the next few months.

Mr. Panic has done a number of things that we should all admire him for. He has abandoned the policy of all Serbs being in one state, which was undoubtedly Milosvic's policy last year, but even Milosevic seems now to have abandoned it. In the talks that I had with Mr. Panic I noticed one change. Whereas last year he talked about the Serbs in Krajina expressing their self-determination by being able to remain in the old Yugoslavia, he is now talking about the Krajina Serbs being part of Croatia, provided that human rights are extended to them on the same basis as they are extended to every other citizen in Croatia. That is important.

Moreover, at the London conference Mr. Panic recognised the boundaries of Croatia—that they should be inviolable and could be changed only by peaceful negotiation, not by military means. It was Mr. Panic who called for early elections in November. That is why many of the deputies, who stand to lose their seats in the Yugoslav Parliament in November, oppose him. That is the reason for the motion of no confidence in him. In addition, Mr. Panic is the man who dismissed Mihalj Kertes, the hardline deputy security service Minister and deputy interior Minister, from the Government. A close colleague of the Serbian President was dismissed by Panic. We do not help Panic by increasing the sanctions on Serbia.

If, indeed, the arms were coming from Serbia into Bosnia and an army were invading across the border, that might be a different matter. However, in his speech, the Foreign Secretary intimated that the attacks were coming from inside Bosnia—that it was Bosnian Serbs who were involved in these attacks. It would be an odd way of rewarding Mr. Panic for his efforts, particularly for his efforts at the recent London conference, if we attempted to undermine him. That is the warning that I gave this year. I gave a warning last year: that we should not have recognised Croatia. Despite what the hon. Members for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) and for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) said, those people who looked into what had happened in Croatia last year, on behalf of Lord Carrington, came to the conclusion that Croatia was not ready for recognition. Why? Because human rights were still not being recognised there.

Mr. Hardy: And they have still not been recognised there.

Mr. Wareing: That is right. Serbs, who had lived as Yugoslav citizens for 40 years in parts of Croatia, are now foreigners in their own country. It is as though we were to say that all Scotsmen who live in England should no longer be given the same rights as English people. If that happened, we should say that that was totally wrong. Not enough pressure is being put on Croatia. The Croats are not innocent. People, I acknowledge, have said that it is not all one-sided. I deplore the actions of the Serbs, particularly the irregulars who are involved in Bosnia, and I deplore the atrocities. Likewise, I deplore the atrocities that have been committed by the other side.

Until last January the Government adopted an even-handed approach, but I reproach them for the fact that that approach has ceased, simply because, in my view, they needed German support over Maastricht. Be that as it may, it was wrong; it was an error. The hon. Member for Staffordshire, South is wrong in believing that military attacks on bases in Serbia would have anything other than a counterproductive effect—that of undermining the very people in Belgrade whom we want to continue in power and whom, to use a phrase that the previous Prime Minister used about Mr. Gorbachev, we can do business with. We must be careful about the policies that we adopt and ask ourselves a few questions about them.

The Foreign Secretary said he regretted that the old Yugoslavia fell apart. But we played our part in that because when Yugoslavia appealed more than two years ago for membership of the Council of Europe, it was ignored. The hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) and I tabled an early-day motion and wrote to the Foreign Secretary asking for the know-how fund to be extended to the old Yugoslavia, but we were told that it was not democratic enough.

Mr. Hardy: Three years ago Yugoslavia was given guest membership of the Council of Europe.

Mr. Wareing: But that was a belated approach and more should have been done to uphold the integrity of the old Yugoslavia. The Foreign Secretary said that he would not go into how the storm in Bosnia began. The EC played its part in that by its early recognition of——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Lofthouse): Order. I call Mr. Churchill.

12.40 pm

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): About 24 years ago British troops were deployed in Northern Ireland. Tragically, they are still there. The Yugoslav conflict is on an even greater scale. The terrain is infinitely more difficult and the viciousness of the conflict far surpasses the one in Northern Ireland. I hope that we are not blundering into a situation that will prove to be a costly can of worms.

British troops respond admirably when they have a clear-cut objective. Examples of that are retaking the Falkland Islands in 1982 and, along with our coalition partners, driving Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait last year. Bosnia is different, but the mountains there are not unknown to the British Army. While serving as the Member for Preston my late father fought in the Bosnian fastnesses alongside our erstwhile colleague Sir Fitzroy Maclean. The objective in Bosnia now is much less clear cut and our forces will be under instructions to escort convoys of humanitarian aid.

In giving evidence to the Select Committee on Defence, the Minister for the Armed Forces said earlier this week that it was hoped to negotiate safe passage for the British protected convoys. But we have seen with what alacrity both sides have broken previous agreements, and it would be a dereliction of duty not to be prepared for the worst. The Select Committee on Defence was reassured by the positive statement of the Minister for the Armed Forces that British forces would be authorised to return fire "with all they have got." But will what they have got be enough?

We are told that if a British escorted convoy comes under attack from heavy weapons the commander is under instructions somewhat ingloriously to adopt the time-honoured tactics of British Sunday journalists—to make an excuse and leave. It is plain that 1,800 British troops cannot possibly hope to fight their way through an area which 30 Nazi divisions failed to control in the second world war.

The desperate plight of the civilian population has been referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), the Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, and by my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack). The atrocities in the conflict are unspeakable, but apart from those atrocities civilians are in a desperate plight and suffer from a lack of food, water, shelter and fuel, and the problems will intensify in the coming winter.

I do not dispute the Government's decision to try to get food and medicines through, but our overriding concern must be to ensure that British casualties—there will inevitably be British casualties—are kept to an absolute

[Mr. Winston Churchill]

minimum. Only this morning, four further United Nations casualties were recorded when their armoured personnel carrier was blown up by Serbian forces.

I have three concerns about the deployment of the Cheshire regiment, of which I can say as a Member representing part of Cheshire, we are very proud indeed. I should be grateful for the Secretary of State's assurance that it will be considered. First and foremost, is there a chain of command in which Ministers and our soldiers can have confidence? Grave concerns have been expressed about that. Secondly, is it prudent to rely on the good faith of the warring factions rather than providing any airborne reconnaissance capability that would warn our forces of an ambush? I understand the decision not to use helicopters because, as my right hon. Friend the Minister made clear, it would place our pilots at unnecessary risk from shoulder-launched surface-to-air missiles, but what about unmanned airborne vehicles, which are known as drones? There is a proposal before the Ministry to make such equipment available within a short time on a short lease. I hope that that will at least be considered.

Thirdly, what if our forces come under heavy weapons fire? They will have no means of pinpointing the source of the fire, let alone of retaliation. Would not it at least be sensible to deploy an Invincible class carrier to the Adriatic as a precautionary measure so that if one of our convoys gets into trouble, is ambushed or has its withdrawal blocked it knows that, within 30 minutes, it can summon an air strike? Alternatively, that could be achieved by deploying fixed-wing aircraft in Italy. I favour the air exclusion zone over Bosnia that the United States has proposed.

If this debate were being held next year, the Government would be unable to send the Cheshire regiment. I call on the Secretary of State urgently to review the "Options for Change" cuts proposed for the infantry. Our armed forces are experiencing severe overstretch, with the gap between tours in Northern Ireland being reduced from 24 months to only 15 months. By general consent, that is an unacceptably short respite between tours. Surely it is clear to all but the most blinkered friend of the Treasury that we need at least five more infantry battalions than are envisaged in the present plans. The cost would be a mere £75 million, which, in the sum total of Government expenditure, is but a drop in the bucket. That could, however, give a great deal of flexibility to the Army. It would relieve much of the overstretch and many of the human problems that go with it for our forces and their families. Perhaps my right hon. and learned Friend would care to make a start by reprieving the Cheshires.

12.50 pm

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): I am the third member of the Defence Select Committee to speak this morning. Defence Ministers will be appearing before us so frequently in the next few months talking about this very subject that they may come to think of themselves as members of that Committee, too.

It was right to recall the House to debate these serious issues, but one wonders whether, if the Mr. Panics of the Conservative party had not messed up the economy, we would have been able to hitch a ride on the back of the economic debate to discuss foreign affairs. Whatever the rationale for this debate, however, it is right to discuss the crucial issues involved in foreign affairs and defence, and I am pleased that the Defence Select Committee has already met to try to elicit more information than has hitherto been made public.

It might seem perverse to view the cold war as anything other than a negative phenomenon, but in many ways it was simple. Not only did soldiers know who the enemy was; they knew which dug-out they would be fighting in, and they probably knew the name of the tank commander who would come against them. In those days policy makers did not need to think much. The world was a simpler and stable place. All those conditions have changed, not always for the better.

The turbulent, volatile and conflict-ridden world in which we now live surely requires much more thinking —fresh ideas are needed. One thing is certain: anyone who believes that we are entering a wonderful new era without war, in which armed forces can be reduced to negligible levels, is deluding himself. Such aspirations will be thwarted.

History offers us little comfort for the idea that war can be banished. There have been major defining treaties in the past. The 1990 charter of Paris was intended to create an orderly Europe, and it failed. My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) has spoken of armaments being passed around the world. We read in the press only today that Russia is selling diesel submarines to Iran. Then there is the problem of the haemorrhaging of nuclear capability. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute in a recent publication identified 30 conflicts around the world today. So we need forces commensurate with our national interests, alliances, and obligations, such as our obligation to the United Nations.

For Bosnia this has been a period of tragedy beyond words. For us it has been a case study of the sort of a war that we shall see more of. It has consumed Croatians and Bosnians and it threatens to escalate dramatically to engulf the wider Balkan region. We can now assess the effect of the international community's mediation and intervention in the conflict so far. I regret to say that the roles of the UN, the EC, the Western European Union, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, NATO and various national Governments have been far from encouraging; indeed, usually they have been dispiriting. I hope that that experience will serve to quash the idea that Europe is capable of looking after its own security, let alone anyone else's.

Yugoslavia is a test bed for the international community's ability to formulate policy to deal with such conflicts. So far the international community has responded with a paralysing lack of adaptability and co-ordination. The conflict has proceeded almost unchecked. The Secretary of State spoke of "occasional slackening" in the fighting. That leads to the depressing conclusion that unless we react diplomatically, politically and economically, war will spread. There has been a lack of political objectives and the insertion of military forces in the absence of clear political objectives is a recipe for political and military catastrophe. The decision to send British forces, although worthy and limited, seems to have been designed more to placate domestic opinion than to achieve any real solution to the problem.

There is a recognisable lack of enthusiasm on the part of many military analysts on matters such as the nature of the problems facing our forces. To me it appears rather humiliating when forces are inserted and they have to argue their way through warlords' domains. If the warlords say that they cannot go through, they cannot. If the warloads decide that they have had enough of the British presence, all they need do is to kill some British soldiers and, according to information that we have been given, we shall depart.

The force that we have sent is, to use the words of the last Sir Winston Churchill in describing the name of a colleague of his, Bossom, neither one thing nor the other. I suspect that our forces are similarly designed. According to a good friend of mine, Paul Beaver of "Jane's", three main alliance patterns are emerging in the Balkans. The first includes Croatia and Hungary, the second Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Romania and the third Albania, Bulgaria and Turkey. Those regional alliances being postulated could have obvious repercussions for the EC and NATO. Unless we are exceedingly careful and show greater imagination than in the past, the third Balkan war may well erupt.

There is a reasonable possibility of preventing that course of action. There is nothing automatic about a third Balkan war, but much will depend on the outcome of the current war in Bosnia. If Serbia is weakened by war and UN sanctions, and if Serbia concedes the principles of a united Bosnia, underpinned by international guarantees and a UN presence, possibly a trusteeship, as Christopher Cviic of Chatham House has argued, the way could be clear for an eventual non-violent settlement of the Kosovo and Macedonia issues.

A few years ago we were subjected to the Government's rethinking in what was called "Options for Change". As earlier speakers have argued, the concept of "Options for Change" was designed during the euphoric period following the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, in the two years subsequently, the Gulf war and many other wars should have led to some degree of reappraisal. To reduce our infantry battalions from 55 to 37 is dangerous. We have an enormous commitment in Northern Ireland, to home defence, the ACE rapid reaction corps, the Falklands and the residue of empire. Now we have superimposed on that the problems of committing resources to the former Yugoslavia and the possibility of conflict increasing and escalating in the Persian Gulf again. That will overstretch our resources to such a level that options available to a Secretary of State will diminish.

As was said earlier, the 24-month interval between tours of duty in Northern Ireland has been breached. I understand that the battalion put on standby to replace the Cheshires was in Northern Ireland as recently as May. That makes even the 15-month interval that the Select Committee on Defence was told about seem absurdly long.

We are experiencing overstretch in our Army. We are reaching the stage where the Government should be reconsidering the mergers. I shall not repeat the arguments that I have used a number of times in the past, simply arguing for my local regiment to survive.

Perhaps during the Gulf war it was believed that high-tech warfare was the model of warfare for the future and therefore the poor infantry, the unspectacular guard that does the bread-and-butter job, was less important. Surely subsequent to the Gulf war, the increase in the activity of the United Nations and the likelihood of an increase in low-intensity conflict mean that the case for the retention of the infantry is overwhelming. I hope that the Government will reconsider the decision that they made two years ago.

12.58 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Devon, West and Torridge): Following the end of the Gulf war, the Kurds rose up in the north of Iraq and the Shi'ites in the south. On our television screens, we saw the tragedy of the Kurds spilling over the mountains, and the west reacted. We sent in humanitarian aid. We did not see the southern tragedy but we heard the stories.

In April 1991, a month after the uprising, the UN Security Council passed resolution 688, to insist

> "that Iraq allow immediate access by international humanitarian organizations to all those in need of assistance in all parts of Iraq and to make available all necessary facilities for their operations".

Nothing has happened in the south of Iraq to implement that resolution.

Towards the end of July, this year, spurred by continuing stories of unhappiness and misery, the House formed the all-party parliamentary group for Iraqi Shias of which I am the chairman. Our task is to bring the plight of the suffering Iraqi Shias to the notice of the world. I believe that the Chamber needs no videos and no television stories; it has the imagination, the knowledge and perception to understand what is going on in the south of Iraq without the visual aids that others need.

The Secretary of State reacted at once. We tabled parliamentary questions and an early-day motion. The Secretary of State knows well that resolution 688 has not been implemented. I pay tribute here to the excellence and thoughtfulness of the help provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, particularly the middle east desk and its staff, including David Reddaway, our chargé d'affaires in Tehran, Iran. They have worked wonders, as has the Secretary of State himself. Helped by our knowledge and the efforts of the British Prime Minister, he persuaded our American allies and the French to introduce the no-fly zone.

This week I visited Iraq and Iran for the sixth or seventh time. Let me make a brief report on the situation in southern Iraq since the implementation of the no-fly zone. I have to tell the House that the situation is now critical. The skies above the marshes are clear, which is wonderful: I pay tribute to the bravery of the pilots who are keeping them clear. The leaflets are there and the people can see what is happening. They have been dropped with a short message in Arabic, with a picture on the other side of our aircraft and of Saddam Hussein's airships, both fixed-wing and helicopters. How could the allies have allowed him to keep those helicopters? I believe that it was a mistaken decision by the United States, which believed that they would be used for humanitarian purposes. Did they not know the beast with whom they were dealing?

The skies are clear; but on the ground, in revenge for our actions in trying to monitor the non-implementation of resolution 688, Saddam Hussein has now put half his entire military forces into the marshes. The dangers are considerably heightened. The results can be seen even just inside the Iraqi border. There are great black, smoking areas, stretching into the water where one or more missiles landed perhaps an hour earlier. The black zones are 300

[Miss Emma Nicholson]

metres long: if the missiles had landed in the town they would have demolished about 20,000 houses. They would have gone up in flames.

Food stocks have been removed and taken north of the 32nd parallel. That is the first thing that Saddam did when he invaded Kuwait: he took out all the food. The farms have been burnt, including the small rice farms in the marshes. The villagers are no longer self-sufficient in food, yet they are blockaded, so that they cannot get out to the towns to try to find food on the black market. The towns are filled with soldiers.

Tank divisions, each containing 45 tanks, are based in different towns in the marshes. I have the names of those towns. Missiles and missile launchers make nonsense of the claim that it is impossible to bomb the towns and villages from the ground. Assault boats carrying 30 to 40 armed men—the boats in which I travel carry a maximum of four or five people—assault the towns and villages each day.

The troops are stationed 30 km outside the marshes. They have been beaten off a little, but they come back in every day and carry out their remorseless attacks—burning, shooting and killing defenceless people, and destroying whole villages and towns. I talked to a man in a hostel for the wounded in Ahwaz who came out of Iraq on Monday with his hand blown off. He was a young farmer, only 20 years old. In the towns and villages around his area lived 25,000 people; five days ago, the area was emptied by 20,000 armed men. That is what has happened since the introduction of the no-fly zone.

Sewage dumping has further contaminated the drinking water—containerised and brought in from cities around the marshes, such as Basra. I saw the evidence of the drainage of the marshes of which we have heard in recent weeks. The water level has been reduced; the roots of the papyri show.

I have already described the physical evidence of attacks. Clergy are at risk in the wake of the death of the Grand Ayatollah Al Khoei. There has been no medication in the marshes for many years. Medicine is not available and there are no doctors. There is a grave shortage in the supply of food and the water buffalo have almost disappeared through lack of water. The muddy fish, stinking water and malarial air are all that is left for people to live on. If that is not genocide, the word means nothing.

In my humanitarian work this time I have been able to obtain much new military data on the Saddam Hussein marsh attacks, drawn from the evidence that people have given to me. It is compelling; it is difficult and dangerous to obtain, but it exists. I have brought back tapes, photographs and videos taken at great risk of life and limb by people deep inside the heart of the marshes. I have many written statements from personal interviews within and outside the marshes that desperate people—men, women and children—have given me. I shall give those reports to the Secretary of State for Defence and the Foreign Secretary.

Thousands of people have escaped. It becomes ever more difficult to do so as the front line of Saddam Husssein's army gets closer to the border of Iran. People become trapped as their villages are assaulted. They run towards the safe haven of Iran but cannot get through. Eight families died in mined waters near the border two days before I sailed there. There are many thousands of people in the camps in Iran—a country which has reacted with hospitality and support. Iran now has 3·5 million refugees in camps and on the borders. The country gives free right of passage to all refugees and offers a real safe haven.

Has the official aid worked in Iraq and should sanctions now be lifted? The United Nations methods of distributing aid in southern Iraq—the district which I know—has been faulty and misapplied. The food aid that has come in and which the United Nations has been given to distribute in the past 18 months was given to officials in southern Iraq. Who are those officials? They belong to the Saddam Hussein regime. The food was then given to the Saddam Hussein army. I have no faith in the United Nations as a distribution agency in southern Iraq. The United Nations Development Programme officials in Iran have been sitting in the most expensive hotel, day in day out, week in week out, for more than a year. They seem to have achieved little.

Should economic sanctions against Iraq be lifted to help the people? To do so would presuppose a beneficent Government aiming to carry out good actions on behalf of the people. That is not on offer. We are dealing with a despotic regime headed by a tyrant of demonic proportions—a man who lacks the normal human feelings and sensitivities and whose documented cruelty stretches back 20 years or more. His half brother, Barzal al Takriti, a murderer, is the Iraqi United Nations delegate to Geneva. That is what we have allowed to happen.

Public and private funding has come from the Government's Overseas Development Administration, from the European Community and from the British public. It is that money which I have been spending. I pay tribute to the many Iranians and Iraqis who have formed seven committees to help me work for the good of the Iraqi people throughout Iran and on the borders. There is now an aid committee in the marshes to deliver food. The danger is acute. One man was lost delivering food—our EC aid—three weeks ago.

I pay tribute to the Persian Gulf department of the Iranian Foreign Ministry—in particular, the first secretary, Mr. Vahid Farmand and his colleagues, to the Interior Ministry, to the governor of Khozestan and to his staff and to the governor of Shustar and his office, to the Iraqi Opposition, the Supreme Council of the Revolution in Iraq, to Ayatollah al Hakim , to Yousif al Khoei and his grandfather's foundation, and to the many other Iraqi groups and individuals who have done so much to help. Both Iran and Iraq have come together with myself to make that humanitarian aid—dangerous, arduous and sensitive work—effective. We can deliver a little food, but it is not enough.

I call upon the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to do all that he can to secure the new Security Council draft resolution—the revised assets resolution—to incorporate aid to the Shi'ites. It does not incorporate such aid. There is no mention of the Shi'ites. I call upon him to provide food from the air and to think hard whether one could in some way achieve, not full military intervention immediately, but perhaps a massing of troops on the border. For if we cannot push Saddam Hussein's troops north of the 32nd parallel soon there will be no marsh Arabs left and few Shi'ite Iraqis either. The

Tigris and Euphrates great marshes of history will have gone, we shall have failed and Saddam Hussein will have won.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I remind the House that we have come to the end of the time governed by a 10-minute limit on speeches, but many hon. Members want to catch my eye. I should be grateful if hon. Members would bear that in mind and, as far as possible, make their speeches short.

1.10 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): I have listened with great care to hon. Members from both sides of the House talk with great passion about the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. There does not seem to be any consistency in the approach to tackling that massive problem. That is one reason why the conflict has escalated into Bosnia. If there had been concerted and clear action by the United Nations and the European Community at an early stage—whatever that action should have been—I think that it would have sent a clear message to the Serbs, who have committed most of the atrocities.

It is almost 12 months since the fall of Vukovar, after a three-month seige by Serbian forces. We all recall the awful bloodshed, the senseless killings and the massive artillery attacks perpetrated by the Serbian-dominated Yugoslav army. That shocked the world. We deplored the loss of life, the destruction of communities, homes and possessions, the destruction of an ancient culture and the dislocation of the peaceful co-existence between the Serbs and Croats.

Yet our response was disjointed in the sense that there was no concerted action. By the time that United Nations peacekeeping forces had been deployed, the map of Croatia had effectively been redrawn, to the benefit of Serbia, and the land held by the Serbs became part of the drive for a greater Serbia. It is not as though Serbia had no right to be concerned about the future of 600,000 of its countrymen remaining within the borders of an independent Croatia. We all recall with horror the atrocities committed during the second world war, which surely would have allowed the Serbians to consider whether it was safe for their fellow countrymen to remain in Croatia without any protection, but that in no way condones the way in which Serbia acted in Croatia. Rather than securing guarantees for the Serbian population, the Serbs were driven by the desire to lay claim to Croatian territory and that was totally unacceptable.

Due to the lack of concerted action in the Croatian crisis we now have a crisis in Bosnia Hercegovina. Ethnic conflict is not new in that part of the world, as we know to our cost from the earlier part of this century. Some people will point to historical precedents to prevent direct military intervention, but, because there has been no other course of action, and after the past 12 months of inaction, when ceasefire after ceasefire was breached with monotonous regularity, it could at least be argued that Serbia thought that a venture into Bosnia would not be challenged.

Bosnia is now a recognised state, in which 44 per cent. of the population is Muslim, yet Serbia controls two thirds of that country and Croatia has also taken a share. By the time of the conference in London in August the map of Bosnia had virtually been redrawn and the prospect of greater Serbian domination was much closer. I echo the sentiments voiced in some parts of the House today that if sanctions are to be effective they must be as watertight as possible. If we allow them to be breached, the Serbs will continue to drive into Bosnia and to control as much of the country as possible. It is clear that any intervention at this stage would appear to be too late to save the awful tragedy that has shattered the region, but limited western military action in a joint United Nations and European Community initiative is now essential to drive a path for humanitarian aid and for food and medical supplies to the beseiged city of Sarajevo and other places.

When we have committed ourselves to that course of action, the rules of engagement for troops deployed in the region must allow them to protect themselves, with the freedom of action that that implies. Neil Ascherson, in a recent article in *The Independent on Sunday*, described ethnic cleansing as "a foul expression". How apt that description is. That cruel method of driving people away from their homes, shattering communities and destroying people's lives should galvanise others into action. It is oppressive nationalism of the worst kind, fuelled by belief in the pure race. Let us reject it completely, and let us say publicly that we do so. Let us act in a way consistent with our belief that driving people from their homes and casting them away in inhuman conditions deserves international condemnation and action.

The Balkan conflict has led to the displacement of more than 2 million people. It has caused the greatest European refugee crisis since the second world war. Most of the refugees remain within the six republics that made up Yugoslavia, but I am afraid that the response of some western countries to the crisis has been painfully inadequate. Of course, I understand why some people say that refugees should be kept as close as possible to their homes—but many do not have homes to go to. Their homes have been razed to the ground. They have nowhere to go, no shelter and no food. The United Kingdom should play a greater part in the acceptance of refugees from that war-torn country.

Africa, too, faces famine, war and death. Forty million people are facing starvation and there is a real danger of instability in vast parts of the continent. One in six Somalis is a refugee outside the country and, inside the country, especially in the south, there is a massive problem of starvation and malnutrition. Twenty-five per cent. of all children under five are reported to have starved to death. One aid worker reported having seen 40 babies die overnight in one of the feeding centres. As journalists and aid workers penetrate towns and villages, they encounter horror after horror.

We know that the United Nations is now planning massive food aid and that humanitarian aid workers are dedicated to the immediate relief of the suffering. However, that is happening against a backdrop of a real cut in overseas aid, as we have already heard today.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: No. I am sorry, but I have only a minute left.

Even when the immediate problems are alleviated, massive problems will remain concerning the restructuring of the country. As we alleviate famine, which we must, we must also remember that the west has an overseas aid obligation. The prospect of a decrease rather than an increase in aid is to be deplored. The United Kingdom currently holds the presidency of the EC Council of

[Mr. Jones]

Ministers, which has proposed a £200 million cut in the Community's 1993 budget for development and co-operation.

African countries owe massive debts to western Governments, the International Monetary Fund, the World bank and commercial banks. I urge the Government to give an assurance that the United Kingdom will give the lead by increasing, not cutting, its aid budget and by calling for a meeting of G7 Ministers. They must agree to reduce Africa's total debt burden by implementing the original Trinidad terms as the first step to completing debt write-off. They must agree also to reduce the level of commercial debts owed to banks. That will help to rebuild the economy of that shattered continent, so that its peoples can have real hope for their future.

1.20 pm

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): I will never forget marching into Londonderry in 1969, when I was 19, from a troop ship in the River Foyle, together with 600 other British troops. We were sent to prevent civil disorder degenerating into civil war. It will not surprise the House if I say that I have every sympathy with the Cheshire regiment and the support troops sent to the former republic of Yugoslavia. I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on his robust statements about the rules of engagement for British troops. A lesson has been learnt, because when we went to Northern Ireland, our feeling was that if we used our rifles, we would be court martialled. There was a feeling of great insecurity among British forces there in 1969. It is essential that any British troops sent to Bosnia have the right to shoot back.

As there is a strong possibility that some British soldiers will be wounded or worse, I am in favour of some sort of air exclusion zone. We have air superiority and we should use it. My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) pleaded for an aircraft carrier to be sent as a reserve, and that must be right when one considers the exclusion zone in north Iraq and the efforts that we are making to help the Shias in the marshes in the south in the same way, which have been a huge success.

We should note also what hapened to the Ukranian battalion in Sarajevo that has been supporting the UN's efforts. It was shelled and several of its members killed. Last week, I was privileged to hear Mr. Zlenko, the Foreign Minister of the Ukraine, speak passionately and movingly about his country's commitment and how deeply the Ukrainians feel about the troops that they lost. We must not allow British troops to become en laagered—battened down and sitting ducks. We must have a plan for withdrawing British troops if the circumstances suggest that Bosnia is sliding into a hopeless civil war.

There are three clear and related objectives. The first is the resolution of the conflict in Bosnia. I strongly support the sanctions against Serbia, but I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), who served in Yugoslavia during the second world war, and who did so much as chairman of the all-party Yugoslav group, and to his remarks about Prime Minister Panic. There must be a case for throwing that man a lifeline and for easing sanctions. We must be rigid about sanction-busting along the Danube, but we should also build up Mr. Panic if we can.

Our second objective must be to be restrict the conflict to Bosnia and Croatia. Many eyes are watching what is happening there—not least those of the Transylvanian Hungarians in Romania.

I went to Cluj last year. It is a tinderbox. Mr. Zlenko referred to the problems of Moldova on the Romanian-Ukranian border. There are dozens of small enclaves—of Germans, Tartars and Kazaks, for example—throughout the Russian Federation all the way to Vladivostok. We have to contain the fighting. If it goes south to Kosovo and Macedonia, we will have NATO fighting NATO—the Greeks and Turks at loggerheads. And Bulgaria, one of the most stable of the newly liberated countries in eastern Europe, is terrified. I spoke to a senior Bulgarian diplomat the other day who was terrified that Bulgaria will be drawn into the conflict about Macedonia because Bulgaria lost of lot of land to the Macedonian province of the former Yugoslavia.

The third objective must be to save lives in Sarajevo, Gorazde and Tuzla. The winter is coming upon us. This is not just a humanitarian tragedy; we may face a political disaster too. As the people in those cities are mostly Muslims, we have a larger foreign policy issue at stake here. We are trying to do things in the middle east and need support in that region. If we are seen to do nothing to stop Muslims starving, I fear for the future. If we fail, we shall create a huge political problem the like of which we have not seen before. It will affect our middle east policy and it will be devastating. We must not send the wrong signals. We may have to relieve those cities by force. They must not starve.

In summary, an air exclusion zone, which can be demonstrated to be a success, can be imposed. The Chetniks are cowards. Are we really saying that we cannot hit the gun emplacements around Sarajevo with our modern weaponry?

Finally, today's debate is also about Somalia. We may be entering a new era in foreign policy thinking. The United Nations is stretched as more demands are being made of it. We have a unique situation in Somalia, where warlords do not care about the population and use a mass of arms to damage them. There may come a point at which we have to intervene in a nation's affairs to save that nation. There may be a case for seizing the port in Somalia. The prospect is, therefore, of a new world where, in the not-too-distant future, we may have to use force in the best interests of a country's population, regardless of its leaders.

1:28 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) will forgive me if I do not devote much of the time available to me to what he said, although his speech deserves to be taken seriously. He may agree that the Somali experience demonstrates the evil of uncontrolled trade in cut-price ordnance. I fear that disarmament will result in weapons being sold to third world countries that can ill afford what the rest of the world should not allow them to use.

The debate is about the exercise of international authority. I was delighted with what the Foreign Secretary said about the United Nations. I am pleased to see my hon.

Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) as our principal spokesman on foreign affairs. He commenced his speech by emphasising the same important case. We must recognise that, in the guise of the UN, international authority is not in a particularly robust condition. The hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) provided us with further evidence of that.

I am reminded of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe assembly that some of us attended as representatives of this country. I had the good fortune in July to lead my party's delegation. I have never been to a more ramshackle hotchpotch of disorganised chaos in all my life. If it had not been particularly for members of the staff of this House, it would have degenerated into a confused muddle. Those hon. Members who had the good fortune, or misfortune, to take part in the proceedings of that assembly may share my assessment and also share my gratitude for the fact that the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) helped to bring some order out of chaos.

If the United Nations is in such a condition, it gives cause for anxiety and distress. It might lead some people to say, "A plague on all your houses; they can't run anything; it's a complete farce. We'll stay on our own beaches and ignore the international cause." I am sometimes tempted to take that view.

Just before the killing started in Yugoslavia, the Council of Europe—which has some influence at the margin, at least—decided to bring the leaders of all the Yugoslav republics to Strasbourg. Quite a lot of us attended the meeting. Each of the leaders made a speech. During the speech of the leader of the Serbs, the aide to the Croatian leader, sitting beside him, spent his time making gestures which even this House, at its most childish, would find surprising—gestures of insult and obscenity. The leader of the Serbs on two or three occasions acted rather foolishly by seeking the protection of the chair when a more Anglo-Saxon remedy might have been more appropriate.

Against that background, the parliamentary assembly then rushed to a call for the immediate recognition of Croatia, despite the fact that I had asked that Croatian leader one very important question. I asked him whether he would be prepared to agree that before the international community recognised Croatia it should, with the other Yugoslav republics that had not yet been officially established, accept that, while the world understood that the state of Yugoslavia was finished and had no future, transitional confederative arrangements should be made that would allow mechanisms to protect minority rights to be put in place before international recognition was conferred.

I spoke in the debate—I believe it took place the next day—on behalf of my political group and put that case. I suggested that recognition should not be immediately conferred. Unfortunately, that view was narrowly defeated. Without wishing to be rude to Conservative Members, perhaps I could say that it was a dreadful pity that the chairman of the assembly at that time was the leader of the Conservative group. It left his group rather like headless chickens. Some of them voted with me while some of them voted against, along with the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston). That is one reason why I disagreed with his assessment during his speech.

Those same people spoke to me a few days ago, in meetings connected with the Western European Union and the Council of Europe, and told me, "Of course we can't give Croatia full membership because it does not comply with the rules." They said that because there is no freedom, because there is aggression, because the majority in Croatia have a position of privilege that is denied to the rest. It is a great pity that wisdom was not applied earlier. But I do not believe that there is a great deal of wisdom about. During the Gulf war I spoke in favour of that war. Later I made it clear that as far as I was concerned it finished 48 hours too soon. During the Gulf war, however, Britain properly played a part. At the end of that conflict, I was astonished by the triumphalist report presented to the Western European Union. Members from almost every country flocked to speak and only two British Members were scheduled to speak at the end of the debate. At that assembly in Paris, I made an unpopular speech. Member after Member from other Parliaments spoke in a triumphalist and self-congratulatory way about the victory in the Gulf. I said that some member states had sent more parliamentarians to speak in the debate than they sent personnel to serve in the Gulf.

We are now preparing for military intervention in Bosnia. For two years I have listened to people in Europe calling for military intervention and some of those calls have been very jingoistic. But Britain, which was, prudently, the most cautious of all, is now sending the largest contingent. Some Conservative Members are making a considerable mistake by saying only that our troops must shoot back if someone shoots or prepares to shoot at them. Can soldiers shoot at a sniper who is firing from 1,000 yards or more or at those who are lobbing mortars from wooded terrain at an armoured convoy?

The Government must be careful. I am not suggesting that we should not put our forces behind the United Nations, but if we are not careful, a situation of inextricable complexity and embarrassment will develop and that will place an unfair responsibility on our platoon commanders in the Cheshire and other regiments.

There should be an air exclusion zone, but we must face the fact that sooner or later the air exclusion force may be used to strike at locations from which mortars, bombs and shells are raining down upon the United Nations convoys. We must think the matter through. However, effecting the air exclusion zone does not present a great difficulty.

Along with the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) I have the good fortune presently to be attached to the Royal Air Force and yesterday morning I flew in a GR1 with one of the young men who served so bravely in the Gulf. I also spoke to his colleagues, many of whom shared his experience. They do not know precisely when, but they know that shortly they will be expected to reinforce or replace the pilots who are currently serving with distinction over Iraq. Those pilots, who are highly intelligent young men, have enormous skill and will carry out the function that the Government will lay upon their shoulders. They have demonstrated upside down, sideways and in every other way that they are capable of operating an air exclusion zone over Yugoslavia in the same way as they operate one over Iraq.

But once again, we shall be called upon to provide an unfair share of the burden because some member states which are eager to make calls are not good at making a military contribution. International authority must be made efficient and strong, and we must persuade the

[Mr. Peter Hardy]

British people that the burdens that they will bear and the losses that they may feel are justified. They will not be justified unless there is a rather more positive approach from the Government.

The Government's view was prudent and cautious, but they appear to have dropped prudence and surrendered caution and the House and the country have not yet been given an adequate explanation. If we are to be less prudent and less cautious, we are entitled to say to our European partners and friends that it is time that they stopped making claims, demands and calls that are not matched by adequate contributions.

1.39 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): The House sends off a British contingent to the United Nations protection force with encouragement and pride but not a little anxiety. That force has the clear objective of escorting humanitarian convoys—a worthwhile objective. However, if it is limited to that, we shall be shoring up a crumbling edifice and bogging ourselves down in an unending process. We should then be treating the symptoms but not the causes of the illness.

The causes are the classic hatreds, which have been exacerbated by recent events, between Serbs, Croats and Muslims. The worst examples are in Bosnia Hercegovina —provinces artificially created by the Hapsburgs in the last century. Is it our objective to shore up that artificial edifice, which itself has been pounded to rubble by its own inhabitants? Through the auspices of the United Nations or the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe perhaps we should be taking positive steps to enforce peace in the area by the imposition and enforcement of a no-fly zone and by the isolation of artillery, armour and other weapons; indeed, by the implementation of the agreement reached at the London conference.

If we allow the situation to fester, the violence will spread like a cancer through the Balkans and northwards into central and eastern Europe.

Europe is a tinder-box of national emnities that are now thawing after the 50 years deep frost of communism. Some 77 per cent. of the population of Kosovo are Albanians, who have been subjected to repression, which is now getting worse, from the ruling Serbs, inspired by their 14th century historic battle. Macedonia, likewise, has a major ethnic group that has been long under Serbian control from Yugoslavia, which has a destabilising effect on Greece and Bulgaria. Not only is Yugoslavia, a creation of Versailles, in collapse but so is Czechoslovakia. In the wake of its collapse we shall encounter a rekindling interest in the Sudetenland, now dominated by the Czech authorities. The Sudetens in Bavaria and elsewhere in Germany see an opportunity in this redefining of states in that area. The large Hungarian minority in Slovakia may call for self-determination, as, indeed, might the Slovak minority in Hungary. Any of these may progress from dissent to violence and war.

In Poland, many people in Silesia and Pomerania have rediscovered their German identity. There is a destabilising phenomenon in the Kaliningrad enclave, formerly east Prussia, which is populated by Russians and is now a dumping ground for Volga Germans. Newly liberated Lithuania is ignoring its own experience and is repressing Poles in the south of the state. Moldova Ruthenia, Crimea and many other nationalities throughout the former Soviet Union, such as the Tatars and Cossacks, are all stirring. We must prepare ourselves in the United Nations and in Europe to cope with those problems.

Despite the collapse of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, we must take lessons from the process. Buried deep in the recollection of the House are names that have long been forgotten: Schleswig, Allenstein, Marienwerder, Upper Silesia, Klagenfurt, Vilna and Teschen, which all had large national groupings whose destiny was unclear. The treaties created international commissions, with the participation of interested parties, but with disinterested chairmanship, which carried out plebiscites that determined the destiny of the territories concerned. In almost all cases, the belligerent armed forces withdrew. Allied forces kept the peace for the duration of the plebiscites and allied diplomats ran the plebiscites. British forces and diplomats participated in most of these. The commissions allocated territories according to the result—by zone, as in the Schleswig case, to Denmark and Germany, or by county or district, as in the cases of Allenstein or Vilna. This plebiscitary process should be reconsidered to see whether there are lessons to be learned in the case of Bosnia and Hercegovina. We currently run the risk of letting these problems fester. We should ensure that our technical capacities are in order, and we must find a mechanism to consider these solutions and how to enforce them.

1.45 pm

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I do not wish to understate the importance of the issues facing us, but, in the interests of the House, I must speak briefly. The Ministry of Defence is well aware of my interest in the Cheshire regiment. I thank the Minister of State for the Armed Forces for his co-operation in what was to have been a visit to the regiment in Germany last week—it had to be called off because of the far more important work of the regiment preparing for its visit to a difficult zone.

It is a curious fact that under "Options for Change" a regiment so suited to the UN's requirement is due to be merged with the Staffordshire regiment. Perhaps the Ministry of Defence will reflect on the logic of that and give the troops the present of a reprieve when they return home.

In my view and that of many of the military personnel to whom I have spoken—they are far more qualified than I to speak about the strategic issues—these small county infantry regiments have a place in modern United Nations peacekeeping operations. I should like to discuss that in the context of other parts of the world, but I have no time today to do so.

My one criticism of the Ministry of Defence so far is that the Government have failed to provide me and other Members representing Cheshire with detailed information with which we can respond to understandable constituency fears. Discussions have taken place today about the precise rules of engagement and the chain of command, not to mention the risks faced by members of the regiment. The length of the commitment into which the regiment is entering is a subject close to the hearts of the families concerned. I hope that the Secretary of State will note that point and ensure that all hon. Members are kept abreast of what is happening so that we can offer support to these families.

I recognise that we cannot gaze into the crystal ball, but I urge the Government to go no further than using the troops to assist convoys of humanitarian aid. Obviously the troops must be adequately equipped to defend themselves in extremely difficult circumstances. Several hon. Members have commented wisely on that. I do not often find myself in agreement with the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), but he made some pertinent points which I am sure the Defence Secretary will have noted.

On the ground, command may have to be given to people with a degree of control to deal with these difficult circumstances. We cannot possibly recall the House to decide each time a soldier needs to defend himself. He clearly needs the right to defend himself and must be properly equipped so to do, but that does not mean that the House should authorise the regiment to embark on anything beyond protecting its own personnel and helping the people whom it has gone to assist by means of the convoys. It is important that the House sees that in its right perspective.

I have severe doubts about the potential structure of the negotiating table, as it is currently envisaged, around which it is hoped that a more long-term solution will be found. Nevertheless, we must give it the best opportunity possible if we are to develop moves towards a lasting peace in what is an extremely difficult and fraught situation.

I finish by reiterating the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) who said that our hopes and good wishes go not just to the people in war-torn Yugoslavia but to our own troops and their families in helping to resolve the situation.

1.50 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): First, I declare a personal interest. My mother is Serbian. She was born in Belgrade. In common with many Yugoslavs, I also have relations who are Croatian.

This tragic war has torn all the Serbian people apart. Those who have been able to get hold of the correct news, despite the censored television in Serbia, have been appalled at the atrocities and have wholeheartedly supported Panic's efforts to distance himself from Milosevic who is clearly an evil man, an expansionist.

It is important now that we should look forward. It has been interesting to hear hon. Members ask how we can throw a lifeline to the opposition, the Free Democratic Movement, so that it can oust Milosevic who controls the army, which in turn supports the militia.

There is a way that that can be done. There will be federal elections in November. It is important not only that we should wholeheartedly support Panic, as hon. Members have said, but that we should do so much more publicly and explain to the public that Panic has clearly distanced himself and condemned the atrocities.

In addition, we should follow the pattern of Poland. People there supported the Solidarity movement by sending it money and giving moral support. In that way the Polish people were finally able to gain real freedom.

Milosevic is a former communist, a socialist. He wants to control the country at all costs. If, in the forthcoming elections, we can create the oxygen for democracy really to breathe, in the long term that will be the most constructive way to bring the fighting to an end, to snuff it out.

But there are difficulties. The Free Democratic Movement of Serbia, DEPOS, needs help. It needs moral support and financial help. There is a bank account for it in London. I call on the House to give those I call genuine freedom fighters the freedom to bring real democracy and the toppling of Milosevic.

The war in Belgrade, in Yugoslavia, has brought tremendous heartache but also much appreciation for the fact that Britain has decided to contribute troops to the humanitarian force. I agree with some comments that have been made in the House and I confess that if I had had my choice we would have done that sooner. One can hope that the Government's diplomatic initiative will succeed, and I do not underestimate that, but that cannot be done at the expense of fast humanitarian aid. Therefore, I welcome the entry of the troops.

However, I have one or two caveats. We must not only ensure that, as we have already agreed, there must be good liaison with the local warlords but our troops must be accompanied by proper Serbo-Croat speakers. There is also benefit, which has not been mentioned today: the presence of those troops will give heart, encouragement and a degree of stability to the civilians who crave peace. I also believe that they can cramp the style of the militias. Those troops—the Cheshires and Lancers—are brave men, who, I think, enjoy the wholehearted support of the British people. They are professional soldiers who have never ducked a responsibility or a duty, and I know that they have our wholehearted backing.

Of course, there could be a price for that dedication. There will be casualties. It may be worse: there may even be deaths. It is tremendously important for us to tell the families of those soldiers that this is a price worth paying for the sake of humanity. More than that, what I hear from the people of Serbia tells me that they appreciate this proffered generous sacrifice.

1.55 pm

Mr. Michael Gapes (Ilford, South): Contrary to what an American academic said a few years ago, history is not dead; it is back with a vengeance. What we see in the former Yugoslavia is due to historic animosities and feuds, but I regret to say that it has also been contributed to by the mistakes of a number of countries in Europe and internationally.

I want the Minister to explain why, if 11 European Community countries are against recognition and one is in favour, a state is recognised; while if 11 are in favour and one against, the state is not recognised. A series of tragic mistakes have been made over the past two years, which have encouraged disintegration and prompted fanatics on all sides to sweep away the secular, democratic and pluralistic forces. As a result, it is now very difficult for democratic socialists of any kind in the former Yugoslavia to obtain a hearing anywhere. Religious fundamentalism and ethnic hatred are the dominant forces in all the republics.

We should also condemn the Governments, including our own, who knew what was going on in Kosovo three or four years ago but did nothing about it. It is all very well to talk about Kosovo today, but people were coming to this country two or three years ago—sometimes on visits

[Mr. Michael Gapes]

funded by the Foreign Office—explaining what was happening in Pristina. They described how university departments were being closed and how people were being kicked out of their jobs. And what did we do? We did nothing.

The tragedy of much of Africa, among other issues, is almost being ignored except when—as in Somalia—it becomes so bad that people are forced to talk about it. A war has been raging in Mozambique for a long time. We hope that there will be an agreement and democratic elections there in the near future, but we should be talking far more about that today. No one has mentioned it.

It is very unfortunate that, for whatever reason, today's debate was interrupted. The headlines in tomorrow morning's newspapers—and, no doubt, on television tonight—will not be about the tragic plight of the Shias in the marshes of Iraq, or that of the Somali people who are suffering at the hands of the mafia gangs who are destroying their society, or that of the peoples of the different parts of Yugoslavia. Instead, they will be all about what a particular Chelsea football supporter did or did not do on a particular day.

It is important to draw attention to the way forward and to learn some lessons from these international crises. The United Nations Secretary-General's report, "An Agenda for Peace", presents the important concept of peace enforcement, as opposed to peacemaking or peacekeeping. I believe that our Government should be doing far more to support the Secretary-General and his efforts to strengthen the role of the United Nations. Perhaps we should also consider whether there is a role for United Nation trusteeship as a means to resolve some of the disputes.

If we are able to secure peace in the former Yugoslavia, I am not sure whether we shall be able to replace all the pieces. I hope that we can, but I fear that the animosities and fueds will be so deep that the situation will need outside intervention for many years.

I worry when I see the reported remarks of the Minister to the Select Committee on Defence stating that he has no idea how long British forces will be deployed. I think that it is an honest answer, but I worry——

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): It is better than a dishonest one.

Mr. Gapes: Yes, I prefer an honest answer to a dishonest answer. But there must be clear monitoring of the situation so that we know the facts and can have a full debate in the House before we go down the slippery slope of 20,000, 30,000, 50,000 or 100,000 British troops being deployed as part of the massive force that might be needed to contain the conflict.

2 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): We have today witnessed a good and useful debate which has well justified Parliamen's recall. I only wish that Parliament had been recalled earlier and that we could have spoken longer. The contributions from both sides of the House have been positive. Hon. Members have talked of their experiences—often gained during visits to various parts of the world in the summer months. Such contributions have enhanced the quality of the debate. Right hon. and hon. Members have posed a number of pertinent questions and made a number of useful suggestions. I hope that the Secretary of State will deal with as many as possible, without jeopardising the safety of our troops involved.

Although the motion refers specifically to Somalia, Iraq and Bosnia, in view of the limited time at my disposal I shall concentrate on the position in Bosnia, as that is where our ground troops are to be committed in the near future and where a number of detailed issues are of concern to hon. Members and our constituents. However, I stress that my decision in no way reflects the relative importance Opposition Members attach to Somalia and Iraq which, like many other places in the world, we regard as vital. One message that has come, certainly from the Opposition and, I suggest, from Conservative Members, is a welcome for the new, enhanced role of the United Nations.

Before we discuss the detailed, military aspects of the operation in Bosnia it is well to remind ourselves that, when talking of the use of the military, we are accepting that our own trade, profession and art has failed. Politics and political action have broken down and we are having to resort to force to try to maintain a standard of humanitarian decency.

However, no one should doubt that there must be a political resolution of the problem in Bosnia, Iraq and throughout the world. The use of the military is merely the means to an end—we should never forget that objective. I associate the Opposition with the thanks given to Lord Carrington for his sterling, valiant efforts to resolve the problems in the past, and we wish his successors well in the future. We hope that they will be able, against all the odds, to find some sort of resolution before we deploy troops. We still cling to that hope.

We do not demur from the Government's decision to involve British troops in Bosnia. Indeed, we called for such action early in August. If the United Nations considers it appropriate to deploy troops to support humanitarian convoys in their efforts to get vital food and medicine through to beseiged citizens and to protect the released detainees, the Labour party believes that we should do so. As a permanent member of the Security Council, we have a responsibility to ensure that British troops play that part, although I emphasise that that has to be under the aegis of the United Nations and has to be limited to the protection of convoys.

In no way can we give the Government a blank cheque for further escalation. To extend military participation further would be extremely dangerous, if not foolhardy. The terrain is ideal for hit-and-run attacks. The old Yugoslavian army, many of whose remnants are now fighting in Bosnia, was trained specifically for that task and we simply must not get drawn into a conflict on one of the various sides. British military involvement must not be allowed to escalate into such a quagmire, and we do not believe that escalation is inevitable.

Having said that, we realise that we are placing the lives of our troops at risk; they really are laying their lives on the line. In so doing, we must remember that most military opinion is against such an initiative. There are too many unknowns and too many uncertainties for justification of intervention on military grounds alone. The truth is that the mission can be justified only on humanitarian grounds. In a sense, that is the essence of our involvement and that makes our responsibility as politicians doubly onerous.

We must ensure that our ground troops out there have a clear guide to their role and a clear list of instructions of what they can and cannot do.

I have heard many hon. Members raise issues along those lines today. I should like to press the Secretary of State further. Clearly, the command structure is one of the most important aspects. For example, are we certain that the structure, as envisaged—with a supreme commander commanding a force comprising 16 nations, operating miles apart and performing different functions—is the right structure? As the Secretary of State knows, there have been criticisms of the present operation, and it is vital that we get the lines of communication and of command clear.

That leads us to the next major question asked by several hon. Members from both sides of the House—what is the precise role of the troops? That may seem a silly question. The Minister of State for the Armed Services has led us to believe that the troops will be protecting convoys, travelling with them as they make their way to the besieged areas. However, the French deputy commander of the United Nations protection force, Major General Philippe Morillon, who I understand is in charge of all European forces there, was quoted in *The Times* on 23 September as saying that the aim of the operation is to break the blockade of various named Bosnian towns, by creating safe corridors to each, along which supplies of humanitarian aid could travel, and which could be policed by United Nations checkpoints. That is very different from what we understood the situation to be, and what I understood to be the British Government's position, as explained by the armed forces Minister. We need to know what the position is. Is it to protect convoys or to create land corridors? The two are distinctly different.

Various right hon. and hon. Members have mentioned the rules of engagement. Have the rules been clarified? I read what the Armed Forces Minister said in his evidence to the Defence Select Committee on Tuesday—that United Kingdom troops would have the right of reply.

I very much welcome the Select Committee's work and the fact that it held that important meeting, because it allowed hon. Members from both sides of the House to ascertain the precise position and made it much easier to stage this debate.

However, the ambiguities remain. Various hon. Members have asked whether the troops can reply only with armour or whether they can use heavier fire power if necessary. Different reports are emerging.

There is even further confusion on that narrow but vital question. The Minister of State for the Armed Forces, in evidence to the Defence Select Committee, confirmed the status of the rules of engagement when he said:

> "Yes, we agree our rules of engagement with the UN and we are quite happy that the rules of engagement are no more restrictive than ours."

With that in mind, I draw the Secretary of State's attention to the official pronouncement from the UN Secretary-General's report of 10 September, paragraph 8 of which says:

> "Operational decisions relating to a protected convoy, including action to be taken in the event that the convoy encountered obstacles, would be the responsibility of the commander of the UNPROFOR escort, who would, where possible, consult the senior UNHCR representative in the convoy before taking such decisions."

I appreciate that the words "where possible" are there, but I suggest nevertheless that that description is a recipe for confusion and possible disaster. Only one decision can be taken under fire, and it is silly and dangerous to pretend otherwise. That point must be clarified.

I shall explore that subject a little further in the light of General Wheeler's evidence to the Select Committee. My hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) asked the General:

> "Is it possible for whoever is in command of the convoy to respond with force without reference to higher authority?"

General Wheeler replied:

> "It probably"—

I stress the word "probably"—

> "will be the case providing we can talk it through with the UN people on the spot."

That is not good enough. We do not want "possibly" and "probably", and "talking it through later". We need to have everything sorted out now, before our troops go, so that they know where they stand, know the rules of engagement and have the responsibility to follow them. We need specific answers from Ministers to those questions.

I ask the Secretary of State again about appropriate equipment. The Government have been open on the subject, and clearly everything has not gone according to plan. It was not a happy situation when our engineers were sent to Sarajevo airport with only soft-skinned vehicles to transport them round the airport. As soon as the Government heard about it the matter was put right, but we cannot afford to make such mistakes. Fortunately, there were only very slight casualties, but there could have been fatalities. We cannot afford such decisions. We must have the right back-up and equipment.

For example, I understand that there is a chemicals plant in the Tuzla region. Will our troops take equipment to protect them from possible chemical contamination? That could be a vital consideration.

As we have already heard today, our troops in the corridor will have to pass through two separate war zones. I understand all the difficulties involved with air cover, but is the Secretary of State aware that most infantrymen feel uncomfortable about going into such action without air support and air cover? Is it not possible for us to have a helicopter back-up for reconnaissance, or even for alerting base about ambushes, and so on? I know that there have been problems with civilian helicopters attached to the military, but it seems sensible to provide some helicopter back-up. That was certainly the view of the French at the Council of Ministers meeting on 28 August, when they offered a helicopter detatchment. Are we not able to offer similar back-up?

It is important that the Secretary of State does everything in his power to keep Members of Parliament informed about what is happening. During the Gulf conflict regular, often daily, bulletins were deposited in the Library. We appreciate the sensitivities involved and the confidential nature of many actions, but right hon. and hon. Members have responsibilities to their constituents —many of whom will be involved in the struggle or have dear ones who will be. I hope that the Secretary of State will follow the precedent followed during the Gulf war in that respect.

We ask those questions in the hope that the Secretary of State will be able to provide further information. We pose them in a supportive manner. We want to ensure that our troops have the clearest understanding of their role and responsibilities. We are very conscious of the

[Dr. David C[illegible]]

dangerous mission that we are asking them to undertake. They are performing a vital task in saving the lives of civilians in a terrible civil war. We wish them every success. They have our blessing, and I trust that every single one of them will return home unscathed.

2.15 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on his first speech from Labour's Front Bench as his party's principal defence spokesman. He has been a defence spokesman in the past and therefore comes to the Opposition Dispatch Box with considerable experience.

It is a significant indicator of the times in which we live that in a debate on Yugoslavia and Iraq it is considered necessary and appropriate that not only foreign affairs spokesmen but defence spokesmen should participate. It has been said that ambassadors are people who can be disarming, especially when their countries are not. The facts that confront us at present suggest that a necessary contribution can be made by the defence forces of various countries in helping to achieve United Nations objectives.

Today's debate has been disparate in addressing the problems of countries as far apart as Bosnia and Som[illegible] One common thread has been influenced by the ending of the cold war. That has not brought a period of international harmony but an extraordinary outburst of some of the most cruel and vicious conflicts—including the first on our own European continent—since the end of the second world war.

Another common thread was mentioned by the hon. Member for South Shields. I refer to the extraordinary increase in the authority of the United Nations and its ability to take action to help resolve difficulties. With the ending of the cold war, the Security Council now finds it possible to reach agreement on a series of initiatives. As a consequence, the pressures on the UN are greater than they have been for many years. The armed forces of many western and other countries—including our own—are increasingly asked to fulfil new roles of a humanitarian or peacekeeping nature.

I will comment first on Iraq. I returned 24 hours ago from a visit to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other parts of the Gulf, where I was able to meet Royal Air Force personnel involved in the enforcement of the no-fly zone in southern Iraq. I pay tribute to the extraordinary and professional work that they are doing in difficult circumstances. It is extremely hot and dusty, and they are presented with a considerable amount of potential danger, yet they approach their task with the cheerfulness that we expect, and which the RAF has always shown.

My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) made an extraordinarily powerful speech about the situation in the marshlands of southern Iraq. It would have convinced anyone who needed convincing why it was necessary to impose the no-fly zone. Since August in particular, there has been increasing evidence of growing acts of repression by the Iraqi Government against their own people in southern Iraq, and increasing information to suggest that fixed-wing aircraft were being used to assist those acts of repression.

The United States, France and ourselves now have aircraft in that region to impose the no-fly zone, and that initiative has been achieved with tremendous success. No Iraqi aircraft have been operating in southern Iraq, which is helping to reduce the level of repression against the people of that area. Sometimes, I am asked when that exercise will be ended. It can be concluded only when there is convincing and satisfactory evidence that the Iraqi Government and Saddam Hussein in particular are willing to comply with UN resolutions and to cease to oppress people in that region.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): Was not the point of the speech that my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) made that the no-fly zone is not securing the safety of the marsh dwellers?

Mr. Rifkind: I believe that the no-fly zone is making an important contribution in that direction. A number of the military acts of aggression in the past few months have had the support of aircraft, because of the difficulties of communication in the area. There are few roads there. It is difficult to penetrate the marshlands, so the ability to use air cover to support Iraqi forces will have been important. The zone cannot solve the problem alone, but it is making an important contribution.

I shall now deal with the powerful speeches right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House have made [illegible]bout the former Yugoslavia. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) and my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) and others described the difficulty of reaching a judgment about whether it is right to deploy British forces in that quarter. The hon. Member for South Shields asked me to state the precise purpose of British soldiers' going to Bosnia-Hercegovena. They will escort convoys which may deliver the medical and food supplies that will increasingly be needed as winter approaches and hardship intensifies. They may occasionally escort detainees who have been released from the camps and wish to go elsewhere in the country or abroad.

The hon. Member for South Shields asked whether we would want forces to be used to escort convoys or to impose safe corridors. They will not do the latter. If we were to impose a safe corridor, we would need a much greater deployment than is currently contemplated and it would imply a far more substantial and worrying military commitment than it would be appropriate to make now.

My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) and others asked about the command structure that is to be applied and whet[illegible] it is satisfactory. The hon. Member for South Shields also asked that perfectly reasonable question. The command structure will always be difficult when forces from a large number of countries are involved in an operation of this type. Now that the UN is considering a substantial increase in the amount of military activity in the former Yugoslavia, it is necessary in our judgment and that of others that the command system should represent the new role. It is therefore proposed that under General Nambiar, the overall commander of the military forces, there should be a new two-star headquarters. General Morillon will be commander of that headquarters. He will have a British chief of staff. There will be a number of other British personnel in important positions in that command, which is likely to have responsibility in the Bosnia area.

The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) asked whether this was to be a NATO headquarters or a NATO contribution. It would not be appropriate to describe it in those terms. It will not be a NATO force or headquarters, but there have been discussions about whether it would be appropriate to use many of the elements of an existing NATO headquarters because of common habits, practice and experience and the valuable assets that will be of great use when these matters are taken forward. That is highly desirable.

Several hon. Members asked about the rules of engagement. That is a crucial aspect of the matter. As my right hon. Friend the Minister of State said in evidence to the Defence Select Committee, there can be no question but that British forces must have the right to use the means necessary to defend their lives and the lives of those for whom they are responsible. We are determined to ensure that the rules of engagement will reflect that fact. The convoys that will be carrying goods to various parts of the former Yugoslavia will, of course, be armed convoys. It is an armoured battalion that is going. They will have not only personal weapons but Warrior armoured personnel carriers which have their own cannon and their own guns. Mortars will be carried within their vehicles. If the circumstances required it, in order to protect life, it is appropriate that the rules of engagement should allow persons to take such action as is necessary for that purpose.

Clearly, the precise wording of the rules of engagement is currently under discussion. It would not normally be our practice to go into the precise detail of rules of engagement, because one would not want a potential assailant to be aware of the circumstances in which the troops would respond with fire. I hope, therefore, that the House will forgive me if I do not go into precise detail, but to the particular assurances that were sought I can give a positive and unqualified answer. In particular, it is not our belief that it should be necessary to consult headquarters many miles away if, by doing so, there would be any enhanced risk to the life or safety of the individuals concerned. Of course there may be occasions when that will be possible without risk, but if there were risk—and that must be in the judgment of the person on the spot—it would be appropriate that they should take whatever action is necessary.

None of us knows what level of danger is going to be faced, but so far as the British Government are concerned, we have no doubt that it is appropriate for these military convoys to proceed only if they have reason to assume in advance that they will be able to make safe passage. If I can give an example: we have had for some time the Hercules aircraft which have been carrying humanitarian supplies to Sarajevo. They have made a very important contribution towards the relief of suffering in that city. Sadly, a few weeks ago, an Italian aircraft carrying out a similar function was shot down. It is clear beyond any misunderstanding that that aircraft was shot down by hostile fire from irregular forces on the ground, probably using hand-held missiles. As a result of that, these aspects of our humanitarian activities have been suspended. The Hercules have not been flying for several weeks, nor have the aircraft of a number of other countries, but consideration is being given to whether those flights should be resumed. However, both we and others have made it quite clear that only when we are satisfied that the pilots and the crew who are responsible for flying these aircraft will not be exposed to dangers against which they have no defence—only at that stage—would it be appropriate to review the situation.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): My right hon. and learned Friend will recall that at the London conference the Bosnian Serbs agreed to notify the United Nations of the positions of all heavy weaponry and also agreed to put it under the supervision of the United Nations. Has that been done?

Mr. Rifkind: I am afraid there has been a very poor response by those who gave that pledge. What has happened so far is that a very small number of pieces of artillery have been collected together, but I must add the qualification that those who were in control of those weapons before are still in control of them and are still firing with them. All that the United Nations has been allowed to do is to monitor that particular operation. I cannot believe that that is an honouring of the spirit of the promise that was given by those who felt it appropriate to make that commitment.

Clearly, the time when our forces are deployed will depend, as we were asked to ensure that it would, on when we have sufficient information as to exactly how they will be used, where they will go and what their precise responsibilities will be. Since the United Nations accepted our offer of reinforcements, we have had a reconnaissance party in Bosnia seeking to identify the precise routes that any convoys might go in order to carry out their responsibilities. There are difficulties being experienced in ensuring that there could be reasonable safe passage to Tuzla or Doboj, which are the two towns that have been identified as possible towns for relief to be provided by British-escorted convoys. A reconaissance party is in Bosnia at the present time. Only when it recommends that it is satisfied that we could expect these supplies to get through without unreasonable difficulty—only when that has been established—will it be appropriate for the deployment to take place. We hope that the forces will be available and deployed by early November, but it is a major operation. About 1,800 men, just over 1,000 vehicles and an estimated 600 tonnes of stores will have to be sent to Bosnia. That takes a considerable time and it is appropriate for these matters to be dealt with carefully.

I thank the House and all parties represented in it for their support for the Government. That support is appreciated by the Government and will be enormously welcomed by those brave men and women who will be active in Bosnia. The fact that they know that they have the united support of the House will be a tremendous uplift to their morale and will ensure that they are able to achieve their contribution.

It being half-past Two o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *put the Question already proposed from the Chair, pursuant to the Resolution yesterday.*

Resolved,

That this House do now adjourn.

Adjourned accordingly till Monday 19 October, pursuant to the Resolution yesterday.

House of Commons

Monday 19 October 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Local Government Reform

1. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to make clear his detailed plans for local government reform.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): May I start by welcoming the hon. Members for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) to their new positions on the Opposition Front Bench. The answer to Question 1 is as soon as possible.

Mr. Jones: Why is it that the Prime Minister spent part of the weekend discussing subsidiarity with the rest of the European Governments yet when there is an opportunity to put subsidiarity into effect through local government reform in Wales the Government do not take it?

Mr. Hunt: The local government reform that we are pursuing in Wales is as a result of a combined agreement at the outset between the counties and the districts that there should be unitary authorities in Wales. I recognise that there is also strong feeling, which has been expressed to me by the local authority associations, that there should be an assembly in Wales. But I say to the hon. Gentleman and all those who propose such an assembly that we have been through all that before. The people of Wales rejected an assembly by a majority of four to one.

Mr. Rod Richards: In his consultation paper the Secretary of State said that he sought consensus. Has he received a submission from the Labour party?

Mr. Hunt: Although we have had the most widespread consultation, I have to tell the House that I am still waiting to hear from the Labour party about what it would propose on local government reform. A manifesto published at the time of the last election says:

> "We will create"—

this is a Labour Government—

> "a single tier of 25 to 30 unitary local authorities."

I understand that the previous figure was 17 to 25. I hope that the Labour party will make up its mind and tell me what its plans are so that I can take them into account in the consultation.

Mr. Murphy: The Secretary of State still has not told the House or the people of Wales whether there will be local government reform according to the timetable which he has already outlined. Does he have Treasury approval for the local government plans? There are some estimates that it will cost as much as £50 million. If that is the case, can he today give us a guarantee that there will be no adverse effects on the spending proposals for Wales that he intends to make in the next few weeks?

Mr. Hunt: I reaffirm the statement that I made in the House on 3 March in which I proposed the creation of 23 unitary authorities in Wales. I reaffirm the timetable that I announced then. The new unitary authorities will be operational as from 1995. I say to the hon. Gentleman again that there is still time for the Labour party to make detailed proposals rather than merely throw out figures of 25 to 30. The preliminary signs are that if we moved in the direction proposed in the Labour party's manifesto, there would be costs over and above those of my present proposals. Will the hon. Gentleman please make up his mind and tell us his and his party's plans?

Homeless People

2. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the number of homeless people in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Clwyd, South-West.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): In the quarter April to June 1992, 5,919 people were accepted as homeless by local councils in Wales. However, specific figures are not available for Clwyd, South-West.

Mr. Martyn Jones: In the light of the appalling situation shown up by the national figures, is the Minister aware of the proposals contained in a consultation paper issued by Tai Cymru which, if implemented, would take away the powers of Welsh rural housing associations to deal with rural homelessness, by giving the powers to urban bodies? There would be only 10 such bodies and they would be based in urban areas so it is likely that they would not be able to deal with rural homelessness.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the important work of Tai Cymru and the housing association movement in Wales. They have been an example of tremendous success and I want to see that going forward. The consultation process is ongoing. I and Tai Cymru are maintaining an open mind about exactly how it can be taken forward.

Heart Disease

3. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the incidence of coronary heart disease in Wales in 1980; and what was the equivalent figure in the latest year for which statistics are available.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on the incidence of coronary heart disease in Wales is not available centrally. However, there were 9,706 deaths of Welsh residents from coronary heart disease in 1980—345 deaths per 100,000 population—compared with 9,541 deaths in 1991, a decline to 331 per 100,000 population.

Mr. Coombs: The figures are encouraging. I am sure that the House would want to congratulate Heartbeat Wales on its campaign and on reducing the numbers of people suffering from premature coronary heart disease in

Wales. Can my hon. Friend tell the House what more he thinks can be done to reduce the figures still further, because they remain a cause for some concern?

Mr. Jones: I wish to accept my hon. Friend's congratulations on behalf of Heartbeat Wales and the health promotion authority for Wales. They have begun their work well and there are already encouraging signs of a reduction in smoking among adults. We are taking forward the possibility of other measures, including opportunist testing for cholesterol.

Dr. Kim Howells: The Minister will know that a general reduction in the level of blood pressure tends to reduce the incidence of heart disease quite dramatically. Can he tell me why the good work of Heartbeat Wales and general practitioners everywhere in Wales has been so massively undermined in the past week by the stupid and inept handling of the coal crisis? Does he not know that that has sent the blood pressure of Wales sky high? What is he going to do about it?

Mr. Jones: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should adopt his own advice and not raise his blood pressure unnecessarily, when we can all do better with rational discussion.

Labour Statistics

4. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the figure and percentage of male unemployment in Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. David Hunt: A total of 102,200 and 13·5 per cent.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Secretary of State recall telling the recent Conservative party conference that it has been a good year for the party? Although I appreciate that his colleagues do not tell him much these days, may I remind him of the mass unemployment, record bankruptcies, escalating repossessions, the debacle over the exchange rate mechanism, the troubles over Maastricht and the crisis in the mining industry? If this is a good year, will the Secretary of State outline what constitutes a bad one?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman should think carefully before he downplays our achievements in Wales, where thousands of new jobs have come to declining coal mining areas. By our positive partnership in Wales we have shown the rest of the United Kingdom what can be done to bring new investment and jobs to those parts of Wales.

Mr. Roger Evans: Can my right hon. Friend assist us by saying what new initiatives he has in mind for economic development in Wales?

Mr. Hunt: I am happy to announce that I am issuing a consultation paper on the establishment of the Welsh economic council, because I am determined to build on the positive partnership that we have in Wales, which has brought us those new jobs and investment.

Madam Speaker: Question No. 5——

Mr. Rowlands: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I would normally take points of order at the end of questions but if I have breached our Standing Orders I must listen now.

Mr. Rowlands: Question No. 4 was on male unemployment. They are closing pits in my constituency——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am genuinely interested if I have breached Standing Orders. I have not done so. I shall call the hon. Gentleman as soon as I can on some other occasion.

Mrs. Clwyd: May we tell the Secretary of State exactly what his achievements have been since he became Secretary of State. Unemployment has increased by 46,500. That is his achievement and every one of us feels that he—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady is responding on Question 4. As a Front-Bench Member she is perfectly entitled to do so. If the hon. Gentleman on the Back Benches has anything further to say, perhaps he will see me after Question Time.

Mrs. Clwyd: In case the Secretary of State missed the point, I said that since he became Secretary of State for Wales his achievement is 46,500 people unemployed in Wales. We all feel that his answers are totally unconvincing. It is clear that he was never told, never consulted and never informed about job losses in the coal industry. Does he realise that Welsh people are fed up with having no clout and no voice in the Cabinet? Surely any self-respecting Minister who has been treated like a tea boy outside the board room door should resign, particularly when the Government have shown how incompetent they are, how many lies they have told, and how bankrupt they are. It is time for them to give up and for the Minister to resign.

Madam Speaker: Order. That was somewhat remiss of the hon. Lady—*[Interruption.]* Order. I am sure that the hon. Lady would not want to leave that impression in the *Official Report*. Would she like to rephrase it?

Mrs. Clwyd: How misleading the Minister's tenure as Secretary of State has been if he claims that he has reduced unemployment. He certainly has not. He has increased it by 46,500 since he came into office. Let him explain that.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Lady has made a number of accusations, one of which was that I was in ignorance. If blissful ignorance were a reason for resignation, there would not be many hon. Members on the Opposition Benches. Unemployment in Wales has fallen from just under 180,000 in 1986 to just under 130,000 today. Furthermore, I am pleased to be able to announce today an investment package involving a further £10 million of Government regional assistance, bringing 1,300 new jobs to Wales and safeguarding 500 other jobs. Government investment for regional assistance this year has meant that we have already made offers totalling £50 million, and more than 9,000 new and safeguarded jobs are forecast. That is action on the Government's part and we intend to bring new jobs to Wales.

Mr. Rowlands: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat now. We must now move to Question 5.

Hospital Trusts

5. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what formal mechanism he will use to monitor hospital trusts in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: As well as monitoring activity and performance by district health authorities and GP fund holders, Welsh Office monitoring of NHS trusts will be centred around the business plans which all new trusts are required to produce each year. That will be in addition to the accountability to the public. New trusts are expected to hold an annual general meeting, produce an annual report and publish audited accounts.

Mr. Wardell: As someone who is extremely dissatisfied with the lack of proper monitoring of hospital trusts that the Minister has just announced, may I ask what he will do to ensure that early-warning signs are in place if those trusts get into financial difficulty? When they do, will he pick up the tab if they are in debt?

Mr. Jones: Officials in the Welsh Office are already considering how best to monitor the business plans. I envisage that to be an ongoing process so that it can work as helpfully as possible.

Mr. Conway: Is my hon. Friend aware of the large number of patients from mid and north Wales who use the excellent facilities supplied at the ear, nose and throat hospital in Shrewsbury? Will he ensure that, when monitoring the position, he also keeps a weather eye on what is happening on the other side of the border? If the suggested plans are carried out to move that hospital to the east, it would not only inconvenience a great number of my constituents in Shrewsbury, but greatly inconvenience patients from mid and north Wales who use the hospital's excellent facilities.

Mr. Jones: Yes, I am aware of the position. My hon. Friend is right to raise that important matter, which I trust will be fully taken into consideration.

Mr. Morgan: The Government's favourite theme song at the moment is, "I'm in the mood for U-turns"—do U-turns also apply to the formation of national health service trusts? I should like to know that before the Government continue with the disastrous policy in Wales where, so far, there is fortunately only one trust hospital. The Government now insist on creating a split between the purchaser and the provider, while the electricity industry is confusing the role of purchaser and provider. Does the Secretary of State agree that the Government's hallmark has been first, meddling, then bungling, and finally—I hope that this will be confirmed later today—backtracking?

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman must curb his impatience to hear about the further progress that I hope we shall make. Meanwhile, I assure him that all the representations received will be fully considered in the evaluation of NHS trust applications. No trust applications will be approved unless my right hon. Friend and I are convinced that they will mean an improvement for patients.

Hospital Provision

6. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next plans to visit Clwyd to discuss hospital provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so at present, but I am hoping to visit Ysbyty Glan Clwyd next month.

Mr. Richards: Is my hon. Friend aware that Ysbyty Glan Clwyd is one of the best hospitals in the land? When he visits it will he bear in mind that the workers, doctors and residents in the hospital's vicinity eagerly await his decision on the formation of a trust for the Glan Clwyd group of hospitals?

Mr. Jones: It would be invidious for me to agree with my hon. Friend that that hospital is the best, but I agree that it is one of Wales's very fine hospitals. Our decision on that application will be announced as soon as possible. I know that my hon. Friend looks forward to that announcement with interest.

Mr. Hanson: When the Secretary of State visits Clwyd will he consider the fact that, on 9 April, four of the five Labour Members of Parliament elected in those constituencies proposed a programme opposing opt-out hospitals? We want to oppose the opting out of hospitals in Clwyd. When the Secretary of State is in my county will he come to visit the Point of Ayr colliery in my constituency, which is closing with 1,000 job losses? Will he gain from the lessons to be learnt from meeting the mineworkers and their families, and will he learn from me that health does not just involve hospitals, but is about prevention, unemployment and other factors that matter to people—which the Government are taking away from them?

Mr. Jones: I am looking forward to visiting Clwyd next month when I shall visit Ysbyty Glan Clwyd. I assure the hon. Gentleman that his and every other representation on new trusts will be carefully considered. I can do no better than repeat the assurance that I have already made: no approvals will be given unless my right hon. Friend and I are convinced that they will be of advantage to patients.

Mr. John Marshall: When my hon. Friend speaks of hospital provision, will he confirm that NHS hospital trusts now treat many more patients than they did 18 months ago? Is that not a sign of progress and should we not praise the work of the trusts instead of denigrating it?

Mr. Jones: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend's sentiments. There is only one example of a trust in Wales, the Pembrokeshire trust. After its first four months, the Pembrokeshire trust is already showing worthwhile increases of both in-patients and out-patients. Such progress should be hailed.

Mrs. Clwyd: In making hospital provision, does the Welsh Office recognise the link between unemployment and ill health? Is the hon. Gentleman going to make provision for the massive number of unemployed who will come on stream in Wales due to Government policies? Does he recognise that 25 per cent. of the Rhondda's population is permanently sick—three times the number of permanently sick in the Prime Minister's constituency of Huntingdon? Does the hon. Gentleman recognise what unemployment does both to the unemployed and to their families, and how it causes ill health among those families? Will he recognise that important fact and make provision for it?

Mr. Jones: I can reassure the hon. Lady that that provision is already in place in the strategies for health that we are implementing well in Wales. The importance of trying to make health gains among vulnerable groups is already identified as a specific target on which we are determined to make progress.

Infrastructure

7. **Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much is currently allocated by his Department to road and rail infrastructure projects within *(a)* Ceredigion and *(b)* Pembrokeshire; and if he will publish an estimated figure for infrastructure expenditure by his Department in Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire for 1993-94.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): In 1992-93 some £10·5 million is directly allocated to road projects in Dyfed. Additional expenditure is incurred by local authorities using credit approvals and revenue support grant provided by the Welsh Office.

Expenditure decisions for 1993-94 will be announced following the public expenditure survey. Expenditure figures are not available by district. Government funding of British Rail does not come through the Welsh Office.

Mr. Dafis: May I remind the Minister of the importance of upgrading the A40 as a way of enhancing, among other things, the role of Fishguard as the gateway to the Republic of Ireland? Will the Welsh Office and the Minister support EC proposals for such an upgrading, which does not involve driving a motorway through a national park and which is a distortion of the situation? Will the Welsh Office commit funds to this upgrading, and will it ask for EC funds for the same proposal?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am glad to tell the hon. Gentleman that I agree about the importance of the A40. Since 1979, we have spent more than £90 million on the A40 and on the A477 in Dyfed; and almost £80 million has been spent on the M4 in that area. Furthermore, I am happy to tell him that about nine major trunk road schemes costing £81 million are programmed in Dyfed. Six of those schemes are on the A40; one is on the A477 and others are on the A483 and the A487.

Of course we shall consider any proposals from the European Commission for improving communications, but, as I have already said, we do not approve of motorways being built through national parks.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Will the Minister give a clear undertaking that the pre-election promises on infrastructure expenditure in Wales will not be cut in the current spending round?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I cannot, alas, give the hon. Gentleman any such assurance. No Minister would ever give such an assurance in advance of the public expenditure survey round. I am sure that he will appreciate that there is going to be a very difficult PES round, but we shall of course try to adhere to our priorities.

Abattoirs

8. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on the effect of EC directives on small abattoirs in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Several.

Mr. Jones: The Secretary of State will be aware of the excellent news for Anglesey in the form of the opening of the Gaerwen meat plant. I congratulate the farming unions, the local authorities, the Welsh Development Agency and others who have worked so hard to reopen it.

The Secretary of State is aware that the main concern for small abattoirs has been the introduction of hygiene regulations by the European Community, which could lead to small abattoirs facing bills from veterinary surgeons of up to £40 an hour. That would virtually destroy the small abattoir industry in Wales, so can he assure us that small abattoirs will be exempt from the charges so that they can continue their excellent work?

Mr. Hunt: I am rather disappointed that the hon. Gentleman left out the Welsh Office from the list of those to whom he paid tribute. I am very pleased indeed that the £5 million investment by McIntosh Reynolds will go ahead, creating 230 jobs. I pay tribute to the officials in my office who, with all the agencies and local authorities that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, have been working extremely hard to make sure that the project goes ahead. I am sure that it was just an oversight on the hon. Gentleman's part.

I recognise that supervision by official veterinarians is a requirement of the directive. There may well be an increase in cost for the industry, but we have written to local authorities encouraging them to take practical measures to keep those costs down. I shall bear in mind the hon. Gentleman's point.

Learning Difficulties

9. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to improve the status of children and adults with learning difficulties—mental handicap—in Wales; and if he will widen the scope of educational training and employment opportunities available to them.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Our unique and successful mental handicap strategy has provided the impetus to enable people with learning difficulties to share the same opportunities and status as other members of the community.

Mr. Michael: Does the Minister recognise that there is a dearth of day care opportunities for adults with learning difficulties? Against that background, the shortage of education and training opportunities and, above all, of job opportunities for adults with learning difficulties is a major problem for those people and for their carers. Will the Minister undertake to hold a proper inquiry into that matter and make specific proposals for adequate services?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am happy to tell the hon. Gentleman that this year's strategy, involving the spending of about £41·5 million, will be relaunched next year. When that happens, there will be increased emphasis on education as a core service and a clear focus on the important period of adolescence. I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's considerable interest in the South Glamorgan training and enterprise council's Track 2000 scheme. He will know that the local TEC funds 35 places under that scheme. Every effort is being made to cater for those with special needs who are eligible for help under the employment action programme. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall keep a careful eye on the situation.

Housing Statistics

11. **Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest figures for housing starts and completions undertaken by Housing for Wales/Tai Cymru.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I am happy to tell my hon. Friend that Housing for Wales is on course to a record of more than 4,000 completions this year.

Mr. Evans: I congratulate my former colleagues in Housing for Wales and the Welsh housing associations on that splendid achievement. Among my hon. Friends and, I think, throughout Wales, there is recognition of the importance of maintaining investment in our housing associations in the years ahead. During the election, there were questions about whether those commitments would be met. I ask my hon. Friend to note, please, that the success that he has reported today must be maintained in the years ahead through the Government maintaining their investment.

Mr. Jones: I hear what my hon. Friend says. Our arrangements have been successful at levering in outside sectors. I know that he will understand when I say that I cannot anticipate the public expenditure round.

Dr. Marek: The Minister knows that, for many years, councils have been selling council houses in Wales and that they have hundreds of millions of pounds which he and the Welsh Office stop them spending on the building of further council houses. It would be a help in getting rid of the present recession if the hon. Gentleman allowed local authorities to spend that money on building more housing in Wales. Why will he not do that?

Mr. Jones: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman has got his figures wrong. At the start of this financial year, local councils had £32·7 million of capital receipts, which they are encouraged to use. Over and above that, after allowing for all redemptions, the housing revenue accounts of Welsh local councils mean that local people are having to repay a net debt of almost £1 billion.

Roads

12. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total spending by central Government on roads in Wales since 1979; and how many miles of motorway and trunk roads have been laid since that year.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Since 1979, total net spending by central Government on the roads programme in Wales is over £2 billion, including £397 million transport grant. Twenty-two miles of motorway and more than 151 miles of trunk road have been completed. Seven schemes totalling almost 17 miles are under construction.

Mr. Knox: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the level of road building in Wales since he became a Minister more than 13 years ago. Does he agree that the road building programme has been a considerable help in attracting inward investment to Wales?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his congratulations to the Welsh Office and to me on this extensive road programme, which has undoubtedly been of considerable assistance in attracting inward investment. It is as well to remind the House that last year we had a record year for inward investment and attracted 208 projects, costing £1·1 billion in terms of investment and creating or safeguarding some 16,779 jobs. This year, between January and September, we attracted 159 projects, costing £816 million and creating or safeguarding 11,069 jobs. Today, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced 17 projects, creating 1,300 jobs and safeguarding 500 more.

Mr. Hain: Does the Minister recall that, last year, he gave the House the commitment that he would proceed with the construction of the missing link of the A465 between Aberdulais and Glynneath in this financial year, if possible? There is still no sign of that work starting. Therefore, may I have an absolute assurance that that project will not fall victim to the autumn statement next month if it slips over into next year?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am happy to tell the hon. Gentleman that we continue to attach considerable importance to the scheme and are spending nearly £3 million this year on advance works. A start on the main works will be made when resources permit.

Labour Statistics

13. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest employment figures for Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: In June 1992, according to the latest available figure, the civilian work force in employment in Wales numbered 1,146,000. We are lucky in Wales to have a good positive partnership, and I very much hope that the Welsh economic council, whose establishment I announced today, will build on that. I am happy to tell the House that I shall want the council to address the following issues: first, the need to continue to train a highly skilled work force; secondly, the need to keep Wales at the top of the inward investment league table; thirdly, support for small businesses; fourthly, creation of an enterprise culture; fifthly, enhanced use of local suppliers; sixthly, an export drive for Wales; seventhly, diversification and expansion of our economy; and, finally, the need to expand our high-technology sector and establish further centres for research and development.

Mr. Wigley: We have just had a statement that should have been made on the Floor of the House so that Members of Parliament could ask questions. Interestingly, there was no reference to the need to raise per capita incomes in Wales, which have dropped dramatically in the past 10 years. Is the Secretary of State aware of the devastation felt in Wales as established factories shed labour and small companies go bankrupt, to which must be added the pit closures of the past week? Does he realise that it is not just a question whether the messenger forgot to reach him with a message about the closures? It is a question of why he was not involved in the decisions being taken on these vital matters. How can the right hon. Gentleman continue in that job when his fellow Cabinet Ministers have so little confidence in him?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman criticises me for making a statement but I must refer him to his question:

"To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what are the latest employment figures for Wales; and if he will make a statement."

At nationalisation, Wales had 220 pits and the coal industry employed 123,000 people. Before last week's announcement we were down to two pits—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]. Before the announcement on 20 August, we were down to two pits employing just over 1,000 people. The answer is that Wales is not to be pessimistic about the future but must go out and get new jobs. The new jobs that have come to Wales mean that overall unemployment in Wales has fallen below the United Kingdom average this year for the first time since 1924. The hon. Gentleman should be applauding that—not talking down our achievements.

Mr. Rowlands: It is a cruel deception for the Secretary of State to pretend that he will match job losses through these announcements. How many jobs has he announced today for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, where we have lost nearly 4,000 jobs at Hoover, where firms have been closed, where male unemployment is more than 20 per cent. and where two thirds of the jobs created over the past five years have been part time?

Will the right hon. Gentleman give me a simple answer to a simple question? Did he manage either last night or at today's Cabinet meeting to get a reprieve for the Taff Merthyr colliery, on the basis that it was never meant to be closed this month or, more specifically, next Friday?

Mr. Hunt: I recognise that the timing was changed, but on 20 August British Coal made an announcement with a view to the closure of the Taff Merthyr colliery.

I shall let the hon. Gentleman have details of the jobs that have been brought to Merthyr. If he examines the inward investment and regional assistance that have come to Wales this year, he will find that we have brought tens of thousands of jobs to Wales, and that we shall continue to do.

Mr. Wigley: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I take points of order at the end of questions.

Mr. Wigley: In view of the entirely inadequate reply to my question, I give notice that I wish to raise on the Adjournment the inadequate apology of the Secretary of State for unemployment in Wales.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is a skilled parliamentarian and I have noted what he has said.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Stipends

21. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, how much income the Church Commissioners expect from parish and diocesan contributions for stipends during the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing the Church Commissioners): We expect that parishes will raise about £65 million towards stipends this year. This represents just over 40 per cent. of their total cost.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend accept that we must not become involved in the law of diminishing returns on the number of clergy to do the job and that the Church will die in that sense if we do? Will he ensure that sufficient money is raised by one means or another to pay enough clergy to do the job? Has he read yesterday's sermon by one of his constituents, the Archbishop of York? What view does he take of that?

Mr. Alison: That was a somewhat double-barrelled supplementary question—perhaps I should address the second barrel of it. The Archbishop of York is a constituent and friend of mine, but that does not mean that I have to agree with everything that he says. The doctrine of the infallibility of bishops and archbishops is not a doctrine of the Church of England. Perhaps I should put the corollary more positively: the doctrine of the fallibility of bishops and archbishops is a doctrine of the Church of England.

Mr. Frank Field: To what extent has the problem been exacerbated by the commissioners' borrowing and buying into the property market just before it collapsed?

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman will know that, apart from dividends and rents, the commissioners have no source of income other than borrowing. The collapse of the property market has hit the Church Commissioners extremely hard, like many other investors, but the hon. Gentleman will recall that when the stock exchange market collapsed in 1987 the Church beneficiaries were entirely unaffected because there was much investment in property.

Set-aside

22. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, how much income will be derived by the commissioners from the common agricultural policy set-aside scheme in the current financial year.

Mr. Alison: The commissioners do not, as a matter of policy, farm any land themselves. Any set-aside payments will be made to their tenants.

Mr. Banks: At a time when pits are facing closure because they are said to be uneconomic, is it not wrong for any land that is owned by the Church to be attracting money when nothing is grown on it? The right hon. Gentleman knows far more about this than I do, but did not St. Paul say something about a man reaping what he sows? I can see exactly what is being reaped by some tenants—a lot of payments from the taxpayer. I cannot see what the tenants are sowing, other than discontent.

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that, paradoxically, much contentment will accrue for a large number of urban dwellers who have strong ecological and environmental sympathies. They will find that, instead of cornfields, there will be many acres of beautiful flowing grass and lovely cornflowers growing. That will be widely appreciated by a large number of people.

Parsons' Freehold

23. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what assessment he has made of the financial consequences of the abolition of the parsons' freehold.

Mr. Alison: The financial consequences of any changes to the existing system of freehold will depend on the nature of those changes. A General Synod steering group on clergy terms and conditions of service is examining freehold, among other matters, and the commissioners stand ready to help to assess any financial aspects as and when that group's work is more advanced.

Mr. Marshall: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the parsons' freehold and the absence of women priests act as a barrier to effective ministry?

Mr. Alison: My hon. Friend will appreciate that the parsons' freehold is not now an unconditional reality. Parsons who secured livings after 1975—which accounts for the overwhelming majority—are obliged to lose their freehold at the age of 70, so there is already a severe diminution in the absolute reality of the parsons' freehold. Whether or not it will be further reduced remains to be seen when the Synod reaches its conclusion.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Immigration

26. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department in how many cases since June, to date, the Home Office has applied to adjourn immigration appeal and immigration appeal tribunals to enable applications from spouses with children with a right of abode in the United Kingdom to be reviewed.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): In the period June to 14 October, the Home Office applied for adjournments in the type of case to which the hon. Member refers on 249 occasions before immigration adjudicators and on 11 occasions before the immigration appeal tribunal.

Mr. Madden: Although I accept that the reuniting of limited numbers of families separated under the primary purpose rule is welcome, does not the hon. Gentleman accept that that rule remains manifestly unfair and unjust? Will he urge Home Office Ministers to abolish it immediately, and warn them that it would be wholly unacceptable for them to replace the primary purpose rule by extending to four years the probationary period before which a spouse can apply for permanent settlement? That action would result in a storm of protest.

Mr. Taylor: The state of the law is entirely a matter for the Home Office, and it is not my place to give it guidance.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend agree that entry to the United Kingdom must be controlled in a strict but fair manner? Every illegal immigrant who enters the United Kingdom takes up a job or receives benefits that we cannot afford. If I had a pound for every illegal immigrant in this country I would be a very rich man, and there would be plenty of jobs for everyone.

Mr. Taylor: As ever, my hon. Friend expresses himself more vividly and powerfully than I can, and I completely agree with certain of his remarks.

Mr. Boateng: Is not the Minister well aware that in this matter—as in housing, welfare and employment law—the law centres movement makes a valuable contribution to the cost-effective provision of legal services? The Minister knows that those services are under threat from local authority cuts throughout the country. Will his Department do something to prevent the disruption of legal services, or are we to see only more hand-wringing and head-scratching from this wretched Government?

Mr. Taylor: I do not think that I am in either the hand-wringing or the head-scratching business—but I am in the business of welcoming the hon. Gentleman to the Opposition Front Bench. He brings to his job considerable knowledge of his subject and, in particular, of law centres.

I know that the Lord Chancellor is personally sympathetic towards law centres. Part of the difficulty is that they are often so beset with local disputation that it is hard for an external agency to contribute constructively.

Welsh Language

27. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what steps are being taken to promote the use of the Welsh language in civil and criminal courts in Wales.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Section 1 of the Welsh Language Act 1967 makes provision for the Welsh language to be spoken in any legal proceedings in Wales. My Department is committed to providing a responsive service to Welsh-speaking members of the community and is shortly to issue a policy statement that will set out the way in which that will be achieved.

Mr. Jones: The Parliamentary Secretary will be aware that, very shortly, a new Welsh language Bill will be before the House. Can he confirm——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Members who are standing please sit down?

Mr. Jones: Will the Bill contain a provision for hearings to be conducted through the medium of the Welsh language, either by defendants in criminal trials or by litigants in civil trials? If so, will sufficient resources be allocated to enable court staff to be trained in the use of Welsh in courts?

Mr. Taylor: The Welsh Language Act 1967 and the Welsh Courts Act 1942 provide Welsh speakers with safeguards. I do not think that I should comment on legislation that has not yet been introduced in the House, but the hon. Gentleman will at least concede this much to me: although I am an Englishman, I spent four years as the Government's Welsh Whip, and I always wish to be helpful in regard to Welsh affairs.

Juries

28. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what information he keeps on the racial composition of juries.

Mr. John M. Taylor: My Department does not routinely keep records on the racial composition of juries; however, a limited research exercise was carried out at a number of Crown court centres in November 1990, when jurors' race was recorded from observation.

Mr. Cohen: Have not the Society of Black Lawyers and the Commission for Racial Equality spoken in favour of multiracial juries? According to the CRE,

> "An all-white jury may have no members capable of challenging prejudice."

Are not the lists of juries predominantly "white male"? *[Interruption.]* Why will the Government not make a simple change, enabling a multiracial or a mixed-sex jury to be convened if either the defence or the prosecution requests it?

Mr. Taylor: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me. I did not hear all of his question, but I shall do my best to reply. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. It really is very disruptive if Front Benchers cannot hear the questions that they are asked. I hope that the House will now settle down and listen to the Parliamentary Secretary's reply.

Mr. Taylor: During the informal observation of jury composition, the Society of Black Lawyers was consulted by the Lord Chancellor, and that was very much the intention. Meanwhile, the law on jury selection is a matter for the Home Office. Jury composition in practice is based on random selection, but the hon. Member may be pleased to know that the royal commission is examining the ethnic composition of juries as part of its remit.

Legal Aid

29. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether he will consider introducing improvements to the legal aid system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The legal aid scheme is kept under constant review to ensure that it is operating as effeciently and effectively as possible.

Mr. Skinner: Is there not something seriously wrong with the allocation of legal aid when a miner receiving redundancy pay is not allowed such aid to enable him to sue British Coal for stealing £735 million from the pension fund, but, as I read the other day, the Maxwell brothers, who have been charged with stealing the Mirror pension funds, have been granted it? Where is the classless society represented in such double standards?

Mr. Taylor: I thought that the hon. Gentleman would ask that question.

Mr. Skinner: Go on, then. Answer it.

Mr. Taylor: I cannot comment on individual cases. The grant of legal aid in civil cases is dependent on whether there will be any benefits gained from litigation. In criminal cases, the test is the means of the applicant and the interests of justice. Either the Legal Aid Board or the court independently assesses these cases. If people are aggrieved by someone having been granted legal aid, they can object—and that includes the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: As two of the problems concerning civil legal aid are, first, that it requires the Government to sign a blank cheque and, secondly, that it excludes a large number of people from access to the courts, will my hon. Friend give serious consideration to encouraging private legal aid insurance, which would relieve both those problems?

Mr. Taylor: I thank my hon. and learned Friend for his question. There is a role for legal expenses insurance. I think that it is to be pursued. My hon. and learned Friend may have a valuable role to play. We also have progress to make in respect of conditional fees for which the courts and legal services legislation expressly paved the way.

30. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to review the working of the legal aid fund.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The working of the legal aid fund is kept under constant review.

Mr. Steen: Is the Minister aware that in each of my surgeries an increasing number of wives and young children are being—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. We are still in Question Time and the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) has the Floor.

Mr. Steen: Is the Minister aware that in each of my —*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Mr. Steen—third time lucky.

Mr. Steen: Is the Minister aware that in each of my surgeries in the last year an increasing number of wives with young children have told me that they have been abandoned by their husbands, leaving the state to pick up the tab? Will the Minister find a way of ensuring that husbands who abandon their wives and young children do not receive legal aid and that wives who need legal aid obtain it so that they can pursue their husbands and get the money for their children and for themselves?

Mr. Taylor: Any marriage breakdown—it is always a tragedy—is especially a tragedy for the children. Whatever the rights and wrongs of legal assistance may be in the case of the parting parents, the Lord Chancellor's Department would wish there to be a legal aid system for matrimonial affairs that looks after the interests of the children, which are absolutely paramount.

Mr. Cryer: Is not the legal aid system designed to help people on low incomes? Will not a system of flat fees for legal aid inevitably work against very poor people, who will be deprived of proper legal representation, particularly in lengthy or complicated cases? Will the Minister reject entirely today in Parliament the concept of flat fees?

Mr. Taylor: I will not in any way forswear the concept of standard fees, which are a good idea. Standard fees tend to reward proficiency. The only consequence of legal aid as it is at the moment is that the bloke who takes longest gets paid most. That does not seem to be very satisfactory.

Divorce Law Reform

31. **Mr. Wicks:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement concerning his plans for divorce law reform.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I acknowledge the hon. Gentleman's expertise in social and family policy. The Lord Chancellor is considering reform of divorce law as part of the rolling programme of family law and business. To oversee this programme, the family law and administration working party was established in 1989. There are also the proposals of the Law Commission entitled, "The Grounds for Divorce."

Mr. Wicks: I note the House's considerable interest in this question. Does the Minister agree that, as every year the parents of 150,000 children under 16 divorce, the time for inaction by his Department has long since passed?

Mr. Taylor: I agree; but it is extremely important, in a subject about which people hold strong, sincere and deep views, that we get the question of reforming the divorce law right rather than simply achieve speed. It is inevitable that, during the discussions, there will be a great deal of deliberation about mediation, particularly if we are to depart from the traditional adversarial role in divorce matters and from the concept of fault and blame.

Courts (Public Confidence)

32. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to improve public confidence in the courts.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by the Lord Chancellor in another place and by the Home Secretary in the House on 14 March 1991, announcing the establishment of the Royal Commission on criminal justice.

Mr. Bennett: Will the Minister explain why the Government set up the May inquiry and then decided to abandon it when it appeared to be coming up with a report critical of senior judges? If we are to restore the reputation of courts, it is important that such an inquiry is completed and that criticism of judges is published.

Mr. Taylor: The vast majority of criminal cases are dealt with in a perfectly satisfactory way. There have, however, been very proper anxieties expressed about some cases that have led to convictions being quashed. That is why the royal commission was set up, and it is not for me to anticipate its findings.

Coal Industry

3.31 pm

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the coal industry.

Last week I agreed that British Coal should announce that it would cease production at 31 pits over the course of the next five months with the loss of up to 30,000 jobs. I very much regretted that British Coal had had to reach this decision, but I accepted its advice that these steps were necessary in order to bring supply closer into line with demand. I then announced myself the outline of a package of redundancy and special assistance measures, the further details of which I am now able to give the House.

Originally I intended to announce details of the new coal contracts with the electricity supply industry and the future employment prospects for British Coal to the House before the summer recess. This timetable was not achieved. I would have liked to have made the announcement to the House today, but the electricity industry has still not agreed contracts for coal after 1 April 1993. In the meantime, pressure on British Coal, fuelled by reported leaks, intensified and I therefore agreed to allow it to proceed. I regret this discourtesy to the House. I accept full responsibility for that decision, as I do for the consequent events.

Remorseless changes in circumstances have been reducing demand and employment in the coal industry for the past 80 years. The fastest rate of decline was in the 1960s, when 300,000 jobs were lost in a decade, including 186,000 under the Labour Governments of 1964-70. At present, British Coal is producing 88 million tonnes, with 65 million tonnes going to the electricity generators. It is most unlikely that British Coal will be able to sell more than 40 million tonnes to the generators as from next April. The economic case for a substantial reduction in capacity therefore remains compelling.

Nevertheless, the Government recognise the concern at the speed of the rundown and about the very great difficulties it would cause to the communities involved. We have therefore concluded that, for the time being, British Coal should be allowed to proceed with the closure of only 10 pits, which it has told me are currently loss making and have no prospect of viability in the foreseeable future. The pits which fall into this category are Vane Tempest, Grimethorpe, Houghton Main, Markham Main, Trentham, Parkside, Cotgrove, Silverhill, Betws and Taff Merthyr.

Nevertheless, it is clearly important that British Coal demonstrably meets its statutory duties to consult and notify and take account of the result of consultation. No closure will therefore take place until after the statutory consultation period has been completed.

In the case of all other closures and redundancies, I have asked British Coal to introduce a moratorium until early in the new year, except for those which may be agreed by the work force at the pits concerned. This will provide time for negotiations to continue, and, hopefully, to be concluded, on the new coal contracts. During this period there will be no compulsory redundancies, although voluntary redundancies will be allowed to proceed under the terms announced by British Coal last week.

During this moratorium, the Government and British Coal will set out the full case for the closures which British Coal planned and to which I agreed. The Government will also provide an opportunity for hon. Members to debate the issues. In addition, we will carry out widespread consultation with all those concerned over the next three months. We will then announce our conclusions following those consultations to Parliament in the new year. If, following this process, the Government and British Coal's judgment is confirmed, then British Coal will proceed with a phased programme of colliery closures aimed at reducing surplus capacity as soon as possible.

It is clear that many coalfield communities will continue to suffer significant job losses. I am now able to give the House more details about the package of measures to assist those communities.

In the short term, people will need immediate help to find jobs, to retrain, and to construct a new future for themselves. In the longer term, these areas will need help with infrastructure to attract new industries and business.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has written to the Chairman of the Employment Select Committee with details of a package of measures worth approximately £75 million over two years. A copy of the letter has been placed in the Library.

The training and enterprise councils in the areas concerned will have a major part to play. They will want to ensure that all those affected are offered help from the relevant agencies, including British Coal Enterprise and Government Departments. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will be taking similar action in Wales.

One of the best ways of attracting new industries and long-term investment is the creation of enterprise zones. The Government intend to introduce new enterprise zones in the areas where they would be most effective.

Last week I said that we would ask English Estates to advise on a programme of property and sites provision. On the basis of preliminary discussions with English Estates, the Government have decided to make available to the corporation, and in due course to the Urban Regeneration Agency, £75 million of additional money over the next three years. In addition, the corporation will in this year spend around £10 million in those areas.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is also making nearly £2 million available today to the Tyne and Wear development corporation. This will enable it to make an early start on the further extension of the Sunderland enterprise park and the new Viking industrial park in south Tyneside.

We have already announced that three areas—Doncaster, Barnsley and Mansfield—will get enhanced status when the new assisted area map is announced in the new year. More areas will be upgraded in the review. This will ensure that firms interested in investing there are eligible for grant assistance. We will continue to look at other areas.

These major initiatives will be underpinned by further smaller regeneration measures. I intend to extend the coverage of regional enterprise grants to all coal closure areas. This will help small businesses there with investment and innovation projects. I will strengthen inward investment efforts in these areas. I will see that additional resources are available to local development agencies.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is also acting immediately to alleviate the effects of the closures. He is today setting up a coalfield areas fund. Up to £5 million will be made available for expenditure in this financial year and next. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is writing to the local authorities in the affected areas asking them urgently for proposals on how this money can best be spent to help those made redundant. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will be making a separate announcement on resources in Wales.

I am aware that these closures will have a serious impact on coal industry suppliers and we are already discussing with them ways to assist diversification and the identification of new markets. These measures will all bring new money to the affected areas. We are talking about £165 million altogether. I know that this will make a major impact in transforming the economies of these areas.

These programmes will be carried out by a number of separate agencies, each with established expertise and a track record of achievement in their field, but it will be important to ensure that the programmes mesh properly together, leaving neither wasteful overlaps nor damaging gaps. For this reason, I have decided to appoint a distinguished national figure, who will be an adviser in my Department, to act as co-ordinator and facilitator at the national level. He will also assist my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. I am pleased to tell the House that Lord Walker has agreed to accept this important responsibility. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order.

Mr. Heseltine: The decisions which I have announced today have been difficult. I understand—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Our fellow citizens outside the House are waiting to hear the statement. Let us hear the statement and let them hear it. They can then also hear what other hon. Members have to say subsequently.

Mr. Heseltine: The decisions which I have announced today have been difficult. I understand the anguish that will be caused for the coalfields concerned, but there is no economic alternative. The Government will now proceed to work for the long-term future of all those concerned.

I have arranged for copies of this statement to be available in the Vote Office.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): On Sunday the Secretary of State told the nation that there was no alternative to his closure programme. May I therefore congratulate him on the fact that by Monday he had discovered that there might at least be an alternative closure programme.

May I first ask the Secretary of State whether he thinks that the past seven days have enhanced or reduced the Government's credibility. If, as he claims, he agonised over this decision for months, how did he come up with a decision that could not survive six days of public debate? Can he explain how it was that he approved a timetable of closure which could not survive three days of challenge in the courts?

If the Secretary of State hopes that the House will welcome the announcement that British Coal will now observe the statutory notice period, can he explain why he ever approved a programme that involved breaking the law? May I warn the Secretary of State that the closure by delayed action that he has announced today does not measure up to what the nation demands.

The people of Britain who protested over the weekend, from Chesterfield to Cheltenham, were not protesting about the timetable of the closure. Does not the Secretary of State realise that they were protesting about the closures? They wanted the closures stopped, not phased in. Nor did they want money spent on training miners for the dole. They wanted action to save those miners' jobs. They will not be reassured that they will get that action by the length of the Secretary of State's statement which dealt with the action that he will take after those miners have lost their jobs. Nor will they be reassured by a thin package which offers the entire mining coalfields only half the money that his Department has sunk into Canary Wharf.

Does the Secretary of State understand that his statement will be judged by whether it is a genuine attempt to save miners' jobs or a manoeuvre to save Ministers' jobs? In order that they may judge which it is, will the Secretary of State tell us whether his statement means that a single pit on last week's list has a secure future or whether a single miner has a secure job? By the end of the phasing in his statement, how many more jobs will have gone? How many more jobs will have gone in the power stations that burn coal? How many more jobs will have gone in the engineering factories which supply the cutting gear, the winding gear and the pit props? How many more jobs will have gone in the coal communities when miners do not bring home wages which their families can spend in the shops? How will it help Britain to get out of recession to push all those people into unemployment? How does that help to restore the confidence in the economy which Ministers keep telling us is the key to recovery?

The Secretary of State claimed again today that there is a clear economic case for closing the mines. On Sunday he rested that economic case on the argument that it would produce cheaper electricity. Can he name a single independent expert who believes him? Does he know that the chief executive of PowerGen, which makes the electricity, has said that the closures will increase generating costs? Does he know that every one of the new gas-fired power stations is expected to produce more expensive electricity than any of the coal-fired power stations that he will shut?

What was most remarkable about the right hon. Gentleman's statement was that it did not contain a single proposal for him to intervene to stop any of the closures. The only action that he proposed in his statement was to set out the case for closure. Does the Secretary of State remember that only a fortnight ago he promised that he would intervene before breakfast, before lunch and before dinner in the same way as the German Government intervene to help German companies? Well, this is his chance. Last week the German Government confirmed a package of DM3 billion to keep open pits that produce coal at double the price of that produced by the pits that he proposes to shut.

Now that the Secretary of State has given himself more time to intervene, will he intervene to save British jobs in the way that the German Government save German jobs? Will he intervene to secure Britain's coal reserves in the way that the German Government secure German coal reserves? Will he intervene to provide an energy strategy

[Mr. Robin Cook]

which makes sense for Britain in the way that the German Government provide an energy strategy which puts Germany first?

There could be one, and only one, real benefit from the delays in the closures that the Secretary of State has announced: the delays give time for an independent review of the case for keeping the pits open—an independent review by a figure other than a former Tory Cabinet Minister. Will the Secretary of State agree to such a review? Will he let an independent review obtain the answers to our questions before any of the mines are shut, before any of the coal seams are flooded, before any of the coal reserves are lost and before he does any more damage to the economy by putting any more people on the dole?

If the Secretary of State will not agree to halt all the closures and set up an independent review, I serve notice that we shall table a motion that will give the House the opportunity to set up such a review and give a real future to Britain's coalfields.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) suggests that Lord Walker is in some way involved in the review that I announced. That is absolutely not the case. Lord Walker will devote his energies to securing the co-ordination of the measures that we have announced today. I say to the House, and to the Labour party, that in the past decade we have seen the economy of south Wales transformed under a Tory Government. We have seen it above all else because Lord Walker, when he was a member of this Government, brought his energies to bear on that transformation.

I tell the Labour party that I will take no lectures about the problems of closing down industries and running away from the consequences. I had to go to Corby in 1979 when the Labour party closed the steelworks with no attempt whatever to put jobs in their place. After a decade of diversification Corby has become a flourishing town. We have to find ways to bring that diversification into the coalfields. That is the only way to find lasting opportunities for the people who live there.

I note that the hon. Member for Livingston did not for one moment address himself to the fundamental dilemma that I face—the fact that British Coal has a contract until next April for 65 million tonnes of coal for the electricity generating industry. Next April, at best, British Coal can look forward to a contract for 40 million tonnes, and the reason for that is that those in charge of producing electricity can get their fuel more cheaply from alternative supplies. That is the dilemma. As they are charged with a responsibility to produce electricity cheaply, and as there is a regulator to ensure that they do so, it is unanswerable that the regulator will not allow them to buy generating fuel from other sources unless he is satisfied that they are the cheapest available sources.

The regulator is in place to deal with that, but it is important that the House should have the opportunity to examine the case that British Coal has had to face, pit by pit, which backs up its closure programme and that is what I have announced today. That is why, during the moratorium that I have announced, we shall produce a detailed calculation for the benefit of the House, and why there will be no further movement, other than in the pits that I have announced today, until after the House has had a chance to debate the conclusions. That will give the House an important opportunity to understand the dilemma facing the electricity generating industry.

When the hon. Member for Livingston asks about the jobs that will be lost, I notice that he does not ask about the jobs that will be lost to the rest of British industry if we do not provide it with the cheapest electricity that we can generate. It is not simply a question of looking after the coal industry—we shall do the best that we can to find a viable coal industry. We have to help British industry to be competitive in world markets. That is my overall responsibility. I cannot do that by imposing on industry electricity costs higher than the market can offer.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I must caution the House that this is a time for questions. It is not a time for hon. and right hon. Members, Front Benchers or Back Benchers, to make long statements. We have had the statement. I am looking for pertinent questions and direct answers.

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend realise that his very reasonable statement will give great encouragement to the House and to the country at large, especially his remark that there will be enterprise zones to encourage inward investment and the setting up of new small businesses by those miners who lose their jobs, as that has been so successful and will be successful again——

Madam Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will set us off in the right way by asking a direct question.

Sir Michael Grylls: I have concluded, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I note his support for enterprise zones. Like most hon. Members, I have seen the value that they have brought to Shotton, Workington and Corby. I hope that all those Opposition Members who are jeering will not come to my office to ask for enterprise zones in the way that they always do.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Does the President of the Board of Trade recall that in the 1960s the historic error was made of depending on the assumption of cheap oil permanently? The Government's attitude is now based on the historic error of depending on cheap gas and cheap imported coal, which is an invitation to companies and countries that owe nothing to this country to hold our country to energy ransom in the future.

Does not the Secretary of State acknowledge that what is now happening with the crisis that he is inflicting on the coal mining areas is not to do with what he called "a remorseless change in circumstances", but is a direct consequence of the style and system of privatisation which the Government brought to this country? Does he accept that what he has said today does not begin to deal with the realities of mass unemployment that he will bring to coal mining areas? Most of all, nor does it begin to deal with coal as a precious national asset, which is how any patriotic Government must treat it.

Mr. Heseltine: The right hon. Gentleman repeats by implication the very point that his hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) made about the cost of gas-fired generation and the fact that it is more expensive. His hon. Friend quoted the managing director of PowerGen. Why is it that PowerGen is the only company now operating a gas-fired station?

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): No words that I can express in this House could give vent to the shock waves that have gone through the community of Nottinghamshire following the announcement last week. That means that the review that my right hon. Friend has announced is critical. What status does that review have? It must be a profound and important review covering all aspects of the question because we need to see that the strategy for the future will ensure that coal-fired power stations and a deep-mine industry remain for 10, 15 or 20 years. From what the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) said, we know that we may need it then more than we do now.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend makes an absolutely critical point. I assure him that the Government intend that the statement that we make and the information that we provide will be profound and comprehensive. We intend to do everything possible to enable deep-mined British coal to be world competitive. That is the objective because it is the only way in which we can provide for the rest of industry and our consumers the basic competitive fuel that helps them to win in the export markets.

Nobody is more aware than I am of the impact that my announcement and that of British Coal last week have had throughout the country. I have had to share the agony of that decision for many months, and because that information has been available to me, I have spent so much time examining the alternatives. But, in the end, I come back to this stark dilemma: there will be a reduction of 25 million tonnes in the likely market for British coal next April; and, on top of that, the reduction in the amount that British Coal will get for its coal is likely to be significant. It will therefore have a lower revenue from a lower tonnage. That is the dilemma, and unless we can find a way to deal with it we are faced with the unpalatable conclusions that I put to the House.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Does the President of the Board of Trade accept that a phased closure of pits will do nothing to stem the anger of people who are outraged at a Government who are tearing the industrial heart out of our economy? Does not the Government accept that that is the inevitable consequence of the privatisation of electricity and the creation of rigged markets for gas and nuclear power? What we need is not a phased closure but a full review of energy policy. In those circumstances, will Professor Littlechild's report be made in time to be taken into account before the pits close? Does not the right hon. Gentleman accept that the only phase out that the country needs is the phase out of him and of the Government?

Mr. Heseltine: Professor Littlechild is, of course, fully aware that he has clear statutory responsibilities. He is now engaged on two reviews, and it is well within his ability to make available to us whatever information he thinks appropriate. The House can be sure that I shall take into account Professor Littlechild's views before I return to the House.

When the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) says that we cannot phase the closure of pits or the rundown of the industry, he seems to forget that we have phased the rundown of manpower in the pits from 700,000 after the war to about 50,000 today.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): Everyone is anxious for the outcome of the review. Will my right hon. Friend give some idea of its timescale and when we may know some of the decisions? When the review takes place, will it be borne in mind that if one strips away the subsidies, levies and sheer lack of competitiveness of some of the other fuels, British coal is the cheapest of all? Will British Coal and the people in the industry have the opportunity to make precisely that point?

Mr. Heseltine: The views of British Coal will be clearly set out in the report that I make to the House; that is absolutely fundamental. I intend to return to the House early in the new year.

As to the specific point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) about alternative supplies of fuel, it is perfectly true that the fossil fuel levy creates a subsidy for the nuclear industry. However, the subsidy is to deal with the decommissioning of old and unsafe plants. I defy the Labour party to suggest that I should not carry out my statutory duties to make those plants safe.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I take points of order at the end of statements.

Sir Harold Walker (Doncaster, Central): Why is the right hon. Gentleman discriminating against specific pits such as Markham Main, in my constituency? Why is he applying the axe to them immediately? Last week people were handed redundancy notices with only a few days' notice. Why was that pit not included with the others? It has rich seams and its productivity has increased enormously. The death of that pit will be the death knell for the whole village.

Mr. Heseltine: I am sure that the right hon. Member knows that 250 of the Markham Main employees have already applied for the new redundancy terms that I announced last week. I repeat that the 10 pits that I have listed this afternoon are pits that the chairman of British Coal has assured me are not making a profit today; and there is no foreseeable way in which they will do so.

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement as far as it goes, but I fear that it does not go far enough. The miners of this country are not asking for charity; they are asking for a level playing field for their product. Unless my right hon. Friend can assure the House that what he is offering is a thoroughgoing review of Britain's long-term strategic energy requirements that will address the imbalances created by the uneven playing field and, pending that, there will be a moratorium on at least 90 per cent. of the closures, I shall certainly find it difficult to support his position in the Division Lobbies.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend, who I know has taken a great interest in these matters, has heard me list 10 pits which are not making a profit and which British Coal says have no prospect of making a profit. Those are the ones that we have authorised British Coal to proceed with.

[Mr. Heseltine]

In respect of the other pits, we have announced a moratorium. I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that we have gone as far as we reasonably should with all our responsibilities in that context. There can be no case for my telling British Coal to keep uneconomic pits going. We are talking about uneconomic pits at today's price of about £1·85 per gigajoule; that price will drop, we read in the newspapers, to something in the order of £1·50 per gigajoule. That clearly shows that, if these pits are not profitable at today's higher prices, there is no way they will be profitable at tomorrow's lower prices.

We shall have plenty of chances to set this out in the debate on Wednesday and in my subsequent comments before the House is invited to vote early next year. It is certainly important to deal with my hon. Friend's concerns with the wider issues, and I will do so.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the President of the Board of Trade aware that he cuts a pathetic figure here today—both he and Major Wimp beside him? Is it not high time, instead of handing out quango jobs to Lord Walker, who lined his pockets with Maxwell money, that the Government saved the jobs of the 31,000 miners for whom the right hon. Gentleman has announced this moratorium? It is not a stay of execution they want; they want their jobs to remain.

There has been a 155 per cent. increase in productivity. There has been no increase in the price of industrial coal for six years. We can compete with the rest of Europe. Why should German coal be imported to Britain at £110 a tonne when we can produce it, after devaluation, at £37 a tonne? In the name of God, go, and take the Prime Minister and the rest of the rag, tag and bobtails with you!

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will know that the Bolsover pit is one of those that we have covered by the moratorium. I should have thought that he would concentrate his endeavours on pleading a rational case for his constituency and his pit rather than on debasing the currency of the House of Commons, as is his habit. He would help the House more if he recognised that no German coal is imported to this country for the purposes of electricity generation. The hon. Gentleman would also help the debate if he realised that imported coal comes not from Germany but principally from America, Australia and Colombia, mainly because it is opencast coal which is a great deal cheaper to mine from the surface than to extract from Britain's deep coal mines.

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): Can my right hon. Friend confirm as a result of his original statement that the seven mines in the Selby group in my constituency will continue to employ 4,000 deep pit miners; that they will be producing 12 million tonnes of coal a year for power generation; that that represents more than a quarter of likely coal sales, from just seven pits; and that this in turn represents the vast investment which my right hon. Friend and his predecessors have made in productive, constructive coal mining, far outstripping investment in closures? Will he also confirm that, if any additional mines are saved as a result of his statement today, that will only enhance the fact that overwhelmingly the largest proportion of fuel input to power generation will come from British Coal and from pits in my constituency?

Mr. Heseltine: My right hon. Friend is right. After the contraction of the industry that we are contemplating, British Coal will still be the largest contributor to electricity generation in this country. I confirm that the Selby group is a core part of the future of the British coal industry. We have invested £1·3 billion in that group of pits, which has played its part in securing the improved productivity upon which the long-term viability and, therefore, the future of the industry depend.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Is the Minister aware that the Prime Minister said at the Tory party conference at Blackpool that he would put Britain and the British people first in all his policies? Is Nottinghamshire still part of Britain and, if so, why is Germany, which has 4 per cent. unemployment, subsidising its coal mines by £1 billion per year while Britain, with 10 or 11 per cent. unemployment, is eliminating almost 31,000 jobs? Is he also aware that, of the 5,000 people in Nottinghamshire who have recently been through training schemes, only 257—5 per cent.—have found jobs? What does he think that will do to the county?

Mr. Heseltine: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows that 86 per cent. of the miners who go through British Coal Enterprise advisory services find jobs. I am sure that he also realises that the Germans are contracting their industry because of the pressures of reduced competitiveness of the fuel.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about subsidies for the German industry. I am sure that he will bear in mind that the Government have put £18 billion into British Coal during this decade. Less than one tenth of that amount was put in in total by Labour Governments in earlier years.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that most of the pits in my constituency were closed when the local Member of Parliament, George Brown, was a member of the Labour Government and that no help whatever was available at that time?

I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement. Given enough time, mining communities do adjust and can make a successful future. There is life after coal, and if my right hon. Friend comes to south Derbyshire we shall be delighted to show him a successful community for which that is true.

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As I know, in many parts of the country the coal industry contracted significantly under Labour Governments and major diversification has taken place. Nowhere is that more the case than in south Wales, as Labour Members understand all too clearly. When Labour was in power, it ran down the coal industry without let or hindrance, and it ill becomes the Opposition now to pretend that they had a magic solution when patently they had not.

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): I am an ex-miner with 26 years' underground experience. This is a poor and bitter day for the people of Britain because the Minister's statement goes no way towards sustaining confidence in Britain's coalfields. The closure programme includes the sale of Frances colliery in Fife. I met the Minister for Energy and asked him not to give away or sell prematurely the assets of British Coal because the future of the Scottish coalfield rests on the development of a colliery that is presently mothballed and up for sale. If it is prematurely sold and not girdled about and proper investment is not made in it, it will disappear for ever.

In terms of the future, that colliery is important, and in saying that I am not taking away from the arguments of my hon. Friends. The Minister is slashing the pits, saying that they are uneconomic. It is the old, old story: anyone can make anything uneconomic if he wants to. I hope that the Minister will reverse the decision because many other assets are being stripped. I know that some of my ex-colleagues—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] All right, but this is important. The people who are running British Coal are feathering their nests for whatever the future brings, whether it is privatisation or not. All that I am saying is that——

Madam Speaker: Order. I pleaded with the House for questions. I know that the hon. Member will accept that.

Mr. Clarke: I hope that there is not a scorched earth policy. *[Interruption.]* That is hard to say when one has had a drink, but it is no laughing matter for the Scottish coal mining community if that is the policy of British Coal and the Government.

Mr. Heseltine: I am aware of the constructive approach that the hon. Gentleman has taken and the dedication that he has shown in the interests of the industry. He obviously has an experience of the industry that I could not begin to equal. Because I know that the hon. Gentleman is wholly sincere in his approach, I want to respond in kind. I am prepared to look at the points he has made, but I want to share with hon. Members the danger that I face. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman will see the difficulty I have in trying to respond seriously to his point.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Stop being so unctuous and tell the truth.

Mr. Heseltine: Well, stop being so plain bloody stupid. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Sometimes my patience is tried so far that I almost use that sort of language.

Mr. Heseltine: I was speaking about the danger that is presented. There is bound to be a significant number of miners who face the loss of their jobs and see the risk to the community, and, understandably, they will instinctively wish to use their redundancy money to buy the pit. I want to be cautious before I encourage mining communities to invest in pits that, in our best judgment and in the best judgment of British Coal, have no viable future.

I do not say that because I want to choke off all interest or potential—that is the last thing I want to do. If miners come armed with expert advice and financial resources, and if, as I hope, they propose to put in only a limited amount of their redundancy money, I can give the House this assurance: I will personally ensure that their case is seriously considered.

Let me go further, because in some ways this is at the heart of one of the dilemmas that we face. The market that British Coal sees for its product next year will decline from 65 million tonnes to 40 million tonnes. If one or other of the pits scheduled for closure is moved into the private sector by a group of miners and supporters, that will potentially take part of that 40 million tonne market, with the consequent danger that other British Coal pits may be at risk. Therefore, that must be taken into account as well. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that I am responding as genuinely as I can to what I know to be his serious interest.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement as it suggests that he, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and other Cabinet colleagues have been listening carefully to what Conservative Back-Bench Members have been saying and to the views expressed by many people throughout the country since last Tuesday. Perhaps we have someone who is listening up there. I do not think, however, that the response goes far enough. I ask my right hon. Friend to put all mines into the review and to question British Coal, because at this stage we do not necessarily have to accept what it says. I do not think that the slight delay that would occur over the next few months would be detrimental eventually in terms of the cost of the outcome.

Will my right hon. Friend please put these considerations into the review? Let us have a complete review of the coal industry and of our long-term energy requirements.

Mr. Heseltine: I know exactly how much my hon. Friend is concerned about these matters as I have had the chance to talk to her personally about them. I cannot, however, go as far as she asks. These are pits that are not economic even at the high level of payment that British Coal now receives for its product, and British Coal will be receiving significantly less next year in what is already likely to be a much reduced market. It would be imposing costs in public expenditure terms for which there is no justification.

The House will understand—I do not wish to widen the discussion—that all delay has a cost consequence. If we produce 25 million tonnes of coal next year for which there is no market, that will cost an additional £1 billion or more in a year. That will have to be financed in public expenditure. It will be matched against a range of other investment or revenue consequences—hospitals, schools and roads, or whatever it may be. That is the choice that the House is asking us to make. I cannot responsibly make it in respect of the 10 pits today.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Secretary of State aware that his economic arguments are wholly unconvincing? If they were applied to agriculture, half the farms in Britain would be threatened with closure. They were not applied when the gamblers played the currency markets three or four weeks ago. It is a political act, long prepared by the Government, to rig the market, to close the pits and to punish the National Union of Mineworkers.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware also that it was the brutality towards those who were told that they would lose their jobs in 48 hours that produced the public response? Men who have devoted their lives to the industry wake up one day and find that the Secretary of State has ended their industrial life. It is the brutality of it that has stirred the public. We want to see all the closures reversed and a return to a planned energy policy to ensure that we use the nation's reserves wisely.

Mr. Heseltine: The right hon. Gentleman says all these things now, but as a member of a Labour Government it seemed not to occur to him that it was necessary to protect all these jobs. What exactly was he doing when he helped

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to provide finance for the interconnector with France so that French electricity could cross the channel to compete with ours?

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that in my constituency, where there are no mines and no farms either, there is great concern about the way that the miners were treated last week? Will he accept from me, along with my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock), that all the pits should be subject to the moratorium? Should not there be an independent energy survey that embraces what is happening in the nuclear industry and the question of how long gas supplies will last? Coal is a strategic industrial element that is vital to this country's future.

Mr. Heseltine: My right hon. Friend repeats the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock). I cannot give an assurance that I will change the decision that I announced today in respect of those 10 mines. My right hon. Friend must realise the implications of that process. If he wants us to finance the continuation of those pits, other sacrifices will have to be made in public expenditure terms. My right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) is an enthusiast for many aspects of public expenditure programmes. One cannot have them all, and that suggestion does not seem justified. There is no long-term viability for those pits, even at the existing level of revenue —which is higher than that which they will be able to achieve next April. There comes a point in Government when one must make difficult decisions.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): Will the President of the Board of Trade answer a question that many in this country want to ask him: where is the long-term strategy for an energy policy? The answers given this afternoon do not meet the serious charge that has been laid against the Government. If there is only to be justification for British Coal's decision, will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that his own Department stops licensing the 40 or more gas-fired power stations that are likely to come on stream? Many mining communities will believe that, with his statement this afternoon, we have moved from strangulation to suffocation.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman makes an interesting point. I have to deal with legal constraints in respect of the planning applications that are before me, but I am not unsympathetic to that important question— which I must address during the moratorium and the further submission of views. I cannot, however, unbuild the gas-fired stations which already exist or which are being constructed, and which account for a significant amount of the competition.

The hon. Gentleman asks about our strategy for an energy policy. It is impossible to ignore the existence of United Kingdom-owned North sea gas. That is the source of the remarkable opportunity to obtain lower cost electricity. At present consumption levels, North sea gas supplies will last for another 50 years.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my right hon. Friend accept that his announcement today will do nothing to assuage the fears of those at Trentham colliery, many of whom live in my constituency? If my right hon. Friend casts his mind back to the 1974 miners' strike, he will recall that those same miners who crossed the picket lines and defied Arthur Scargill are now being let down by his decision. Will my right hon. Friend please explain, in relation to our competitiveness within the so-called level playing field in Europe, why the decision was recently taken to allow a £3·3 billion agreement between the power generators and subsidised coal producers in Germany to get away scot free?

Mr. Heseltine: It is clear that the Germans are subsidising their industry, but they too are running down their coal industry. Our concern must be not the level of subsidies in Germany but whether we can provide for British industry and British consumers electricity cheaper by competition from gas-fired production or whatever alternative source we use.

The UDM's contribution was quite the most remarkable memory that I have of the industrial relations situation in the early 1980s. I happened to be in the Cabinet at that time, and I know exactly what UDM members did. That, among other things, made me determined to achieve the scale of redundancy compensation that I have provided and announced, which makes available up to £37,000 per miner—an average of £23,000 per miner—at a time when, owing to world recessionary pressures, people are losing their jobs in the manufacturing and service industries without receiving redundancy pay on anything like the scale of the compensation that I have announced.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) asked me whether I could exempt Trentham. I must tell him—and it gives me no pleasure to do so—that Trentham is one of the biggest loss makers with which British Coal is faced.

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): Who does the right hon. Gentleman think he is kidding with such a disgraceful statement? Certainly not the miners at Vane Tempest colliery, who have been denied the investment that could have turned the colliery around; certainly not the people of Seaham, a town that is still reeling from the closure last year of Dawdon and Murton collieries, with the loss of some 3,000 jobs. The people of Seaham are experiencing the highest number of job losses in the country, and the lowest number of job vacancies in the United Kingdom.

My people want to hear the President of the Board of Trade talk of clearing the lines for our entry into the European market—a market that is bringing in 150 million tonnes of coal from outside the Community. We want to hear the right hon. Gentleman speak of the incestuous relationship between supply companies in the north-east and gas-fired power stations—an arrangement into which we have recently entered. We need answers to these questions, and we certainly need to appease the frustration and anger of the hundreds of miners who are being thrown out of work in Seaham.

Mr. Heseltine: I have tried to recognise the anguish that the hon. Gentleman described. As he knows, Easington is not one of the 10 collieries that I have listed today. He must also know, however, that over the past decade or so £18 billion of investment—I have already mentioned that figure—has gone into British Coal. It is entirely unacceptable for anyone to suggest that the Government have not done all that it reasonably could to make the industry competitive and to give it a chance.

It is true that Europe imports substantial amounts of coal, but it is imported from the world competitive market, at much more competitive prices than British Coal can achieve.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Has my right hon. Friend stressed enough the significance of the 40 million-tonne electricity supply contracts? Is it not the case that, roughly speaking, for every million tonnes by which the supply falls below that figure, an additional 1,000 miners will be put on the dole? The level of public indignation will then rise out of control.

Is it not a disgrace that the contracts have dragged on for so long? While trying to keep demand at that level, will my right hon. Friend please review the policy for licensing gas stations—a policy that has already, up to April, passed licences for 14 such stations?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend has raised what is, for me, one of the most distressing aspects of the issue. Despite the endeavours of all the British Coal negotiating teams, we have not yet seen a contract between British Coal and the generators, or between the generators and the regional distribution companies.

When I addressed the annual conference of the UDM, I made it as clear as I could that I considered it important for both the generators and the regional electricity companies to realise that this was not just an economic matter. There are communities out there with legitimate anxieties, and there is an imperative need for those contracts to be concluded. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) is broadly right: if contracts for approximately 40 million tonnes are not entered into next year, every million tonnes below that figure will have an impact on employment in the coal mining industry.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that, as yet, he has singularly failed to answer the many questions that he has been asked about the Government's future strategy on energy policy? Is he really suggesting, through this statement, that in a consultation period of three months an energy strategy can be brought forward that has not been brought forward over a three-term period by this Government?

Would it not be much better to place a complete moratorium on this programme and to reconvene the Select Committee on Energy, which had built up considerable expertise in this sphere? It would enable us to look at an energy policy that would be to the benefit of industry, consumers and employers alike and would ensure that at least we went forward into the 21st century knowing where we were going. In that context, we should seriously look at the subsidy that has been given to the nuclear industry, some of which, of course, was instituted by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn).

Mr. Heseltine: I do not agree that we should question the principle of the subsidy that was given to the nuclear industry because, as I have already said, that is being used to decommission capital facilities; it is being used to decommission plant. Otherwise, I should be failing in my responsibilities. I will not do that.

The hon. Lady asks me about the strategy. We have a very clear energy strategy—to provide for British companies and British consumers a diversity of energy supply at a competitive range of costs. That is what we are determined to achieve. In doing that we have to be sure that there is a long-term prospect of continuation of those resources. We are satisfied about all those things within the strategy.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): In order to inspire proper confidence in the moratorium, will my right hon. Friend do two things? First, will he ensure that there is an independent assessment of the energy resources and requirements of this country? Secondly, will he summon the heads of the power industry and ask them whether they have really been putting Britain's long-term interests first?

Mr. Heseltine: They are all operating under statute to ensure that they clearly understand what their duties are. We laid down those duties. We laid down the regulatory regimes within which Offer must supervise their activities. It is quite clear that they have duties and that there is a regulator.

My hon. Friend raises the interesting question of an independent assessment. Of course, I shall give the clearest view I can as to what the arguments are, but what must have emerged today and on many other occasions is that this is not a case where we will persuade people that there is an independent calculation that leads remorselessly to one conclusion. One is dealing with great pressure groups, great vested interests, great alternative sources of energy, and everybody argues his case. However many times we argue it and whatever figures we provide, we will never get agreement between the conflicting interests involved. That is why in government we have to make decisions about priorities. I shall try to set out for colleagues why we have taken the decisions that we have, but I do not pretend that we shall satisfy all those who represent every pressure group because I know that we shall not.

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood): Will the President of the Board of Trade reassure the House and give some confidence to mining communities about the review that is to take place? It appears to have no independence at all. The President of the Board of Trade has told us several times this afternoon that the final outcome will be a contract between British Coal and the generators of 40 million tonnes. If that is the case, we shall be back to where we are today.

This review, this process, is a fraud. We want assurances that the nuclear levy is to be looked at. We also want assurances that the length of the contract between the generators and gas generation will be looked at. The coal industry wants a level playing field, a level market. The Government have provided no opportunity for that to happen. The inquiry gives no chance for an independent assessment.

Mr. Heseltine: My task in announcing the moratorium and promising to come back to the House is to provide for the House the evidence on which the 40 million tonnes calculation is based and, consequentially, the evidence to show why there is no greater market for the pits that face closure. That is the task that my review must undertake, and I have assured the House as clearly as I can that that evidence will be forthcoming. I shall not be able—I should not seek to interfere in the matter—to stop hon. Members from arguing that there is an alternative market for British Coal, but they must show where it is because British Coal

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cannot find it, and it is because no one else is prepared to show me where it has a competitive opportunity that I have had to make these unpalatable decisions.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Is not it a fact that my right hon. Friend is left with responsibility for British Coal without having any influence whatsoever over the purchasing habits of its main customers? Is not this one of the weaknesses of the manner of electricity privatisation? Is he aware that some of us tried to impress that on Lord Parkinson but got nowhere? Will my right hon. Friend consider taking powers positively to influence the purchasing policies of the generators, if that is necessary, in order to sustain a medium-term policy rather than having the terrible situation that we have had to go through in the past few days?

Mr. Heseltine: In considering all the options, I considered that one because it was an obvious example of how one could have found alternative markets for British Coal. However, the first question that followed that consideration was, am I prepared to ask the House for powers to insist that electricity generation is more expensive than it would be otherwise? It is because I believe that my first responsibility is to ensure that British industry and consumers get the most competitive energy that I am not prepared to ask the House to reverse the decision that it took in the past half decade.

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the President of the Board of Trade aware that his statement is another example of the sickening betrayal that the public have recognised in the past week? Does he realise that the public require a complete stop on pit closures so that the complex issues to which he referred can be considered in depth? Is he aware that, seven months ago, the Trentham complex, which is in my constituency, was congratulated by British Coal on producing the quickest 2·3 million tonnes in Europe? In July, British Coal congratulated Trentham miners and said that they had a long-term future. What has changed since then?

Will the right hon. Gentleman impose a complete moratorium so that the matter can be considered in detail, the country can be advised and the House can look at the results?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Member is asking the Government to acknowledge something that his Governments were never prepared to acknowledge—the remorseless pressure of the market decline for coal. The Labour party in power was never able to find markets for coal and therefore ran down the coal industry year after year. I am faced with exactly the same process, and I am determined, in the course of the moratorium that I have announced today, to put before the House the nature of the costs and competition that British Coal faces. In that context, we shall see how unavoidable were the decisions that I had to take and authorise British Coal to take.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): In view of the Government's fantastic achievements on the single European market, will the President of the Board of Trade explain to the public and to hon. Members why on earth it is not possible to sell coal to Europe? The Germans produce and sell coal at £86 a tonne and other European countries produce and sell it at £112, £79 and £76 a tonne, which is more than double the British price.

If the single European market means anything, why is there no demand for British coal in Europe? If the Secretary of State says that there is nothing funny in that, will he explain why PowerGen's chief executive has said that his coal-fired plant is able to generate far more cheaply than the independent gas-powered stations? He would love to put a contract to buy coal but, sadly, he cannot do so because he cannot get contracts with the regional electricity companies, which are the shareholders in the independent gas plants.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend has asked a number of questions. I find questions about PowerGen and National Power so contradictory because half the projects for gas-fired electricity are being developed, or have been developed, by National Power and PowerGen. It is inexplicable that the companies that are saying that they can produce coal-fired electricity more cheaply are among the biggest developers of gas-fired electricity. They cannot have it both ways. They say that because they are trying to sell their coal-fired electricity to the regional electricity companies, in competition with the gas-fired plants of the RECs. My hon. Friend is in the middle of the crossfire of a competitive situation between two groups of companies. He should take their sales pitch with the cynicism that he views other matters on which he is expert.

Let me come to my hon. Friend's views on Europe. I am the first to agree with him: there are things within the European Community that I would like to see made more competitive. One example of an area in which the Government are pressing extremely hard, which has significant implications for British coal, is in gaining access for British electricity generators to the European Community's grids.

Sir Teddy Taylor: What is stopping you?

Mr. Heseltine: We are negotiating; it is on the agenda of the British presidency. We are pressing our European partners to open up that opportunity. That is a much more constructive and likely way to make progress than by suggesting that we can produce deep-mined British coal and transport it across the channel and Europe to compete with the world price coal that the Europeans can purchase. We cannot compete on that basis. We might be able to do so if we were to get access to the European electricity grid.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Will the President of the Board of Trade explain something simple to the House? He said that he cannot intervene, despite what he said a few weeks ago at his own party conference. If the Government own 40 per cent. of the shares of the electricity companies and 100 per cent. of the coal industry, why on earth cannot they intervene? Nobody can understand the illogicality of that.

Mr. Heseltine: Because the electric industry operates within regimes that were passed and approved by the House, it is subject to regulation. The hon. Member reveals the stark distinction between what he and I mean by intervention. He means intervention in order to stuff costs down British industry which it can avoid in alternative ways.

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): Will my right hon. Friend pay careful attention to the fifth report of the Select Committee on Energy, and look at the medium-term projections for energy costs? I sympathise with his view that there are many conflicting statistics and figures, but every business in this country has to project supply and demand and estimate costs in the medium term, so that it should not be beyond the wit of the House to take an objective look at that, which will be vital in the forthcoming five to 10-year period for businesses, domestic consumers and, not least, our balance of payments.

Mr. Heseltine: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. I assure her that I will deal with that matter in my report to the House.

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): Will the President of the Board of Trade explain to the House how a pit such as Silverdale in my constituency, which was recently described as the jewel in the crown of British Coal, can be put on the list for closure? What criterion is British Coal using for the list? Surely, if a pit such as Silverdale is due for closure, there is no hope for any of the others.

Mr. Heseltine: I understand how the hon. Lady feels. I have tried this afternoon to answer that question on several occasions. The explanation is very simple and stark. British Coal does not see a demand for its product, and British Coal does not see the price levels that it is currently getting beyond April of next year. There is a 25 million tonnes projected reduction in demand for its product. It has had, therefore, to reach management decisions as to which pits it should recommend for closure and which ones it should continue to exploit. It is that uncomfortable decision to which we will come back when I make my report to the House.

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): In view of the public expenditure implications of this unfortunate sequence of events, will my right hon. Friend confirm that all the measures that he has announced hitherto will be funded out of new money that he has obtained from the Chancellor and not out of existing budgets and thus give the House, and in particular hon. Members who represent other parts of the United Kingdom that have genuine economic and social problems, an assurance that our regions will not be penalised as a consequence of the sequence of events?

Mr. Heseltine: I can help my hon. Friend. I made it clear in my statement where the money was coming from, whether it was within existing public expenditure programmes or whether it was new money. I can assure him that, in terms of the two big announcements that I made today, they are new money. Of course, my hon. Friend is absolutely right. He makes the point that the coalfields have real hardship and problems, but so have other parts of the country. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I will certainly not ignore that.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): The President of the Board of Trade's announcement will not save one of the 31,000 job losses that were announced last week. There will not be a review. There will be co-ordination by Lord Walker, whose history in running down the mining industry during his tenure in the Department of Energy is well known, and there will be no confidence in the mining communities about his appointment.

May we have a little bit of Thatcherism? May we argue on a level playing field so that coal can stand its ground against nuclear and gas energy? As was disclosed by the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson), who was one of the right hon. Gentleman's campaign managers against Lady Thatcher, if the power generating boards do not agree to the 40 million tonnes, with every 1 million less the 19,000 jobs that are left in the industry will be threatened. We are not at the end of a closure programme with the loss of 31,000 jobs; we are at the beginning.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman is fully aware that we are not in any way at the beginning. The beginning started between the first and second world wars. It has continued remorselessly ever since, and it has been continued under all parties regardless of their political persuasion. Let me repeat, because the hon. Gentleman might not have heard what I said, that Lord Walker is nothing to do with the review. Lord Walker will co-ordinate the measures that are to help people living in coalfield areas.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, and particularly the assistance that he offers to coal industry suppliers to pursue diversification and new markets. What steps will he take to ensure that suppliers play on even playing fields? What steps will be taken to ensure that British Coal rescinds the stop that it put on maintenance contracts last weekend?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend touches on a very important aspect of this matter, and that is coal industry suppliers. They, of course, have been aware of the likely contraction of the number of mines and, in certain cases, have already made their own plans to diversify their activities, particularly overseas. We have leading technology, particularly long-wall technology, in our suppliers, and we will do all that we can to give them every proper help. Obviously each company is different and each market is different, but I assure my hon. Friend that we will have urgent and intensive dialogue with them to see what we can do.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Is the Secretary of State aware that his announcement today that Parkside colliery, in my constituency, the last colliery in Lancashire, should close without further review is incredible? Is he aware also that Parkside has more than 40 million tonnes of coal reserves, that the vast majority of its coal goes direct to Fiddler's Ferry power station, only eight miles away, by direct train, and that British Coal recently installed a brand new machine on a new face at a cost of £6 million? Is the Secretary of State aware that on Friday not one single job for manual labourers was available at St. Helens jobcentre and that there is no chance whatsoever of any of the 800 miners who will lose their jobs in Parkside getting a job anywhere on Merseyside?

Mr. Heseltine: I know and the hon. Gentleman knows of the remarkable changes that have been taking place over the past decade in St. Helens. I salute the local community, the local authorities and Pilkingtons, who have played such a remarkable role in bringing about that transformation. The figures that British Coal has shown

[Mr. Heseltine]

me for that particular colliery indicate that it is not able to make a profit even in today's circumstances. That is the real world that I have to confront.

I understand what the hon. Gentleman says about the investment that has taken place. There has been massive investment—that is very much the point that I am making—but it has not enabled the collieries that I am dealing with today to make a surplus. In those circumstances, if they cannot do it today at today's prices, they certainly cannot do it at tomorrow's likely prices.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): My right hon. Friend was entirely right to reject British Coal's judgment that a Conservative Government could ever have connived in behaviour which threw men out of work at only 48 hours' notice. In the context of the review that my right hon. Friend has announced today, will it be possible to consider that, although gas may be cheaper now, by any judgment, gas stocks clearly will be less than coal stocks? Is not the relative position of the availability of sources something which the review might take into account?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend makes an important point about resources and reserves, but the history of the North sea has been a continuing one of extending the calculations for the amount of reserves that are available. The present calculations indicate that on the present levels of consumption we have about 50 years' worth of reserves, and that is before taking into account any further reserves which may be discovered. On any foreseeable calculation of the likely availability of fuel, there is a continuing availability of North sea gas as far into the future as any practical judgments can predict.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): The President of the Board of Trade will be aware that the destruction of Grimethorpe will put out of work virtually the entire male population of Havercroft, Hiendley and Ryhill, but he is clearly not aware that Grimethorpe made a profit over the past three years and that it is not dependent upon electricity. It depends upon selling to local industry, in particular to Coalite. Coalite had absolutely no notice of the closure of Grimethorpe and it has been left in considerable difficulties as a result, and that is clearly very wrong.

Will the right hon. Gentleman clear up another matter? People keep talking about a review. I should have been very happy if a review had been announced, but, as I understand the right hon. Gentleman's statement, no review was announced.

Mr. Heseltine: I looked particularly at the problems of Grimethorpe colliery. However, as the hon. Gentleman will know better than I, it shares facilities with Houghton Main, which loses money. If we aggregate the two—*[Interruption.]*—if we close Houghton Main, then Grimethorpe is a loss-making colliery. If we keep them both open, they do not make a profit. We are faced with the fact that, on any calculation of whether that pair of collieries is ever likely to compete in tomorrow's market at tomorrow's prices, the answer must be that British Coal has made recommendations to me which I have accepted.

The hon. Gentleman asked a question which I have been asked on many occasions. I have explained that there will be a moratorium. I have announced 10 pits today which I am persuaded by British Coal do not and cannot make a profit in today's world, let alone tomorrow's. I have announced a moratorium for the other pits and said that I will come back to the House with a full explanation of the costs and calculations which the House will have the chance to debate before we take any further decisions.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): Will my right hon. Friend accept that there is an understanding in Nottinghamshire of the very real pressures that the coal industry faces? However, there is no understanding of the way in which the announcement was made last week or of the peremptory way in which the UDM was treated in that announcement. Nevertheless, I greatly welcome my right Friend's statement today as a chance to think again and to ensure that we get it right this time.

Mr. Heseltine: I know how strongly people in Nottinghamshire felt and I have tried to indicate my own particular responsibilities in this matter. I do not in any way seek to absolve myself from those responsibilities. However, I must say that I have had discussions with the UDM leadership. Indeed, when the House has finished questioning me, I hope to see the UDM executive this afternoon to discuss these matters further. I attended the UDM conference and I have said that the Government will make available through British Coal financial help if the UDM wishes to proceed with, as I understand it, its present intention to become part-owners of the residual coal board.

Mr. Bill Etherington (Sunderland, North): I must tell the President of the Board of Trade how disappointed I was with his statement. Wearmouth colliery is in my constituency. It was to be mothballed, but I now understand that, due to the moratorium, it has a new lease of life. We will not be kidded about this. We have a stay of execution. The people in Sunderland believe that the Government need to be mothballed, not Wearmouth colliery.

I have a simple question for the President of the Board of Trade, but I am having great difficulty in coming to terms with it. Will the right hon. Gentleman explain how we can improve the trading conditions of this nation when he has already stated today that he is looking for cheap, secure energy supplies, but is using the two most expensive sources—nuclear and gas? We do not want a revised timetable; we want a new service.

Mr. Heseltine: I understand how strongly the hon. Gentleman feels, but it simply does not help to say that gas and nuclear are more expensive. If they were more expensive, there is no coherent answer to the question why anyone buys electricity from that source. I know that the hon. Gentleman will welcome the fact that we have made an additional £2 million available to the Tyne and Wear development corporation.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): As most of this nightmare flows back to the mistakes made in the original electricity privatisation proposals which made electricity more expensive rather than less expensive, does not the President of the Board of Trade agree that he must have a much more fundamental look at the matter? Merely to suggest that there will be a postponement of closures is not enough. I am sorry to say that if he does not undertake today to put the 10 pits back into the total of 31 for fundamental review and saving later on against a background of a published unemployment figure of 3·2 million and a true figure of probably 3·75 million, he will not carry the House on Wednesday night.

Mr. Heseltine: I must rest with the arguments which I have deployed and which I will continue to deploy. I cannot believe that my hon. Friend and my right hon. Friends want me to incur public expenditure keeping open pits which are uneconomic at prices today which are going to be slashed tomorrow and keeping open pits supplying a market which will decline by 25 million tonnes next April. I cannot believe that the House wants me to take part in all the discussions that Governments properly carry out about the priority of public expenditure—cutting resources here, cutting programmes there and making arbitrary decisions there—the consequence of which is that I would have money to keep open uneconomic pits against the advice of the people who have to manage them.

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): The Bentley and Hatfield pits are in my constituency. Neither of them is uneconomic and both have made a profit this year. The people who work in the collieries cannot understand, and nor can anyone else, why the Government are shutting economic pits which are making a profit when PowerGen and National Power are supplying electricity to the regional electricity companies, when gas is 30 per cent. dearer, and when nuclear power is up to 350 times dearer. The only person in the country who will not accept the argument is the Secretary of State. No one can understand what the Secretary of State is playing at unless, as was said earlier, this is a vindictive attack in response to the 1974 dispute.

Mr. Heseltine: I think that I can answer the hon. Gentleman's question. The calculations of profit to which he referred are based on the present £1·88 per gigajoule which British Coal is receiving for its coal. The calculation that British Coal has to make is not in the context of what it receives today but what it knows it is at most likely to receive next April. That is the dilemma. It will receive next April only what someone is prepared to pay it. No one is prepared to continue to pay a price of the sort that leads to the notional profit to which the hon. Gentleman referred. That is the difficulty.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): My right hon. Friend expressed concern in his statement that some miners would use redundancy money to invest in some of the pits that are proposed for closure. What inquiries have the Government received and what advice has my right hon. Friend received about the possibility of any of the pits being sold to the UDM or any other interests? Will he also tell us whether he has considered breaking the monopoly of British Coal?

Mr. Heseltine: There are inquiries. There are not very many, but there have been a few. I have to say that some of them tend to come from miners or their representatives who are concerned about the reduction in opportunities in their area. However, I would not wish to give any sign to my hon. Friend that there is a significant market for a significant number of those pits. I believe that there will be a market under the privatisation proposals for British Coal once we have been through this uncomfortable process. However, I do not believe that there is a significant market for the pits which are scheduled for closure.

My hon. Friend asked whether I had considered the idea of breaking British Coal's monopoly. The one thing that we have learnt this afternoon is that British Coal does not have a monopoly. It is very much in the market and has to compete on very onerous terms.

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): If the supposed justification for the closure of Silverhill colliery in my constituency is the operation of market forces, why has Britain imported coal that has gone straight on the stockpiles at pitheads and power stations? Was it to bolster a bad Government case? Are the stockpiles there to justify the action taken to close Silverhill immediately? Is it not time that there was a stockpile of redundant Ministers?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will realise that the decisions on what coal to import, the volume in which it is imported and where it is stocked are matters for the generators, not matters for British Coal or matters for which I have any direct responsibility. If the generating companies or regional electricity companies imported coal, they would be responsible for their own decision. It is not a matter for me.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Will my right hon. Friend confirm, just for the record, that during their most recent 11 years in office Labour Governments closed twice as many pits as Conservative Governments have closed in the past 13 years? Furthermore, since 1985, more than 100 pits have been closed with the loss of more than 100,000 jobs. That is three times the number proposed at present. They were closed with the minimum of economic, social and political difficulty because the closures were phased over a period. Therefore, it was the rapidity of the present proposals and the way in which the announcement was handled which caused the reaction from Chesterfield to Cheltenham. It was not the long-term strategy of reducing our coal-mining capacity, which is accepted by most people, including the Select Committee on Energy, which studied the subject only last year.

Mr. Heseltine: I do not disagree with my hon. Friend's analysis. I do not wish to comment on the number of pits that were closed or the number of miners who left the industry under which Government. However, there has been a remorseless reduction in the industry post-war, regardless of which Government were in power. In reaching a judgment, the House will wish to bear in mind that the Government have invested more in the coal industry since 1979 than all previous post-war Governments put together.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. So that the House may know my intention, I inform hon. Members that at 5.30 pm I intend to call the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) who, I understand, wants to make a response. We shall have questions until 5.30 pm.

Mr. Jimmy Boyce (Rotherham): I wonder what the people of Britain will make of the statement of the President of the Board of Trade today. First, he takes sole responsibility. Perhaps that is because there is no longer any collective Cabinet responsibility. The right hon. Gentleman also tells us—*[Interruption.]* I shall come to the question in two seconds, Madam Speaker. The President of the Board of Trade also tells us that he agonised for months over the decision to close the pits. Yet

[Mr. Jimmy Boyce]

yesterday, in "On the Record", he told the interviewer, Mr. Dimbleby, that he did not have time to telephone the Secretary of State for Wales. That is what he said; it is on the record. Then he said that he was frightened of leaks. Was that because he thought that the Secretary of State would leak the decision?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for taking so much trouble to listen to what I had to say in "On the Record", but it would help if he had understood what I said. I made it absolutely clear that my right hon. Friend should have been informed of the announcement that that pit would be closed one day earlier than he was, and I have accepted full responsibility for that. British Coal submitted that name to my Department very late, and we did not transmit it to my right hon. Friend as fast as we should have done. There was absolutely no other explanation for that except that it was an administrative oversight for which I have apologised to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar): My right hon. Friend referred earlier to the success of British Coal Enterprise in finding jobs for redundant miners. Will he give the House an assurance that before any redundancies are announced the measures that he announced today will be in place? Does he agree that the communities affected by the pit closures have a right to success and a right to look for jobs after coal? Does he further agree that the most tragic thing that could come out of the moratorium would be to raise hopes and expectations in those areas that suddenly markets for coal will appear when currently no such markets exist?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend has put the heart of the case which persuaded me that it was right to move forward. On all the evidence put to me—I shall have to explain it in detail to the House—the market will decline by 25 million tonnes next April. Therefore, I did not think it fair to those communities or desirable in their long-term interests to suggest that the market would exist. That is why I took the decision that I did, on the advice of the coal board. However, in the light of events, I have made the statement that I have to the House today.

I hope that the message that my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) has sent out will be understood. The message is that we are giving time for a wider understanding and a slower pace in certain circumstances. But that does not create a market for coal. Therefore, I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that we intend to proceed, with Lord Walker's help, with the implementation of the measures which I and my right hon. Friends have announced today.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Yesterday the President of the Board of Trade told the country that there was no alternative to the policy that he then had. Last night, together with the Prime Minister, he cobbled together an alternative policy. Can he tell the country how he can put forward a different policy before the House with any integrity? Will he explain how he can stand here with a new policy and still claim to have any integrity as a Minister?

Mr. Heseltine: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman has not fully understood, but I have explained, as clearly as possible, that there will be a lack of demand for 25 million tonnes of coal in the market place next April. I cannot create that market place. Therefore, it is important for me to explain to the House and to let the House debate and examine the implications pit by pit of the dilemma that British Coal faces. We can consult on these matters. That is what I have said today, but it does not change the basic dilemma that I have had to face ever since I took on this job.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Although I do not have any coal mines in my constituency, I have many concerned constituents who were very distressed. They have written many letters and they have telephoned me, as have the constituents of many other colleagues, about the way in which this matter has been handled. There is great anxiety that the matter should be clear in the future.

Could the President of the Board of Trade say something about the enterprise zones? He knows that I have been very interested in enterprise zones, and he and I have been involved in setting them up. They have not all been a success. Some of them need clarification. Does he agree that enterprise zones could be considered for the 10 mines that will be closed? Does he agree that the Chancellor of the Exchequer could consider increasing the tax benefits for setting up companies in enterprise zones so that companies do not simply move from outside the enterprise zones to inside them to avoid certain rates and taxes? Does he agree that there could be a real tax-free zone in enterprise zones where the coal mines were in the past?

Mr. Heseltine: I am aware of my hon. Friend's interest in not only enterprise zones but the whole issue of regeneration. While I can guess that the enterprise zone with which he deals is not as successfull as others, he will be aware that the broad picture has been of immense diversification and considerable success. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has no intention, as far as I am aware, to change the basis of the incentives which apply to enterprise zones. The concept of enterprise zones is a weapon that we are prepared to use in this case. We shall consider establishing such zones where we think it appropriate and where the area will benefit from it. We have not yet reached a decision on where enterprise zones will be established or the number.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): So that no one is in any doubt, will the President of the Board of Trade confirm that all 31 collieries will still close, perhaps not next week, but by next April? Will he confirm that, notwithstanding anything he has said today, he intends to close 31 pits? Will he also bear in mind that two of the 10 collieries announced for immediate closure are in Barnsley? The devastating effect that those closures will have on that community is not worth thinking about when one bears in mind that we have lost thousands of jobs in the area since 1985.

Mr. Heseltine: I accept the hon. Gentleman's argument about the problems in Barnsley. That is one reason why in my initial statement I announced assisted area status. I believe that that will be a help, but I am fully aware there there will be difficulties, which I have always accepted.

As for the hon. Member's question about the 31 pits, he and the House know, as I have repeated it many times, that there is a gap of 25 million tonnes in the market for British coal. On that basis, one is led remorselessly to the uncomfortable conclusions that I first announced. Ten closures will proceed and there will be a moratorium, during which I shall produce detailed calculations for the House, and there will be a further debate. I shall not say that at the margin there will be no change in policy. How can I do so if I intend to make a statement to the House and invite it to debate the implications?

I cannot know whether other purchasers may emerge who may be interested in becoming involved in any of those pits. There will be an opportunity for all those things, but, in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles), I do not want to give the impression that the gap in the market projected by British Coal will simply be filled because there is a moratorium.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): In welcoming my right hon. Friend's statement today and the moratorium that he has announced, which eases the brutality of last week's announcement by British Coal, can he assure the House that the 21 pits included in the moratorium will continue to work normally throughout that time, that the work force will work properly and for the normal number of hours, and that no steps will be taken to pre-empt decisions that might be taken after the moratorium? Furthermore, can he assure the House that there will be complete transparency in the economic case that he sets before the House for each of the 31 pits concerned?

Mr. Heseltine: I want to help my hon. Friend. It is my intention to be as frank as I can in the statement that I shall make to the House. I understand how much interest the matter has created, and it is incumbent on me to satisfy the proper concern of my hon. and right hon. Friends.

I think that I made it clear in my statement that, at the 21 pits covered by the moratorium, voluntary redundancies will be available and there will be no closure unless it is by agreement of the work force.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Does the President of the Board of Trade realise that his statement promising the coal industry not a new policy but a slow death by delay will be viewed with dismay and disgust by people throughout the country and especially in Stoke-on-Trent where Trentham remains marked for closure? Does he realise that that pit set a European record last year for the fastest 2 million tonnes of coal ever mined and made a substantial profit? Is he aware that his claim that the pit lost £20 million this year is a fraud, because that figure includes one-off capital investment in a new administration office block, a new stockyard, a new fitting shop and new seams? Will he undertake an independent inquiry so that he can base his future actions on real facts and not on fakes?

Mr. Heseltine: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman takes into account the fact that there is no gain to British Coal in closing pits unless it sees no realistic alternative. If it sees no realistic alternative, there is no gain to British Coal in closing any other than the least efficient pits. British Coal will be charged with the responsibility for maintaining the fabric of its organisation and will obviously maintain that best if it keeps the best pits. So there is no logic in the assumptions upon which the hon. Gentleman based his question.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Will cheaper electricity not generate additional job opportunities in energy-intensive industry? Does my right hon. Friend accept that the only alternative to his statement is the creation of coal stocks equal to 18 months or two years' consumption—coal stocks which would make the butter mountains of the European Community appear to be mere hillocks?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend raises two points. Coal stocks are an issue that no one can avoid. They are increasing at the rate of 1 million tonnes a month. Miners in their communities know that. They mine the coal and there it is, either at the generating stations or at the pit head because there is no demand—to the tune of 1 million tonnes per month—for the coal that is being mined. Demand is scheduled to reduce by perhaps 25 million tonnes during the next few months.

My hon. Friend's second point is equally right. If we impose higher electricity charges on industry, it will make it less competitive and as a consequence there will be fewer jobs in industry. That is the sort of dilemma that we must balance.

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh): Coming from a constituency which has endured three colliery closures within the past seven and a half months, may I convey to the Secretary of State the anxiety, the feelings and the depression of miners, with an average age of 27 years, who have moved from pit to pit with the guarantee that there will be no compulsory redundancies and who have been totally isolated and neglected and are now near, not to hope, but to despair? How can he reconcile the fact that he proposes to close profitable pits with the fact that uneconomic, dangerous nuclear power stations are being highly subsidised—to the tune of £1,260 million a year levy —and still command 20 per cent. of our total energy market? Could not the production from profitable pits replace at least 50 per cent. of that and save 10,000 miners' jobs? How can he justify the fact that the market competitiveness that he boasts about cannot have a level playing field because of a subsidised levy to protect the vested interests of the nuclear industry?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman ignores the cost of decommissioning the old nuclear plant. The nuclear levy exists to meet those costs. When the hon. Gentleman talks about a subsidy of more than £1 billion a year, he completely forgets the £18 billion which has gone in to the coal industry during the past 12 years.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Point of Ayr colliery in Clwyd has a market, at competitive rates, for every tonne of coal that it produces and that, even by British Coal's criteria, it should not have been included in the closure list in the first place?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend will appreciate that, as I have told many hon. Members, British Coal must calculate on the market that it foresees and not on today's market, and on the prices that it expects next April. It is well able to anticipate that position now because it is negotiating with the generators contracts which name tonnage and prices. Against that inescapable background, British Coal has made these extremely difficult proposals to me.

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): I have not once heard the Secretary of State and President of the Board of Trade apologise during this debate to the 500 miners in my constituency for the uncertainty of the closure proposals and the uncertainties that they face during the next six to nine months of the moratorium. Point of Ayr was included at the last minute and should not have been included. Why does he not take action today to ban imports of coal, which are damaging the industry, and to consider the gas situation? The gas will not go away; it is there. Why do we not have a proper, planned energy strategy which will secure the future of my miners, constituents and community?

Mr. Heseltine: Again, the hon. Gentleman will be more aware of the precise details than I am—*[Interruption.]* I understand that the hon. Gentleman's dilemma is that there are proposals for a gas and oil installation with an investment of some £2 billion alongside the Point of Ayr pit. That is the dilemma that we all face—a £2 billion investment to provide cheaper fuel for the electricity generating world alongside a pit which British Coal says is uneconomical and which it wishes to close. The £2 billion will create a huge number of jobs in the area concerned. There is a trade off, as hon. Members have discovered time and again.

Mr. Robin Cook: As the House will have an opportunity on Wednesday to go over the many questions that the Secretary of State has left unanswered, only one point needs to be put on the record today. To remove the confusion that appears to exist among Conservative Back Benchers and so that there is no misunderstanding of the point when we debate it on Wednesday, will the Secretary of State confirm that there is no review—independent or otherwise—proposed in his statement? On the contrary, his statement commits him during the moratorium to

"set out the full case for the closures which . . . I agreed".

There is no hint of a review here. If the Secretary of State is so confident of his case, why is he not willing to take his chance of arguing it before an independent review?

Mr. Heseltine: I have answered that question time and time again. I have told the House today that I shall set out in considerable detail the case upon which British Coal made its recommendations to me. I shall set out the implications of that and put them before the House once there has been a moratorium which will enable a discussion and consultations to take place. We shall not proceed with further closures until after the House has had a debate, after the moratorium has ended and after my report to the House has been made.

The hon. Gentleman wants to produce a review that will apparently raise a range of conflicting arguments upon which there will be no agreement before, during or after the review. As I said to one of my hon. Friends, those matters are deeply controversial within the energy industry, every part of which has a vested interest that it will not abandon, whatever the evidence put before it.

Ultimately, I am responsible for the Government's energy policy, which I shall set out, and I shall make clear the basis on which we intend to proceed—[HON. MEMBERS: "Resign."]

Madam Speaker: Order. I understand that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) wishes to make an application under Standing Order No. 20.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): When the announcement was made last Tuesday, I wrote to you, Madam Speaker with respect to a Standing Order No. 20 emergency debate on the pit closure programme. Following that, the shadow Cabinet decided to allocate a supply day and, quite properly, to debate this issue. I believe that my request for an emergency debate tomorrow should continue so that we have a two-day debate to hear everything that my hon. Friends, in particular, want to say. At least 20 of them did not get a chance to put their questions today and many questions have remained unanswered, not least the last one put by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) about a review.

The President of the Board of Trade has been hoodwinking the people out there this afternoon. In particular, he has been hoodwinking some of his Back Benchers to give them the impression that he has delivered a moratorium when in fact he will conduct whatever limited review takes place and come back with whatever he likes. That is one of the unanswered questions.

This matter is urgent, important and specific. It is important because the Government talk about ballots yet when they discussed the matter in Cabinet they did not even have a ballot because they did not have a full Cabinet. It is also important as the matter is being rushed through because of the remaining 40 per cent. of the electricity industry to be privatised. There is 40 per cent. left to sell and the Government want to rush it through to line their friends' pockets. That is why they cannot afford to wait more than three months. They also want to get hold of the pension funds. There is £13 billion in the two pension funds belonging to the miners and others who work in the industry. It is estimated that another £1 billion is left, and the Treasury will try to get its hands on that £1 billion to pay for redundancies. That is the Government's game.

A woman in my constituency sent me a parcel yesterday. She said, "Here, take this to Heseltine. This is a miner's suit. He works in a hot seam. There's his pants; there's his vest. Give 'em to Heseltine. I hope he gets the other 30,999 and then he'll have an invaluable national asset." Here, take them. The woman said, "P.S. I've washed them, but the socks need darning." Why does not the Secretary of State put them on, clean up that coal outside his front gate, and never return?

Madam Speaker: Order. I have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman has said and must give my decision without stating any reasons for doing so. I am afraid that I do not consider that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20. Therefore, at this stage, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. This concerns the conduct of the President of the Board of Trade. You will be aware, Madam Speaker, that on 4 March, the former and now defunct Energy Select Committee of the House—the House and the public set great store by Select Committees—published a three-volume report of 300 pages concerning the consequences of electricity privatisation. An important section of that was about the consequences for the coal industry. The Secretary of State published a response—or claimed response—on 9 June. As you will be aware, Madam Speaker, under a Cabinet minute available to all Select Committee members, the normal procedure is that the Government supply a response to a Select Committee report—that report had no fewer than 50 conclusions and recommendations—either by oral statement in the House, a command paper, or a memorandum to the Chair of the Committee concerned, perhaps supplemented by written answers.

In this case, a written answer and a press release referred to two documents that had been placed in the Library as deposited documents. Some hon. Members may not know that those are not normally available to the media. The two documents consisted of one memorandum of three and a half pages from the Secretary of State responding to nine of the 50 conclusions and recommendations of the Select Committee. There was another memorandum by the Director of Electricity Supply to the other 41. Some were replied to by both.

That semi-secret method and the mode of reply were not in accordance with the expectations or requirements of the House. It could be argued that, if some of those recommendations had been adopted, what we have discussed today would not have occurred. Will you therefore, Madam Speaker, rule on whether the Secretary of State's conduct was in accordance with the House's expectations? If it is not within your power so to rule, will you state by whom, which Committee and what means the President's disgraceful and inadequate conduct in a democratic state can be further examined?

Mr. Heseltine: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I cannot allow a response from the Government to a point of order which is directed to me, in the Chair, as I am sure that the Secretary of State will understand.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) for giving me notice of his point of order, with a full explanation of what he had in mind. I believe that he is aware that the Government's response to a Select Committee report is a matter between the Government and the Committee—in this case the successor Committee to the Select Committee on Energy, the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. Therefore, alleged inadequacies in a reply do not raise questions that can be considered a point of order for me. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has many ideas about how to pursue the matter in other ways.

Mr. Heseltine: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, may I seek your guidance as I want to help the House and clarify the matter. I shall immediately investigate how the situation arose—I suspect that it was to do with the fact that the Select Committee no longer exists. If the documents are not in the public domain, I shall seek an opportunity to put them there.

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the House appreciates what the Secretary of State has said.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I believe that the House has been misled this afternoon. It has been given the impression that there is to be an independent review with a moratorium. In view of the fact that Trentham pit has already ceased operations on the evidence of——

Madam Speaker: Order. I want to help every Member when I can. I know that the hon. Lady has a deep constituency interest in the matter, but she is attempting to prolong questions on the statement, and I cannot let her do that by means of a point of order. I have every sympathy with her and I am sorry that I could not call her, but there are many other Members who I have been unable to call. I cannot allow further debate on the matter now.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. This afternoon the Secretary of Trade failed to mention the future of Tursdale workshop in my constituency——

Madam Speaker: Order. That is a very good try, but it is not a point of order for the Chair. I saw the hon. Gentleman rising earlier and I think that he had better leave the matter with me for later. I might remember his face in a few days' time.

Orders of the Day

Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Bill [*Lords*]

Order for Second Reading read.

5.42 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Before I move to the substance of the debate, I shall take this opportunity to congratulate the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on his appointment as shadow Secretary of State for Scotland. It is a major achievement and I am sure that the House will wish to congratulate him on it. I hope that he will enjoy as long and distinguished a career in that position as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who will be missed at our deliberations. I also congratulate the hon. Gentleman's new Front-Bench colleagues and wish them everything that I wished their predecessors.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Is it the Secretary of State's intention to seek the creation of a Special Standing Committee under Standing Order No. 91? It seems that the Bill contains important measures on the management of our prisons, and such a Committee —which can meet on no more than four occasions—would be a useful way to allow Members to cross-examine witnesses and send for papers relating to this important legislation.

Mr. Lang: I certainly agree that the Bill is full of technical and detailed measures which it will be appropriate to scrutinise closely in Committee. Indeed, I fear that my speech today may become more detailed than I would normally wish in a Second Reading debate, but it flows from the fruits of the work of the Kincraig committee—an immensely distinguished and reasonably broadly based committee. That committee report was extensively consulted and applies to a specialist sector— the House already has the benefit of an enormous degree of scrutiny and careful consideration. That will inform our deliberations in Committee as well as any Standing Committee would. Therefore, I am not minded to accede to the hon. Gentleman's request for a Special Standing Committee on this occasion, although I acknowledge the potential role of such Committees in some circumstances. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I have been here, and in my place, since 2.30 pm—unlike some Members who have just entered the Chamber.

Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is widespread concern about the operation of clause 32(5), which was inserted in another place against the advice of the Government through an amendment tabled by Lord Campbell of Alloway? That clause will make it much more difficult to prosecute war criminals, who are among some of the most beastly men—if not the most beastly men—in this country. Will my right hon. Friend assure us that he will seek to reverse that decision of the House of Lords?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend mentioned clause 32, and in the interest of orderly progress, I shall come to that later in my speech. When I do so, I think that I shall give my hon. Friend the sort of reassurance that he seeks.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): There is at least one respect in which the Government have rejected the recommendations of the Kincraig report in a material matter that affects the terms of the Bill. Is not that, of itself, a compelling reason for hearing what Lord Kincraig and others with an interest in the matter have to say in a Special Standing Committee?

Mr. Lang: It is a more compelling reason for getting the Bill into Committee quickly so that the House can satisfy itself that the Government's attitude is right. The hon. and learned Gentleman is right to say that there are a number of points on which the Government disagreed with the Kincraig committee, for reasons which have been spelt out in another place—and which will be spelt out in Committee in this place. That is not a compelling reason to use the Special Standing Committee procedure.

As the short title suggests, the Bill serves two main purposes. The first is to reform existing arrangements for the early release of prisoners. The second is to make improvements in the law governing criminal evidence and criminal procedure in Scotland.

The Bill is limited in scope. It does not change the substantive criminal law or significantly affect the structure of penalties available to the court. The measures in part I are, however, designed to lead to greater fairness, consistency and openness in the administration of custodial sentences. They are long awaited, and I am confident in saying that in principle they command support across the political spectrum of the House.

As for part II, the measures will improve the administration of pre-trial and trial procedures, avoid unnecessary burdens being placed on witnesses, clarify the rights of accused persons and speed up the business of the courts. Those are highly desirable aims which I hope will be welcomed by hon. Members.

Most of the provisions in part I stem from the recommendations of the Kincraig committee. More formally, that was the committee of inquiry into parole and related issues in Scotland, the chairman of which was Lord Kincraig. I should like to acknowledge our indebtness to that committee. Its report was generally very well received and our proposals reflect the wide acceptability of most of its recommendations.

During the process of consultation, some reservations were expressed about what were essentially matters of detail. Where there is variation from what the committee recommended, it is largely to take account of such reservations. However, the committee established a framework of principles for a new early-release system, and the provisions in the Bill are built upon that framework.

Part of the purpose of the new early-release provisions is to toughen the deterrent effect of sentences for serious crime. There are those who argue that the sentence of the court should mean precisely what it says—a fixed number of years in custody. The Government believe, however, like the Kincraig committee, that a better approach is to allow, within the compass of the total sentence, for a period in custody, and a period in the community during which the offender will be encouraged to resettle under supervision. The provisions of part I will ensure that those sentenced to four years or more will spend at least half the period in custody, and that all will have supervision on release, potentially to the end of the period determined by the court.

An even more important change made by the Bill is to provide for the full outstanding portion of any sentence to be served, should the offender commit another offence punishable by imprisonment after his release, but before the full period specified in the sentence has elapsed. It is this measure that restores meaning to the full sentence of the court, and ensures that the deterrent effect of the sentence lasts for the full period intended by the court which passed it.

The provisions of part I also iron out a number of anomalies in the existing law. An important flaw in the existing system is that parole makes release at one third of sentence possible only for those serving longer determinate sentences. A prisoner serving 18 months or less must always serve at least two thirds of the sentence. A person convicted of serious offences may therefore serve a smaller proportion of his sentence than one convicted of a relatively less serious offence.

The new provisions address the paradox whereby, under the existing law, compulsory supervision is only available for adults released on parole, who by definition pose a low risk. At present, those released at two thirds of sentence having failed to obtain parole receive no supervision whatever. Yet these are the offenders who, by definition, are considered high risk.

The system of remission of up to one third of sentence as it now operates rules out the possibility of post-release supervision for those not granted parole. It also automatically devalues by one third the sentence passed by the court. Under the Bill, the concept of remission is abolished. The proposed new arrangements replace remission with the new concept of early-release entitlements, and address the other disadvantages of the existing arrangements.

The fundamental elements of the new system are provided in clauses 1 and 16 of the Bill. Under clause 1, every determinate sentence prisoner will be required to serve at least half his or her sentence in custody. Long-term prisoners—defined in clause 27 as those serving sentences of four years or more—will be eligible for parole at half sentence. If not granted parole, they are to be released on licence—under supervision—after serving two thirds. All long-term prisoners will thus be subject to post-release supervision.

Short-term prisoners—those serving less than four years—are to be released at half sentence with no automatic provision for post-release supervision. However, there is provision—in clause 14—for the courts to impose such supervision in certain cases.

All prisoners serving determinate sentences, whatever the length of sentence, will be subject to the provisions in clause 16. Under those provisions, as I have already said, a person who commits a further imprisonable offence during the period between release from prison and the end of the full sentence will be liable to be returned to prison for the remainder of that sentence, regardless of any penalty which may be imposed for the new offence.

Clause 1 also re-enacts existing provisions applying to the release of life prisoners. Under these provisions, the Secretary of State may release a life prisoner provided he has consulted the judiciary and has a positive recommendation from the parole board. This retains the Secretary of State's ultimate discretion over the release of mandatory life prisoners—namely, those who have committed murder. Thus the crime of murder continues to be marked as uniquely serious in our law. Before a murderer can be released, it will continue to be the case that not only the parole board but the judiciary must give their views and the Secretary of State must be personally satisfied that release is appropriate. That is the safeguard which the public rightly expects in these difficult and sensitive cases.

Clause 2, however, introduces a new system for consideration of release in cases where the sentence of life has been passed not as a mandatory sentence, but as a maximum, expressly for the purpose of protecting the public. That new provision meets, for Scotland, the United Kingdom's obligation to change the law in accordance with the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Thynne, Wilson and Gunnell. A discretionary life prisoner is one on whom the court has imposed a life sentence partly as punishment for one or more offences and partly to protect the public. The ECHR judgment established that once the punitive grounds for the sentence no longer hold, the public risk ground is a matter which must be open to periodic review by a body having the status and constitution of a court.

Clause 2 provides for the court, when passing a discretionary life sentence, to determine by order the period for which the prisoner is to be detained on punitive grounds alone. At the end of that period, the prisoner will be entitled to periodic reviews of the continuing public risk grounds for his detention. For this purpose, we propose to bring forward rules under clause 20 whereby the parole board will be constituted and function as a court. If the board finds that it is no longer necessary for the safety of the public that the prisoner should continue to be detained, it will be able to direct his release on licence.

Having described at some length the main provisions in part I, I shall deal with the remainder.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: My attention is immediately attracted by the notion of the parole board operating as a court. Will it do so only in the limited respect made necessary by clause 2, or will the whole of the functions of the parole board be conducted as if it were a court? As the right hon. Gentleman will know, the latter would give rise to certain potential consequences with regard to the way in which the decisions of the parole board may be capable of review in another place.

Mr. Lang: The parole board will operate as a court in the case of these non-mandatory life sentences, and only in the context of the risk to the public, after the punitive component of the sentence has been dealt with.

Dr. Godman: Under clause 21, what kind of person will be appointed to the position of parole adviser? Will that be a voluntary position undertaken by, say, members of local review committees, or will the post be an additional role taken on by members of the social work departments in prisons?

Mr. Lang: Persons appointed as parole advisers will be appointed on merit, taking into account their experience and their suitability to give advice to the parole board. The hon. Gentleman may wish to pursue that point in Committee.

[Mr. Lang]

Clause 3 provides a new power to release a prisoner on licence at any stage of sentence if there are compassionate grounds for doing so. There are at present no satisfactory means of releasing, for example, a prisoner who becomes terminally ill or permanently disabled. If the case is very strong, I am able to exercise the royal prerogative of mercy on Her Majesty's behalf, but this is rarely appropriate. The parole board can intervene only if the prisoner is under parole review at the appropriate time, but it distorts the purpose of the board to expect it to recommend parole purely as a device to achieve release in these cases. The Kincraig committee, in highlighting the unsatisfactory nature of existing powers, recommended a new power, and clause 3 is based on its proposals. There will be consultation with the parole board about any proposal for compassionate release, provided time allows, but this will be designed to assist the Secretary of State to address the public risk. The initiative for compassionate release will remain with the Secretary of State and will not be delegated to the board.

Clauses 4 to 9 deal with the application of the new early-release arrangements in particular circumstances or to particular classes of prisoner or detainee, including prisoners who are transferred to mental hospitals; fine defaulters and those imprisoned for contempt of court; young offenders and children; and prisoners who are subject to deportation on release. So far as possible all classes of persons held in custody will have comparable early release entitlements, but there are certain important differences.

One particular difference which I should like to highlight is that the release of children sentenced by the courts will be possible at any time, on the positive recommendation of the parole board. They will not have to wait for any particular proportion of sentence to elapse before release can be considered. Even children sentenced to less than four years will be supervised on release, thus taking into account the particular need for social work support for those who have committed crimes at a very young age.

Clause 10 sets out the conditions under which a life prisoner transferred to Scotland from another jurisdiction is to be treated as a discretionary life prisoner for the purposes of clause 2. Clauses 11, 12, 13 and 17 deal with the duration and conditions of licences—in particular, the condition of compulsory social work supervision which will attach to all licences at the point of release—and with revocation of licences.

Clauses 14, 15, 18 and 19 provide for a new supervised release order to be imposed at the discretion of the courts on certain short-term prisoners, for the variation of such orders, penalties for breach of supervision requirements, and appeals.

The Kincraig committee recommended that there should be no compulsory supervision for those released from sentences of five years or less, but that was one of the few recommendations that attracted adverse comment. Concern was expressed about the need for post-release supervision of some shorter-term prisoners, especially those convicted of violent offences or offences against children. The provision for supervised release orders is designed to meet that concern.

I shall describe a supervised release order as akin to a mini-probation order added to the end of the custodial part of a sentence. The order may be made by the sentencing court in passing a sentence of 12 months or more, but under four years. It will require the offender to comply with social work supervision on release from custody for a period not exceeding 12 months. The purpose of the order, as stated in the Bill, is to protect the public from serious harm. The circumstances in which a supervised release order should be made will be for the judicial discretion, but we envisage that it will be particularly appropriate in cases of sexual or violent offending. The offender who breaches the order will be dealt with by the court that made it, and may be returned to custody for the whole outstanding period of the order since the breach.

Clause 20 and schedule 2 provide for the continued existence of the Parole Board for Scotland. My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate has already, in another place, paid tribute to the sterling work of the parole board and in particular its chairman for the past 12 years, Mrs. Jean Morris. One cannot speak too highly of the dedication, experience and care with which she and the other members of the board carry out their onerous duties. In addition to the re-enactment—with some modifications—of existing provisions relating to the board, the Bill will enable the Secretary of State to delegate to the board, by order, the power to decide rather than advise on the release of specified classes of prisoner.

Clause 20 also empowers the Secretary of State to issue policy directions to the board which will clarify the basis for parole decisions. Expressly, the Bill provides that in giving his directions, the Secretary of State should have regard to the need to protect the public from serious harm from offenders, and the desirability of preventing the commission by offenders of further offences and of securing their rehabilitation. That provision gives public risk central prominence in the parole decision, as recommended by the Kincraig committee.

Clause 21 provides for the appointment of parole advisers, whose function—as recommended by the Kincraig committee—will be to assist prisoners who otherwise might have difficulty in understanding the parole system or in expressing adequately any representations that they may wish to make to the board. The purpose of clauses 22 and 23 is to provide the Secretary of State with adequate powers in relation to the assignment and transfer of prisoners, and the temporary holding of young offenders in prisons.

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): Clause 24 is the only one that refers to untried prisoners. As the Secretary of State is aware, a prison governor is responsible for the discipline of untried prisoners, but who is responsible for their safety? In Barlinnie prison in my constituency, two people have taken their lives and there has been one attempted suicide in the past nine months. Surely the Government are responsible for safety.

Mr. Lang: I am subject to later correction, but I anticipate that the governor is responsible for such matters within his prison. I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern about these sad cases in which, too often, young prisoners take their lives in trying and difficult circumstances.

As I said earlier, the provisions in part II of the Bill would make a number of useful improvements in the law relating to both evidence and procedure in criminal proceedings. Clause 28 gives effect to recommendations made by the Scottish Law Commission in its "Report on Evidence: Blood Group Tests, DNA Tests, and Other Related Matters". It provides a statutory framework for the taking during criminal investigations of fingerprints, impressions and other forensic samples.

Clause 29 and schedule 3 make provision for statements in business documents to be admissible in criminal proceedings. They also provide for copies of documents to be admissible as being equivalent to the originals. These provisions, which were moved in another place by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate in response to an amendment tabled by the noble Lord Macaulay of Bragar, reflect work carried out by the Scottish Law Commission following publication of a discussion paper by the commission. It is thought that those provisions will serve to reduce the need for witnesses to attend court to give evidence which is otherwise contained in such documents.

Clause 30 makes provision to bring the law up to date in respect of the admissibility of evidence contained in audio or video recordings. Clause 31 provides, in effect, that the transcript of an interview between a customs officer and an accused person is to be received in evidence on the same basis as the transcript of an interview between a police officer and an accused person.

The purpose of clause 32 is to make it possible for evidence in solemn proceedings, whether in the High Court of Justiciary or before the sheriff, to be given from abroad by live television link, with appropriate safeguards. I should like to dispel any misunderstandings about the nature of this provision. It is not designed to enable video-taped evidence to be given in Scottish courts. The link would be live. The witness would be televised giving evidence in a courtroom abroad and the television monitor in Scotland would show live proceedings.

The provision could be used to benefit either the prosecution or the defence case. It is quite possible that the defence case could be reliant on testimony from a witness residing abroad, who could not be compelled to attend the court in Scotland. The provision is in no way biased towards the prosecution. Moreover, the provision embodies stringent safeguards for the rights of the accused. Either party may apply to the court for the use of a live television link, but if the application is by the prosecution, the court must be satisfied that it is not unfair to the accused. The court must also be satisfied that it is in the interest of justice, and that the evidence which the witness is able to give is necessary for the proper adjudication of the trial.

Similar provision has existed in England and Wales since the Criminal Justice Act 1988. The law of Scotland has fallen behind in this area. It is right that the parties to a trial and their witnesses should be able to benefit from the use of modern technology, where it is in the interests of justice for them to do so. Therefore, it is a matter of concern that, as the House is aware, subsection (5) of clause 32 was added to the provisions in this clause in another place against the Government's advice and policy. It would preclude the taking of evidence from abroad by live television link in any proceedings under the War Crimes Act 1991.

In the Government's view, which I suspect many hon. Members will share, it is unacceptable that there should be different evidential provision for trials under that Act. It creates anomalies in the law of Scotland purely to meet concerns in another place about war crimes legislation. The principle of war crimes legislation has, however, been established by this House, and we do not intend to allow that question to be reopened by an indirect route. We therefore intend to bring forward an amendment to clause 32 to remove subsection (5).

Many hon. Members hold strong views on the issues which arise in connection with clause 32 and will wish to take part in the debate on that amendment. Therefore, I propose to table the amendment on Report so that we may have a more open debate than would be possible in Committee. I trust that members of the Committee will feel able to exercise restraint so as not to anticipate or pre-empt debate on the amendment at a later stage. We hope and believe that, as a result of that debate, the message will go loud and clear to the other place that this House supports the clause in its original and unamended form.

Clauses 33 to 35 contain further provisions in relation to the giving of evidence by children in criminal proceedings. The broad aim of these provisions is to reduce the stress on children who are involved in such proceedings, while safeguarding—as we must—the rights of the accused.

Dr. Godman: The Secretary of State knows that I am keenly interested in clauses 32 to 35. Am I right in thinking that the whole of a child's evidence may be taken pre-trial? If such a procedure is followed, a child need not attend the criminal trial.

Mr. Lang: That is my understanding. It would involve not just a child giving evidence but a child being cross-examined by the defence and the prosecution precisely in order to avoid the kind of stress that would result from bringing him or her to the courtroom in what could be difficult and stressful circumstances.

Clause 36 gives effect to the provisions in schedule 4 to the Bill, which further extend existing law on certificate evidence. Clause 37 clarifies the procedures for adjournment for inquiry in summary proceedings. Clause 38 extends existing provisions which enable a court to order a preliminary diet so that agreement may be reached before a trial on matters of evidence or other issues. Clause 39 makes provision for a judge sitting in solemn proceedings to deal with other business while the jury are considering their verdict. Clause 40 amends existing legislation so as to require courts to specify the date of commencement of a sentence of imprisonment or detention, and to give reasons where such a sentence is not backdated to take account of time spent in custody before sentence. Clause 41, the last in part II, will enable the Crown to apply to the court to set aside a conviction where the prosecutor believes that the judgment on which that conviction is founded should not be maintained.

Provision for a number of additional procedural reforms is made in schedule 5 to the Bill.

I hope that this overview of the Bill has been helpful to the House. It is, as I say, a Bill whose basic intentions command cross-party support.

Dr. Godman: Will the Secretary of State give me an assurance that he will, by way of the Bill, set up a visiting

[Dr. Godman]

committee for the prison in Greenock? He will surely agree that visiting committees play an important part in managing tension and dealing with grievances within prisons and that the present circumstances in Greenock are wholly untenable. As Lord Fraser of Carmyllie said to me in a recent letter, that prison needs a visiting committee.

Mr. Lang: The Bill makes no provision for such matters because there is no need for a change in statutory arrangements to enable a visiting committee to be set up in Greenock. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will wish to pursue that matter in Committee, where he will have the opportunity to table amendments and speak to them. I share his view on the value of such committees and the desirability of having them.

In conclusion, I believe that the basic intentions of the Bill command cross-party support. I look forward to constructive and helpful debate which concentrates on the detail rather than on the basic principles of what we are trying to achieve. I commend the Bill to the House. It embraces a considerable number of small but immensely worthwhile reforms.

6.11 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I begin by thanking the Secretary of State for the kind comments that he made at the start of his speech. I think that it was Harold Macmillan who once said that a few kind words in politics go a long way. I appreciate what the Secretary of State said. Perhaps on reflection he will feel that the suggestion made by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) about the Special Standing Committee is at least worthy of consideration, as there is a great deal of support for it. I know that he replied to that suggestion off the cuff.

I welcome, as my hon. Friends will, the firmness that the Secretary of State showed over clause 32. The House having made its view on principle absolutely plain, it is right and reasonable that modern technology should be made available to assist the courts in reaching their conclusions.

The Opposition are pleased that the Bill has finally arrived at Second Reading but I am appalled at the length of time it has taken to reach this stage. Hon. Members will recall the timescale. The Kincraig committee first met in January 1988 and published its report in March 1989. The Government's response was produced in September 1990—over two years ago. In England and Wales, the main recommendations of the Carlisle report were incorporated in the Criminal Justice Act 1991 which came into force on 1 October 1992. However, in Scotland we are still discussing the Kincraig report.

As the Secretary of State will be aware, the Parole Board for Scotland, in its annual report for 1991, felt so strongly that it

> "expressed its concern that the delay in implementing the recommendations of the Kincraig Report, published in March 1989, would lead to anomalies between the Scottish and English judiciaries and create uncertainty for those involved in the parole process."

The incompetence in the Government's administrative approach has left Scotland yet again following behind England and Wales. Not only that, but the Bill proposes reforms that would benefit the whole prison system but that are left unimplemented. That cannot be good for our already overstretched prison system. I urge the Government to show considerably more vigilance on these important matters.

I find it surprising that, over this period, the Government have not found time for a debate on the report. The Opposition owe a great deal—we acknowledge it—to Lord Macaulay of Bragar, who had the matter raised in another place. We are thankful for his input in the Bill.

Before I examine in detail the issues addressed in the Bill, I must qualify my initial pleasure at the fact that we have at last reached Second Reading. I think that many organisations involved in this sector agree that an opportunity has been missed—the opportunity to introduce a new Prisons Act to replace existing legislation. As many hon. Members will be aware, the Prisons (Scotland) Act 1989 simply consolidated earlier amendments to the Prisons (Scotland) Act 1952, which was itself a consolidation of previous legislation. Therefore, we have a system operating on out-of-date legislation and one that is in desperate need of a thorough overhaul. The Secretary of State will know that there is much support for that view.

If the Government had taken the bold but necessary step of introducing a new Prisons Act, many wider issues of concern not included in this Bill could have been taken into consideration—issues such as prison legislation and prisoners' rights. The House will know that prison rules are, in the main, made by means of statutory instruments, which lack real heavyweight legislative status. Everyday life in prison for the prisoners is determined by prison administrators, without real public scrutiny. I was glad to read that the Government undertook to review the prison rules. I look forward to seeing a timetable for this, as this is clearly a much needed reform which would be greatly welcomed.

The basic principle of attempting to reduce the prison population in Scotland is highly desirable. This is all the more so because the prison population in Scotland is 5,350 as opposed to 4,750 some 12 months ago—a significant rise in such a short period. The considerable cost of imprisoning a person means that such a rise results in an expensive bill. It is interesting to note that the average sentence in 1950 was 30 days, but by 1985 this had increased to 241. The uneven distribution of population in Scottish prisons has caused the major problems of which we are all aware when we look at the incidents that have taken place over a long period and resulted in enormous strain on everyone concerned, not least prison staff.

It may interest hon. Members to know that 40 per cent. of the Scottish prison population consists of fine defaulters. When it is considered that on average it costs about £12,000 to keep someone in prison for 12 months, I am sure that the House will agree that there must be better ways of dealing with fine defaulters and that we should be looking for opportunities to introduce and implement them.

I welcome the attempts that have been made in framing the Bill to have a closer link between the length of sentence passed by the judge and the length of time spent in prison.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Is it within the hon. Gentleman's experience that those who tend to default on fines tend also to be the poorest and most disadvantaged in the community? They are often people who are out of work or who suffer from a disability. Very often they are female single parents. Does that not reinforce the notion that some alternative means should be found so that such people can pay a debt to the community that does not have to be expressed in pounds and pence?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. and learned Gentleman is correct. I hope that the Bill will give us the opportunity to consider what we are doing as a society. Our present response in many instances is to imprison those who experience great poverty, people who in many cases are unable to pay their fines, and ask taxpayers to pay the bill. That seems to be an odd way of going about these matters.

The Secretary of State has suggested that the Bill has three main purposes. He explained that the first purpose is the fundamental reform of the parole system. Secondly, there is the new arrangement for dealing with life sentence prisoners, which will go some way to fulfilling Scotland's obligations under the European convention on human rights. Thirdly, the Bill seeks to make changes to the law of Scotland on criminal evidence and procedure.

I welcome the third purpose of the Bill, which is the change in criminal evidence procedure. I know that in so doing I speak for many of my hon. Friends and not least my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), who has pursued the matter for many years. I hope that he will feel that there is at least some response to his representations as we discuss the Bill.

We are happy with many of the Bill's provisions, which we consider to be welcome developments. Among those that stand out is the use of evidence by live television link. It will be advantageous in a financial sense and in cases where the individual who is giving evidence is under 14 years of age and has been subject to a serious assault, in some cases sexual offences. The presence of the alleged perpetrator of such crimes—we discussed this when we debated the Children Act 1990—is often a horrifying ordeal for a young child. Many psychologists have long advocated the use of a television link or protective screens to protect a young person. Such provision is, thankfully, included in the Bill.

The provisions in clause 2 deal with discretionary life prisoners. The clause introduces new arrangements that go some way to meet obligations to change the law in accordance with the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. I emphasise "some way" because there are aspects of the European court's thinking that we might have taken more meaningfully on board. I am sure that they will be discussed in Committee and when consideration of the Bill returns to the Floor of the House.

There are many issues to be addressed, including parole and the implications that possible changes will have on the activities of social workers. The House will recall that the introduction of parole as we know it stemmed from a Labour party initiative and the conclusions of a study group which was chaired by Long Longford. The study group produced a paper entitled "The Adult Offender", which paved the way for the relevant provisions that appeared in the Criminal Justice Act 1967.

Clause 14 introduces new supervisory release orders for short-term prisoners serving between 12 months and four years. What will the resource implications be—the question has been asked—if there is a dramatic use of such orders? I hope to hear from the Government whether they have allowed for such a use of the orders and have made arrangements accordingly for the necessary resources that will be needed to make such legislation meaningful.

Possibly of even more concern to social workers are the provisions in clauses 11 to 13, which concern the supervision of long-term prisoners and the conditions and duration of their licence. The provisions could produce many difficult and potentially dangerous situations. In reality, hardened and experienced criminals with the most difficult and chaotic lifestyles will be released after they have served two-thirds of their sentence with mandatory supervision, something in which they will be reluctant to participate. Previously, parole was something that prisoners opted into. They were, therefore, willing to participate in it. That did not present the difficulties that we are now addressing.

The longer the sentence the longer will be the supervision period. I shall emphasise the point. Someone who is sentenced to 30 years and who leaves prison after 20 years will remain under supervision for the next 10 years. That is a long period of supervision. Immense difficulties may be encountered and I offer no easy solution, except to encourage adequate funding and support for social workers whose responsibility it is to supervise long-term prisoners.

If the Bill and so much other legislation is to be effective, the role of social workers is crucial. We all know that there are times when social workers feel that they are under attack. They feel that they will be criticised no matter what decision they take and they are aware of their awesome responsibility. I wish, therefore, to go on record as supporting their role and to indicate that the Opposition do not believe, with the best will in the world, that the Bill can be as effective as we wish it to be without the good will that so many social workers have contributed to the system, for which we thank them.

Clause 3 covers the power to release prisoners on compassionate grounds. The clause highlights the important issue of the relevant roles of the judiciary and the Executive. At present, a prisoner who applies to the parole board—the executive for parole, as it were—has no right of appearance, no right of appeal if his application is rejected and no right to be given a reason for the rejection of his application.

Clause 17 covers a short-term, long-term or life prisoner who has been released on licence but has had his licence revoked on the recommendation of the parole board but makes no provision for any form of representation to be made by the prisoner to the parole board on the recall of the licence. This is a concern that has been expressed by the Law Society of Scotland. I am sure that the Secretary of State and his ministerial colleagues will consider that that is a heavyweight view and one that is worthy of a considered response.

If there is a belief in natural justice, parole cases should be heard in an open forum and not in secret. Secrecy allows for accusations that secret justice is being dispensed. I shall use some quotes to elaborate the argument. Rupert Cross, in "Punishment, Prison and the Public", said:

> "There can be no doubt that the increase in the control of the Executive over the offender after he has been sentenced has been one of the major features of 20th century penal history in this country."

Terrence Morris, in "Deviance and Control", wrote:

> "The spectre of Executive justice casts deep shadows across the light of freedom under the law . . . For above all, justice which is done in private must always lie under the suspicion that its reasoning may be arbitrary and instrumental and such as would wither behind closed doors."

[Mr. Clarke]

Bad behaviour that offends the prison code should be dealt with by prison authorities in the normal way. A criminal act, however, is a matter for the law. The two ought not to be confused, as they often have been under the present system.

Although I am a long-term supporter of advocacy in community care, I have always believed that advisers must be trained and experienced in their individual disciplines. Although the creation of parole advisers is long overdue, and is most welcome, it is essential that they should be properly trained—and clause 21 makes no provision for that. In the debate in the other place, Lord Fraser stated that any long-term establishment would have between one and five advisers, who would be local to the prison and have a previous involvement in it. Will the Secretary of State say who those people will be and whether he will ensure that proper provision is made for their legal training?

Offender services are currently funded by the Scottish Office and regional councils under what has become known as 100 per cent. funding arrangements. I shall be interested to know, as will many agencies, what is the Government's estimate of the number of individuals concerned. One would expect an increase, but the Government's funding intentions are not clear.

If the Government believe that abolishing statutory supervision of 16 to 20-year-olds by social service departments is a quid pro quo in favour of the new system, that presumption may be fundamentally flawed. There are only 600 such cases in Scotland at present, which is far fewer than the expected increase, and suggests only a small potential offset. Those 600 individuals are mainly minor offenders, not hardened criminals.

The Scottish Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders states:

> "To add the parole requirements contained in this Bill without providing funds for increased staffing levels would make a mockery of implementation."

My experience has provided dreadful evidence of inadequate individuals in prison who ought not to be there. *[Laughter.]* Despite the response of my hon. Friends, today of all days the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) has performed a valuable service. If he succeeds in removing the President of the Board of Trade from office, that is another reason why we should be grateful for his presence this evening.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): One of my main tasks is to ensure that the hon. Gentleman never gets into office.

Mr. Clarke: Despite my attempt to express a minority view from this side of the House in welcoming the hon. Gentleman, he is not likely to meet with great success. In fact, this afternoon showed that before very long we will be seated on the other side of the House. I look forward to implementing not only the Bill in an improved form but more important legislation.

Many of those who ought not to find themselves in prison are mentally ill or mentally handicapped, and are there only because shelters and other suitable accommodation have been closed and the courts have nowhere else to send them. Such people create petty crimes or create disturbances and are sent to prison, where at least they are looked after and fed.

That is a failing not of the prison system, but of society to make adequate provision for the mentally disturbed and mentally handicapped. I am aware that appropriate training and briefings for prison staff have begun, and hope that they will continue. However, the effect on prison staff must also be considered. They became prison officers to perform a public service in looking after ordinary inmates, but increasingly they are expected to supervise the special categories of prisoners that I mentioned. That is a gross misuse of the prison service's expensive resources, and the important needs of such prisoners in terms of care in the community ought to be met in more civilised ways.

The right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), when Secretary of State for Scotland, wrote:

> "People should only go to prison when there is no reasonable alternative."

We entirely agree. We thought that was the main thrust of the Bill and of the Government's thinking, as they previously explained it.

It cannot be right that prison staff who have been trained to deal with the problems of individual prisoners should be required to fulfil the role of the medical, hospital, or psychiatric services—yet that is a growing practice.

The Gunn report found that one third of a sample of male prisoners in England and Wales and 59 per cent. of female prisoners suffered some kind of psychiatric disorder. *The Guardian* commented on that report:

> "At least one in five sentenced prisoners is thought to have a mental disorder. A study funded by the Home Office and published last October put the incidence as high as 14,000 of the 38,000 sentenced prison population, with 1,100 so ill that they required immediate treatment."

Figures for England are readily available. Does the Secretary of State have comparable figures for Scotland? In the absence of relevant information, neither the House nor the Committee will be able to give the Bill the attention that it deserves, so I invite the Secretary of State to provide it.

Such revelations are extremely worrying to medical staff who seek to serve such prisoners, voluntary organisations, and the families of the individuals in question. In December 1991, the *Health Service Journal* reported at length on that problem under the headline

> "Prisoners who know not what they have done."

That there should be such people in prison experiencing enormous difficulties, unable to cope with their environment, and who do not know why they are there, says a lot. Surely there are better ways of dealing with such citizens.

Colin McKay of the Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped writes:

> "There are no adequate alternatives to prison, particularly for people with a mild or moderate handicap who persistently offend . . . The police have little training in mental handicap and may fail to recognise it or not know what to do about it. There is a Scottish Office circular on interviewing mentally disordered suspects, but it is a long way short of the more rigorous English code of practice under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984."

Owing to time constraints and the inadequacy of legal aid, defence lawyers may not pick up the fact that a person has a mental handicap. Clearly, we are dispensing with the law in such cases; I am sure that the Secretary of State will take that on board.

It is, and I believe that it always will be, the will of the House that justice should prevail at all times. With that in mind, let me remind the House of the view of the Woolf report:

> "It is fundamental to the prison service's position as part of the criminal justice system that it should ensure that prisoners are treated with justice in prisons".

I hope that the Bill will make certain that that is done; I also hope, fervently, that the necessary changes will be made in Committee, and I look forward to viewing the Bill at that stage.

My hon. Friends have no desire to obstruct the Bill's progress; quite the reverse. We shall, however, seek to improve it at every stage—if only because of our belief that a radical approach based on a coherent philosophy, incorporating social justice for all prisoners, prison staff and society in general, is pivotal to dealing with many of the problems that currently exist. An efficient and humanitarian criminal justice system can ensure that the needs of society are fully met, and we are determined to achieve that objective.

6.41 pm

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): I listened with great interest to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's introduction to this largely technical Bill. In the light of recent statistics relating, for example, to the dramatic increase in the use of firearms in robberies —from 246 cases in 1990 to 440 in 1991, an increase of some 79 per cent.—I welcome some of the parole proposals. Since 1979, there has been a massive 50 per cent. increase in expenditure on the police force, and, in the past three years, £41·4 million has been spent on prison building. It is, however, important to review parole procedure alongside those developments, and I think that the Bill is moving in the right direction.

If the parole system is to succeed, parole should be seen as an outcome that is far from automatic—an outcome that is earned through good behaviour. Proposals to ensure that no prisoner is released having served less than half his sentence are very welcome. I also consider it reasonable to distinguish between prisoners serving sentences longer than four years and those serving sentences shorter than four years, and the placing of emphasis on the recall to prison of those who reoffend on parole is clearly necessary.

With regard to the giving of evidence and the use of technology, I particularly welcome the introduction of pre-trial videos for cases involving children. Children giving evidence go through significant trauma, and anything that we can do to help them must be commended. I also welcome my right hon. Friend's assurance that he will seek an amendment in Committee to remove clause 32(5)—I was very surprised when it was introduced in the other place.

Another problem involving evidence does not appear to be covered by the Bill. I believe that it could be covered, and I hope that my right hon. Friend will incorporate the necessary change in Committee. During the recess, I spent an interesting day in the company of Ken Shaw of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, going up Royal Deeside. Throughout my business life, I never observed nature to the extent that I did that day. It was quite an experience, and I was particularly pleased to see a golden eagle: that was, perhaps, my objective.

At one point, the conversation turned to the problems faced by the RSPB, and by nature conservancy organisations, in prosecuting those who contravene laws relating to the protection of wildfowl. I was informed that, in Scotland, the evidence of two witnesses is required to bring about convictions under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. I believe that they should be permitted on the evidence of a single witness. Under the present law, offenders frequently escape prosecution because their actions have been observed by only one person; that is understandable, given that many such offences occur in largely rural areas in constituencies similar to mine. The RSPB is aware of occasions on which offenders such as egg collectors or persons laying poisoned baits for unlawful predator control have been seen in the process of committing such offences. However, because the offences have tended to occur in remote and thinly populated areas, they have usually been recorded by only one witness. I urge my right hon. Friend and the Government—who have consistently encouraged good stewardship and protection of our rural heritage—to table an amendment or a new clause to the Bill in Committee to close the loophole and bring offenders to book.

As I understand it, the basic principle under Scottish law is that all evidence must be corroborated to be admissible. I believe, however, that various statutes allow conviction on the evidence of a single person, in particular those dealing with the protection of game. For example, section 25(4) of the Deer (Scotland) Act 1959 and section 30(2) of the Salmon Act 1986 permit courts to convict on the evidence of one witness for some of the offences created under those statutes. More recently, the Government have incorporated the single-witness exception in section 87(7) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, admitting single-witness evidence for the offence of dropping litter. There is, therefore, a clear precedent for the conviction of an individual on the basis of one person's evidence— notably, where the circumstances would not allow a conviction otherwise because of the remoteness of the scene of the crime.

Let me give an example, which I believe is still current in my constituency. An amateur field worker, while on his own, came across a failed hen harrier nest. He became suspicious: he could see from the condition of the nest that young had hatched, but they were now absent and he saw no sign of natural predation. Having examined the area closely, he found the bodies of the chicks buried nearby. He removed them, and the matter was duly reported to the local police. Detailed examination showed the bodies to be crushed—damage clearly inconsistent with the behaviour of an animal predator.

A thorough police investigation revealed further alleged offences by an identifiable individual; but, because of a lack of corroboration of the field worker's discoveries, evidence of the serious primary offence can never be put before a court. That is not right.

Another example outwith my constituency but just as relevant occurred earlier this year. An RSPB field worker saw three people—who were known to be egg collectors, all of whom had previous convictions for egg collecting, including several convictions for the taking of golden eagles' eggs in Scotland—rob a golden eagle's nest. Their car was stopped and searched some hours later by the police. They were unaware of any potential incident but they had recognised the men.

[Mr. George Kynoch]

No eggs were found, although the climbing equipment that the men used to rob the nest was found in the car. It is, I believe, common practice for egg thieves not to take their booty with them. They hide the stolen eggs near the scene of the crime and return to collect the eggs out of season when they will not arouse suspicion. In view of past experience of attempting to prosecute in these circumstances, the RSPB agreed with the police that further action was pointless, despite the fact that a serious wildlife crime had taken place in full view of a witness.

I do not suggest that the Government should change the law in such a way as to allow an open-ended list of crimes to be included. There should, however, be a clear list of specified offences relating not just to the offence but to the species concerned so as to provide for the protection of those birds that are most at risk. If the Government included such a provision in the Bill, there would be further consistency regarding the protection of all wildlife in our rural habitats.

I am sure that such a provision would not be controversial and that it would be supported by all hon. Members. It is a necessary provision that could be included in the Bill as a means of tidying up the law relating to witnesses' evidence. I urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland seriously to consider moving an amendment or a new clause in Committee in order to bring that about.

6.52 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): The hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) has raised the issue of corroboration regarding the protection of birds. Like other hon. Members, I have received briefing material, if one may so describe it. The difficulty inherent in the hon. Gentleman's proposal is that it is easy to make a special case, but every time that one makes a special case arguing for relaxation of the principle of corroboration in the law of Scotland, it is much easier on a subsequent occasion—perhaps less deserving—for another exception to be made. The hon. Gentleman referred to admissibility as though that were the same as corroboration, but he is mistaken. Evidence may be admissible, but there may be insufficient of it—that is, it is insufficiently corroborated—to justify a conviction.

The Committee may consider the hon. Gentleman's proposals in some detail, but I have an inherent reservation about the notion that the law of corroboration can simply be set aside whenever circumstances arise that appear, prima facie at least, to justify it. I well remember a debate in the House when a substantial review was made of the law of corroboration in civil actions. If I am not mistaken, the Minister who is to reply to this debate, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland—the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton)—replied on that occasion. To some extent because of the prompting of the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), he reiterated strongly the Government's commitment to the notion of corroboration in criminal cases. I hope that this evening he will once again say that the Government are committed to that principle, while not entirely setting aside the apparently persuasive arguments of the hon. Gentleman.

I believe, like the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), that the Bill might well have been an obvious candidate for consideration by a Special Standing Committee. When I read the Bill in detail, I thought that if ever there were a compelling argument for the devolution of legislative power to Edinburgh, it rested in the terms of this Bill. These are exactly the matters that ought to be considered by a Scottish Parliament sitting in Edinburgh. They trench upon the nature of the administration of an important part of the Government's activities in Scotland. They could much more effectively and efficiently be dealt with in a legislature with delegated power, rather than here at Westminster.

Dr. Godman: I agree with everything that the hon. and learned Gentleman says about a Scottish Parliament. One reason why I suggested that the Bill should be considered by a Special Standing Committee was that we appear to be leapfrogging the English and Welsh legislation in terms of child care law reform. That, surely, is helpful for children on both sides of the border.

Mr. Campbell: The hon. Gentleman, who has a distinguished record in the policy area to which he just referred, makes a powerful point, but, in the context of the Bill, some of the changes that it seeks to effect have been part of the legislative framework of England and Wales for a considerable time.

The tribute paid to the Kincraig committee was entirely justified. Lord Kincraig was a distinguished member of the Scottish Bench. He was Dean of the Faculty of Advocates. He came to the task that was allotted to him with a great deal of experience. He discharged that task very competently. His report, although it may not justify the description that it was a model of its kind, none the less ensured that our debate today is much better informed than it might have been.

Early release—for that is what we must now call it—is an essential part of the penal system. It recognises the possibility of reform. By its very existence it contributes to prison discipline and it will almost certainly have an influence on the nature of a prison regime. The issues with which we are concerned, as the two opening speeches made clear, are complicated in practice. It is significant that to some extent the speeches that have already been made had about them a Committee stage rather than a Second Reading flavour. I hope, however, that hon. Members will not regard this as lawyers' work. There is wide public interest in the way in which we deal with those who commit offences.

The numbers are relatively small. The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) said there were 5,500 people in prison, but any member of society may at any time find himself and, increasingly, herself propelled into the penal system. Public interest is, therefore, significant. We must endeavour to achieve a balance in which society properly reflects its distaste and condemnation of conduct that is contrary to the best interests of society while at the same time ensuring that the interests of those who are convicted and find themselves in custody are properly protected.

That is a difficult balance to justify. It is not always assisted by florid assertions that people who are sent to prison enjoy a good life. Hardly a Christmas goes past without a tabloid newspaper describing the pleasures that are enjoyed by those who happen to be in prison at that time. I doubt very much whether the reporters who write these stories with such enthusiasm would willingly swap their own celebrations of the day for those enjoyed by people who are in Barlinnie prison or Saughton.

As I acknowledged in response to the intervention of the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow, experience in England has been different because of its different legislative framework. In 1987, 57·3 per cent. of those eligible were admitted to early release, whereas in Scotland the figure was only 28·4 per cent. The systems are different, but perhaps that shows that there is more sensitivity in England, to which we hope the Bill will direct us.

In the other place, when dealing with discretionary life sentences under clause 2, following the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights, to which the Secretary of State referred in his opening remarks, the noble Lord Advocate said—I think that the Secretary of State confirmed this—that the parole board was to act as a court. I asked the Secretary of State whether that was to be confined to its jurisdiction for clause 2 cases or whether it was to have wider significance. I hope that I do not do the Secretary of State an injustice, but it seems that he did not quite grasp my point. I understood him to say that the authority to establish the parole board as a court was to be found under clause 20. I think that is what I heard; if I am wrong, I stand corrected. I have read the clause with some care and find it difficult to see how the authority to establish the parole board as a court is to be derived from it. The noble Lord Advocate appeared to accept that that would require subordinate legislation.

There will be substantial questions about how the board operates, such as whether it will have rules that are to be published, by what form of subordinate legislation it will fall to be established and, perhaps more significantly, whether those who find themselves appearing before it will be eligible for legal aid. My reading of the legal aid scheme is that legal aid will not be available unless a specific amendment is made for that purpose.

Establishing the parole board as a court, even for the limited purpose of clause 2, carries substantial implications, which will have to be investigated in Committee.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): If the board is constituted as a court, what appeal rights will flow to those who are not satisfied with its findings? Would an appeal be made automatically to the High Court of Justiciary in Edinburgh? This may be a good proposal, but I am sure that my hon. and learned Friend agrees that it needs to be fleshed out more.

Mr. Campbell: If I may respectfully say so, my hon. Friend's suggestion about the High Court of Justiciary is inept. He has been away from practise at the Bar for some years. As an appeal would be probably of the nature of a civil appeal, it would go to the Court of Session. I suspect that the right to judicial review will be available under the normal rules of our law in Scotland, unless some express appeal provision is to be provided. My hon. Friend's intervention serves only to underline the uncertainty, which will have to be investigated in Committee.

There was some controversy in the other place about clause 23. When the matter was raised, substantially by Lord Macaulay of Bragar, to whom reference has already been made, the noble Lord Fraser was at some pains to say that it was likely to be used only for a temporary purpose. The clause provides that in certain circumstances an offender who should be detained in a young offenders' institution—a specialised institution designed to deal expressly with young offenders—might find himself or herself transferred to prison or a remand centre. I imagine that a remand centre has a less rigorous regime than a young offenders' institution, so in that respect the individual might not suffer any damage, but to transfer a person who should be in a young offenders' institution to a prison represents a substantial difference in the nature of custodial treatment. Therefore, we shall have to consider carefully the protection that is available to people who may find themselves dealt with in this way. It would be a tragedy, to put it perhaps over-strongly, if someone of that category were to find himself or herself transferred to a prison for some administrative purpose or administrative convenience. The issues involved are obviously significant.

Clause 24 deals with what one might describe as governors' punishment. When that was being debated in the other place, the noble Lord Fraser said that changes in procedure were being contemplated as a result of an internal inquiry in the prison service. I hope that the results of the inquiry will be made available to us, because I have always felt some discomfort about the notion of governors' punishment. One is entitled to feel some discomfort about internal procedures, and I can say from such limited association as I have had with those who have been subject to it—always in a professional capacity—that there is great resentment about the nature of that punishment. I suppose that it is equivalent to service life where one takes the commanding officers' punishment, but many inmates resent the way in which it is administered.

I voted against the War Crimes Bill every time it came before the House, for reasons which I think were clear at the time. There was an issue of principle, and some took one view of that principle and others took a different view. I agree with the view expressed by the Secretary of State that it sits uneasily in our legal system to have an amendment of the nature of clause 32(5). The House determined against the position that I took, but that seems to be no justification, however strongly people may have felt in the other place, for including an amendment relating to crime of a very narrow category. I understand the motives for doing so, but I do not believe that it is right to have evidential procedures that vary from crime to crime. Like the issue of removing the need for corroboration, it will always be possible to make a special case, and every time one does so the general principle will be weakened and diluted. Therefore, if the Government's proposal is to remove that provision from the Bill, I certainly will not oppose it.

I should like to draw the Minister's attention to what appears to be an error in clauses 6 and 7. It may simply be a misprint, but clause 6(2) provides that

> "a child detained without limit of time under section 206 of the 1975 Act may, on the recommendation of the Parole Board made at any time, be released on licence by the Secretary of State."

Section 206 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 provides not for detention without limit of time but for detention for a period which shall be "specified in the sentence". It appears to me that section 206 has been inserted, not section 205. Section 205(2) of the principal Act refers to people being detained without limit of time. On the face of it, it appears that there has been a misprint in clause 6. If I am wrong—I have no doubt that the

[Mr. Campbell]

Minister has available to him resources which will enable him to determine whether I am right or wrong—obviously I will withdraw my remarks, but it appears that there has been an error of some kind.

We know, because the Secretary of State has told us and indeed careful perusal of the legislation makes it clear, that the right to what we must now call early release is to be available to children under 18 who may be convicted of murder or children who might not have been convicted of murder but who have been sentenced to a specified term under section 206 to which I have already referred. The Minister will know, because, along with a former Member, Mr. Dick Douglas, we had a very productive meeting at which we discussed the position of children convicted of murder. As a result of that meeting, the Minister was most constructive, and certain changes were made as a result of our representations on the way in which those children were cared for within the system.

There may be cases in which not to allow the early release of a child necessarily ensures that that child will graduate through the penal system, first from the place to which the child was sent as a result of the Secretary of State's direction, then to the young offenders' institution and then to prison. Anyone who knows about penal institutions knows that there is a sense of graduation and that part of the difficulty in ensuring that reform is a central part of penal policy is the fact that the mere association with criminals and those of criminal propensity is enough quite often to inform people about the best and most effective ways of committing some crimes.

It is often said that people learn how to open motor cars without keys because they happen to find themselves in a cell with someone else who has made a habit of doing that. The example that I used is perhaps not profound, but there is a more important principle to be found—that is, if it is possible to release a child without prejudice to the safety of the public before that individual has to go to the young offenders' institution or has to go to prison, that opportunity should be taken. To send the individual through the whole system is to expose him or her to the risk that he or she will acquire the institutionalisation which obviously goes with such a length of time spent in an institution and also an experience of crime by association with criminals which will make it difficult for him or her to adhere to the path of reform.

The next matter is not raised by the Bill but I hope that the Committee will be able to consider it in the form of a new clause. The Bill mentions mandatory life sentences for certain crimes, and indeed for the crime of murder. It is time to look again at that provision in our law. It would be radical in Scotland, and to that extent, picking up the point of the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow, we might put ourselves ahead of England and Wales. My professional experience has led me to believe that the range of culpability in the crime of murder is considerable. There are often cases in which the boundary between murder and what we in Scotland call culpable homicide is very narrow indeed, yet if a case falls on one side of that border, however narrowly, the trial judge has no discretion: he is obliged to send the person to prison for life. That point has arisen not yet controversially in Scotland, but it has arisen in the context of the arguments principally in England and Wales about the defence of provocation.

It is clear that there have been circumstances in which English juries have been unwilling to accept—for instance, with regard to domestic murders when a woman has killed her husband—that provocation can be established by a course of conduct over a long period. There has been strict adherence, even in the Judicial Committee of the House of Lords, to the notion that provocation necessarily involves some heat of the blood or a sudden response under the pressure of the provocative behaviour.

There are grave difficulties in attempting to change the law of provocation because of a range of issues with which we need not concern ourselves today. However, if, instead of a mandatory life sentence, we had the ability or the discretion to impose a sentence of any duration, the difficulties presently caused by the controversy over provocation might be substantially reduced. In essence, the distinction between culpable homicide in Scotland, which is the equivalent of manslaughter in England and Wales, and murder should be withdrawn and we should have a single crime, the crime of homicide, and in respect of the crime of homicide the High Court of Justiciary, the supreme criminal court in Scotland, should have the right, as it already has, to sentence a person to any sentence that it considers fit.

If that were so, the fine gradation which sometimes appears where life is taken as between culpable homicide and murder would be of no significance. Also, if that were the case, a judge could properly reflect in the sentence which he gave the extent to which he believed that a long course of conduct may have contributed to the act which culminated in a woman taking the life of her husband, for example. I hope that we will be able to discuss that issue in the form of a new clause in Committee. There was a Select Committee on this matter in the other place, and its deliberations might be of assistance.

With a Bill of this kind, one's speech necessarily has to consist of taking pieces from here and there, because there is no central theme other than that the law of Scotland should, as far as possible, be brought up to date, that we should deal with those who offend and who are convicted in a way that is consistent with justice and that we should continue to find measures that will adequately protect the public. The Bill gives us all those opportunities. The precise detail of how those opportunities can be achieved is obviously a matter for the Committee, but I am pleased—delighted, even—that the Government have found time to bring forward a measure which will allow for detailed consideration of several matters which the sceptics around me believe are to be regarded only as a stocking filler at Christmas. Whether that is so I do not know, but the Bill offers an opportunity for detailed consideration of several important matters, the determination of which will be an important measure of how a civilised society deals with those who offend.

7.17 pm

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): I congratulate the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on his promotion to the Opposition Front Bench. I also record my appreciation of his predecessor, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), for whom I have gained much respect in the short time that I have been in this place.

However, I am slightly disappointed. I had hoped that the hon. Member for Garscadden would serve in that position for many years to come. In any case, I welcome the hon. Member for Monklands, West. I am rather disappointed that no members of the Scottish National party have been present to consider such an important Bill. That is quite suprising.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West criticised the Government for following the English. Not too long ago, there was great criticism by Scottish Opposition Members of the Government when Scotland led and England had to follow. The Opposition should make up their minds about what they really want. I believe in Scotland leading and I do not apologise for that.

The Bill will be addressed line by line in Committee. It is a very detailed Bill and I want to set out a background that is very different from the comments which have been made so far in the Chamber. Because of other happenings in recent weeks, the media have lost sight of the Bill and its importance to the Scottish public. However, the public have not lost sight of the importance of law and order issues.

The public at large have grave concerns about law and order. The incidence of violent crime is rising and I believe that the steps which have been taken so far have done little to address the situation. To a degree, the Bill has failed to address those points. When the public consider the details of the Bill, they will raise even greater concerns.

I want to relate law and order matters to my constituency of Ayr. Over the past eight months, there have been four deaths as a result of violence in my constituency. They were horrific deaths. Three of those deaths involved young people who were going about lawful leisure pursuits. One middle-aged woman was murdered in her own home. That is frightening and it raises grave concerns in the mind of the public at large, particularly the elderly.

Ayr is not alone. From what I am led to believe, in the past eight months of this year there were 68 murders in Strathclyde. Over a similar period in Northern Ireland, there were 54 murders and Northern Ireland is in a state of emergency.

I must emphasise that the problems that we face in Ayr in relation to law and order are not unique. Ayr is not a no-go area. However, problems tend to arise late at night and at weekends. I am pleased to say that the new Conservative administration of Kyle and Carrick district council has attempted to address the situation in part, as far as opportunities allow, in tandem with the licence trade. There is a move towards a reduction in late licences.

Dr. Godman: With regard to the growing incidence of violent crimes, many of which take place late at night and at weekends as the hon. Gentleman suggested, is it not absolutely stupid to reduce the ambulance cover in our constituencies in the west of Scotland at those times and at the weekends? Should we not have a comprehensive and adequate ambulance cover at such times?

Mr. Gallie *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) continues, I hope that he will not be led down some byway far from the Bill.

Mr. Gallie: I take your point, Madam Deputy Speaker. However, I believe that it would be in order for me to answer the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). I can tell the hon. Gentleman that I have had no complaints about a lack of ambulance services in my constituency. However, I have received complaints about a lack of a police presence and I will address that point shortly.

Although a reduction in late licences may do something about the present situation and alleviate the problem a little, it will not solve the whole problem. We have a problem with youths who carry weapons. However, we cannot relate that to late licensing hours. Youths arm themselves when they are stone cold sober. They obtain weapons long before the pubs close. Indeed, they obtain them long before they go to the pubs. There is a problem there and——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has a more immediate problem and that is to relate what he is saying to the Bill.

Mr. Gallie: With the greatest respect, Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe that the Bill addresses law and order matters which are of vital concern to my constituents who are suffering at the hands of people who are now in prison. The intention of the Bill is to reduce the number of people in prisons and to put people back on to the streets at an earlier stage. I believe that my points are very relevant to that issue.

I want now to consider the number of police on the streets of Ayr and to emphasise the difficulties that they have in apprehending criminals and solving crimes. I point to the ——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have tried to be gentle with the hon. Gentleman. However, I must make it clear to him that he must relate his remarks to the Second Reading of the Bill. This is not a general debate on law and order.

Mr. Gallie: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have some difficulty because I intended to cover the issues in a wider context. I understand that the Committee will take a line-by-line approach on such matters. Having said that, I am obliged to take note of the Chair's comments and I will attempt to confine myself to the Bill as closely as I can.

In doing that, I must point to the reasons why people are imprisoned. Why are they there? They are in prison because they have committed misdemeanours, sinned against society and because their crimes have created problems in society.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Why are you here?

Mr. Gallie: I am here because the people of Ayr had the good sense to elect a Conservative Member who stood for the Union and I am grateful to them.

I hope, Madam Deputy Speaker, that you will show me some indulgence if I address one aspect of the present situation—the crime of housebreaking. Given the way in which housebreaking is treated in the courts, I believe that there is a problem. Housebreaking is treated in a manner which does not recognise the full implications of its effect on society.

Housebreaking can be a violation. It gets into the hearts and minds of the people against whom such deeds have

[Mr. Gallie]

been perpetrated. There must surely be lengthy custodial sentences imposed on those who carry out such deeds. I believe that that does not happen at the moment. If the Bill were to be implemented, the situation for those who ultimately find their way into a custodial situation would be worsened because release would come sooner and the police would have greater problems.

When I consider housebreaking, I think of the pain and anguish that is suffered principally, once again, by the elderly. I have sat in courts recently and witnessed the sentencing policy of various sheriffs. It is unusual that a custodial sentence is passed for housebreaking. I am led to believe that it takes about 14 convictions before someone is put behind prison walls. I feel that much consideration is given to the minds and hearts of prisoners before such a step is taken. It would be entirely wrong to reduce the sentences given to such people in an effort rationally to reduce the number of custodial sentences.

I have to confess that in some matters I shall perhaps require your indulgence, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has already required it.

Mr. Gallie: I beg your pardon, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman should sit when I stand. I was making the passing observation that the hon. Gentleman has had his full ration of indulgence. He should now stick to the Bill or sit down.

Mr. Gallie: As far as I am aware, it is possible to recommend to the Secretary of State and the Minister measures which could be added to the Bill. I suggest that my hon. Friend the Minister should consider the Conservative party manifesto pledge to give the prosecution the right of appeal against lenient sentences. Here we have an opportunity to inject that measure into a criminal proceedings Bill.

What does the Bill offer? It offers a means of reducing time spent in prison by short-term, long-term and life prisoners. I agree that prisoners must have an incentive, but I suggest that when the public hear that in future 12-year sentences will be six-year sentences, questions will be asked and will have to be answered.

I welcome the proposals in the Bill on supervision. Supervision is integral to the good management of the proposals that are on the table. However, I must ask: what is the purpose of imprisonment? We must not forget the punishment element. However, I also acknowledge the treatment aspect, which the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) highlighted. I do not demur, but the all-important point is that prisons exist to protect the public. That must be the first priority. Both actual and potential victims of crime must be the first priority.

I noted the comments of the hon. Member for Monklands, West on the rights of prisoners. I remind my hon. Friend the Minister that the rights of the public at large must be his first consideration. There is cause for close scrutiny and amendment of the Bill in Committee. I look forward to participating in that. Part II of the Bill certainly has much to commend it. For example, it increases police powers to a degree. I welcome the use of DNA tests and, above all, the changes in the procedures when children give evidence. They are of great value.

I also welcome the reduction in the need for witnesses to appear in court. That in itself has much to offer. The changes involving live television transmissions must be supported and welcomed by all hon. Members. They can help the cause of justice. The measures in part II give me good reason to support the Second Reading.

I welcome the comments by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on clause 32. He has suggested a vital amendment which I feel that the whole House will welcome.

7.35 pm

Mr. Ian Davidson (Glasgow, Govan): I rise as the new Member of Parliament for Glasgow, Govan to speak for the first time, having spent a period listening to and watching the behaviour of the House with some interest. I recognise that becoming a Member of Parliament is a considerable transition from being a big fish in a small pool in local goverment—even though that pool is perhaps too large for some who are presently engaged in filling bits of it in and breaking the rest up into puddles. It is a difficult transition. I hope that I shall be able to manage it with the success that many of my predecessors from local government, especially on this side of the House, have managed it.

I should like to start by speaking briefly about my constituency. It has to be recognised that it is not homogeneous but is composed of a variety of villages and communities, each of which has its own local pride and characteristics and many of which fiercely argue for recognition in their own right. It is certainly my intention to ensure that I do that as their local Member of Parliament.

My constituency ranges from the very worst of underfunded public sector housing to the very best that Scotland has to offer. I shall turn to that subject in a moment. Govan is a community with which many people have a connection. There are Govanites in all worlds, ranging from sport and entertainment to the professions and industry. All those worlds have Govanites in prominent positions, to the advantage of all concerned.

I have met senior officers and Members of Parliament here who also have Govan connections. In particular, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) and my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) were at one time residents of Govan constituency. I believe that the hon. Member for Eastwood lived for some considerable time in the leafy suburb of Dumbreck before realising that it was not part of the Eastwood constituency. His subsequent move outwards shows the clear link that Govan has with its hinterland. That is why, as part of the local government reorganisation, consideration should be given to the recreation of the burgh of Govan in an expanded form, initially perhaps to include Govan, Pollok and Eastwood. I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Eastwood is nodding. Already, G division of the police covers the area that I have mentioned. Indeed, the social work boundary is the same. So the recreation of the burgh is obviously worthy of consideration.

My area has suffered considerably from economic restructuring. It is now in the process of lifting itself up, reforming and regenerating work for its people. It has recently had such successes as the Govan garden festival, which was visited by many Members of Parliament. The Mod has been held in Govan and was a great success. Govan Shipbuilders has been reborn. Many hon. Members will be aware of the great work undertaken by the Govan Initiative—a partnership of the local authorities and the private sector, with co-operation, which I recognise, from central Government. The Initiative has done so much to create jobs in that community. Of course, many hon. Members will be aware of the activities and successes of Govan Rangers.

Down the motorway a little distance is an airport which was built by the product of the merger of the burgh of Govan and Glasgow. That reorganisation resulted in a unity known as Glasgow. Therefore, the airport was named Glasgow airport. It seems relevant to me and to my constituents to say that, under the reorganisation, it should be renamed Govan airport, and the former small burghs within the Govan travel-to-work area should be drawn in as part of the greater Govan co-prosperity sphere. In that context, I am referring to Paisley and Renfrew, which would fit well into a new greater Govan area.

Given that we are taking in the constituency of the Member for Eastwood, it would seem appropriate that Linwood, the home of the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde, whom I also mentioned, should be drawn into the area too.

Having reorganised local government, I must make it clear that I have no further territorial demands at present and must move on to the history of the area. Many hon. Members here will be aware that at various times part or all of my constituency has been represented by nationalist Members, but it is not nearly as well known that in the not-too-distant past parts of it were represented by Conservative Members.

Some parts of my constituency were also represented by Conservative councillors in the not-too-distant past, and it is difficult for me and for many of my constituents to understand why the Conservatives have not managed to put up a candidate in the regional council by-election, which is being held a week on Thursday, after similarly failing to put up a candidate in the previous council elections in the Moss Park ward of my constituency. That shows how low the Tories have sunk in that area. Having previously held sway there, they are no longer able to put up someone for office. I am not certain whether that is simply incompetence or whether they intend to seek anti-Labour votes for the nationalist candidate. It would not be the first time that there had been such a dialogue between those two parties to attack the Labour party. Each needs the other in a symbiotic relationship designed to oppose Labour. I condemn that cynical alliance, and I am sure that many of my colleagues do likewise.

The previous Member for whom I have the greatest respect served the constituency for what seemed a considerable time but was, upon reflection, too short. His style and manner may have led some to underestimate a formidable intellect, one consistently applied in the interests of his constituents and his party. Now, as we all know, he has gone to work mainly abroad, where he continues to make a valuable contribution to the common good. I and his former constituents hold him in the highest possible regard. My only regret is that time does not allow me further to sing the praises of Bruce Millan.

My immediate predecessor also must command respect for his achievements. I have checked with the Library, which is unable to find any other Member in the recent past who played such a prominent role in three parties. I did not count Members who changed back to a party again or Liberals, with their various name changes. His is an achievement perhaps equalled but never surpassed. It was particularly noticeable that he was in the leadership of the Labour party when he left, went on to be the leader of the Scottish Labour party and was well on the way to being the leader of his third party before he left the House. He was a man of strong views. Even though the direction of those views changed from time to time, he none the less brought a fervour and passion of argument which was undiminished by the passage of time and which will be recognised by all here.

My predecessor was fortunate in his choice of staff in the constituency who worked hard on the caseload which is such an important part of the work of a Member of Parliament. I and those that they help would not want this opportunity to pass without recognising publicly the sterling work that the staff of the previous Member undertook on behalf of people in the area. I think my predecessor made a contribution to Scottish politics which should not be underestimated or overlooked even by those who disagree with his content or style, or both.

On a personal note, may I say how much I owe to my father Graham, my mother Betty, my sister Moira, my wife Morag and my son and daughter, Colin and Christine. They have given me invaluable support, and without it I do not believe that I would be here today. One person outside my family helped me a great deal, more than they know—a former teacher of Galashiels Academy, who was politically active in the Liberal party. She was a teacher of modern studies who demonstrated to me teaching at its best. Isabel Hilton was able to communicate constructively and positively to young minds—minds developing but barely formed—a wider vision of society and of what was possible which left a lasting impact on me and on many of my colleagues. I pay tribute to her for the way in which she was able to open up in an unpartisan manner the world of politics to many of her young charges.

I am grateful to the Co-operative party for the support that it gave me before, during and after the election. On behalf of many new Members, I must say how grateful we are for the large and small kindnesses that we have received from the more experienced Members, who could perhaps be referred to in this context as old lags.

I am conscious of the fact that if a new Member speaks for more than 10 minutes he might not get to speak again for the next 20 years. I have been a Member for relatively few months, and, like many new Members, I came here with high hopes only to have many of them dashed. Like many new Labour Members, I started with a sense of achievement, having won the first vote in which I participated, only to find that things went gradually downhill from then on, as we have managed to win only one vote since. That has convinced me of the need for a fairer voting system—one that allows us to win on a number of occasions. I hope to participate in such an experience later this week.

I look forward to participating fully in further debates on a variety of issues that concern my constituents and my area, and I hope to carry my party's flag forward in a number of areas.

[Mr. Ian Davidson]

On the subject of the present debate, the solution to crime lies not with procedural alterations, worthy though some may be, but with economic recovery and an end to the hopelessness that drives so many of our people into crime. The Government have presided over an explosion in crime in the past few years, and I hope that they will soon propose to do something positive about it.

7.48 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North) *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Mr. Walker.

Dr. Godman: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not wish to introduce a carping note into tonight's civilised proceedings, but why have you called the hon. Gentleman? He has not been here for the past hour.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for the discretion of the Chair, and I have exercised it in that way.

Mr. Walker: I was about to apologise to the House for the fact that I have been in and out of the Chamber during the debate. It is wrong to say that I have not been here for the past hour. I can tell exactly when I went out, because I went to one of the many interviews that I have been involved in due to today's circumstances.

I am sorry that I did not hear all of his speech, but I congratulate the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan, (Mr. Davidson). I suppose that I would really like to tell him how delighted I am to see him sitting there representing Govan. We enjoyed the outcome of his election, but, more importantly, the House looks forward to hearing what he has to say because he spoke with the conviction that comes from experience. I am sure that his contributions on Scottish and other matters will be welcomed by Members on both sides of the House.

The Bill is important and, although it will not be controversial, it will nevertheless arouse disagreement and individuals will see some aspects of it differently. I have always taken the simple view of life: people who transgress should be made to repay their debt to society. However, it is difficult in any circumstances to get the balance right. Some people feel that often the sentences are too draconian, and others feel that they do not fit the crime.

Much of the Bill deals with the subject of parole. There is always uncertainty when someone is released before completing his or her sentence, particularly if there is a further transgression. The fact that some people transgress —they always will—is no reason for saying that we should do away with the measure completely. The Government are trying to get the balance right.

As the House knows, the Bill is the result of the Kincraig report. As the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) said—I notice that he has left the Chamber and I make no observation other than to say that hon. Members go in and out of the Chamber all the time—not all aspects of the Kincraig recommendations have been implemented. It would have been surprising if they had because Governments rarely implement everything contained in learned reports.

I am particularly concerned about the amendments that were made in the other place regarding war criminals and the question of audio and video evidence and records. I hope that when we examine the Bill in detail in Committee we shall be able to remove that large amendment so that the will of the House of Commons can be carried in the Scottish Committee. Although we in Scotland cherish and guard the fact that we have a separate legal system and way of bringing in laws, we think that some matters should be common throughout the United Kingdom. Such matters, in which the public at large are interested, are important. Although I have always doubted whether many prosecutions would be brought under the war crimes procedure, we are dealing with principles rather than with the practice of what is likely to happen.

Dr. Godman: May I point out that the Secretary of State appears to intend to remove that part of the Bill on Report?

Mr. Walker: If my right hon. Friend has said that he will do that, I accept that he will do it. One of the great advantages of being a Secretary of State is that one can get things done, but that does not stop me commenting on the matter. The hon. Gentleman will also want to comment and make observations on it when he has the opportunity as the debate continues.

We shall probably spend most of our time debating the release of prisoners. An amendment was tabled in the other place about prisoners being released for health, exceptional and compassionate reasons. I was interested to see that Lord Fraser of Carmyllie said that the Government had

> "no intention of penalising a short-term prisoner released on compassionate grounds if, for example, he unexpectedly recovers his health."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 2 June 1992; Vol. 537, c. 870.]

One thinks of people like Ernest Saunders, who has made a dramatic recovery from allegedly being nearly senile. He did terrible damage to the City of London and the Scotch whisky industry's interests. I happen to think that the Scotch whisky industry is in better shape today to face the problems of the world than it was before Ernest Saunders came on the scene. I was deeply involved in matters affecting the whisky takeovers. Nevertheless, we must be careful in examining the recovery in prisoners' health. That is the best example that I can give of someone released on health grounds because he was, according to medical evidence, in a state of senile dementia. I hope that I go through that situation many times in my life so that I may experience longevity and recover as Ernest Saunders has.

I draw attention to that case because, when we have an opportunity in Committee to debate these matters in depth, I hope that we shall recognise that it is difficult to get the balance right. I understand the difficulties in attempting to get it right, but we must always take on board the public's response and reactions. The public will often respond to circumstances and then forget about them tomorrow because something else has come along, so one must not simply change the law to meet the fads of today. If we are to make fundamental changes in how we deal with prisoners, we must ensure that those changes will have the public's confidence. We should not make changes simply to be seen to be fashionable or faddy.

I am interested in the fact that prisoners serving sentences of less than four years will be automatically released halfway through their sentence instead of at two thirds, as at present. It is right that prisoners should be released only if they have been well behaved while in prison.

I no longer have a prison in my constituency, but before the boundary changes of 1983 Perth prison was in my constituency. I was a regular visitor to Perth prison and it always struck me—*[Interruption.]* Does the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) wish to intervene?

Mr. Hood: No.

Mr. Walker: I thought that the hon. Gentleman wanted to have his say.

Like so many prisons of that period, Perth prison is a ghastly place. It is one of the most appalling places imaginable in which to lock up people. If there are benefits to prisoners and society by releasing people from their sentence earlier, I would support that. But I need to be convinced—I am always ready to be convinced—that the sentence passed by the court at the time of the offence is seen and accepted by the public as fitting the crime.

The big problem is not the parole aspect, which is a proper, humane way to deal with people who have transgressed. The question is: are the courts passing sentences that the public believe fit the crime? Too often that is not the case and too many sentences are seen not to fit the crime. I am sure that every hon. Member has been approached when a television programme reports a ghastly occurrence involving a child who has been molested or killed and the sentence does not seem to fit the crime. I accept that in all cases all the evidence must be heard in order to understand why sentences are passed.

One aspect that was long overdue was the change in the law made in England and Wales so that the Crown could appeal against a sentence that it thought to be too light. Such checks and balances are important. I hope that, in dealing with the Bill—which is, after all, entitled the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Bill—we shall have the opportunity in Committee to examine the way in which sentences are passed. It is not just a matter of ensuring that someone is released after he or she has served half of a sentence. The issue is whether a four-year sentence is such as to give the public confidence in our court procedures.

I shall now consider the principle behind the parole system. It is right to have a system that allows for a selective approach to the release of long-term prisoners. That is essential. But equally, whatever system is introduced following the Bill's passage, the public must be convinced that the rules do not allow the release of prisoners who should be kept locked up.

There are some prisoners who should never be allowed out, but they are not in the majority. One must recognise that they are in the minority. However, the important aspect of any parole system must be how one examines the candidates who are up for parole and considers in depth why they were incarcerated in the first place. In addition, a decision must be taken on whether those individuals have records of incarceration for offences that make it unlikely that they will ever return into society as responsible citizens.

I suspect that most of the controversy in future will arise over discretionary life prisoners and periodic reviews. There is no doubt that some people should never be returned to society. There were such prisoners in Perth prison when I used to visit. I shall not name them as their names are known to everyone. They have been incarcerated not only for crimes committed when they were in the public domain, but for crimes committed subsequently, including the capital crime of murder. Such individuals should never be released. Anyone who commits a capital crime while still a prisoner has completely negated the possibility of a civilised society considering him or her for release. We must consider that aspect, how we deal with it, and the issue of periodic reviews.

From time to time almost all hon. Members receive correspondence from people who have been incarcerated. There are genuine cases in which mistakes have been made. We must recognise that we live in an imperfect world. The law, as with anything to do with man, is imperfect. Mistakes can happen, and we must bear that in mind when considering the release of prisoners and reviewing why they were locked up in the first place.

I believe that it is easier to keep youngsters good than to make bad ones good. I have held that view all my adult life, which is why I have tried to make a small contribution to youth work and activities. I have been asked a number of times why I seem more interested in air cadets and boy scouts than offenders. The answer is that if one keeps good youngsters active and involved in organisations that turn them into good citizens, there is a better chance that they will grow up into good citizens.

We spend far too much of our time looking at defaulters—to use an old military term—than good youngsters, of whom there are many more than there are bad ones. We should spend more time considering ways of keeping good youngsters good, which is important when considering young offenders. Young people often drift into offending because it is a peer activity. If someone grows up in circumstances in which anybody else's property is fair game, it is not surprising that he or she has difficulty in making judgments on the difference between right and wrong.

One of the great mistakes that we have made in the post-war period is progressively to drift away from understanding the difference between right and wrong. That is probably due to trendy ideas in education and the breakdown of the normal family unit. We shall be faced with more and more problems that are the direct result of the breakdown of the family unit and the inadequacies of education. Youngsters are unable to cope with situations because they are affected by occurrences in school and at home.

The Bill is not the sort of measure to excite people outside. The only people who will send us representations will be interested groups, not the public; that has been my experience so far. We shall not receive many brownie points from constituents for the time that we spend in Committee or on Second Reading. We shall be lucky to get any mention in the Scottish media for our activities this evening, although this is an important Bill covering wide aspects of discretion and the law.

I was interested in the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) on transgressions against wildlife. We have adjoining constituencies: Kincardine and Deeside joins my constituency at Glen Shee, where my daughters were ski-ing at the weekend. I cannot remember when they last went ski-ing in October. My hon. Friend and I know that one of the great difficulties in large rural constituencies

[Mr. Walker]

involves people who transgress miles away from habitation. I look forward to his moving his amendments and the debates that we shall have on them in Committee.

Although it is probably true that most offences occur in urban areas, we also have problems in rural areas, and it is time they were dealt with properly. The preamble to this Bill makes one realise that it ranges fairly widely, so there will be opportunities to table a number of amendments that should be in order——

Mr. Hood: Stop filibustering.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman should know that I table amendments to most Bills.

Mr. Hood: It sounded to me as though the hon. Gentleman was filibustering. Indeed, I have lost track of the part of the Bill that he is discussing. That is all; it just crossed my mind.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman suggested earlier that I had not been here for the debate. I listened carefully to my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside speaking about the problems of a lack of corroboration. I was merely saying that I shall welcome the chance in Committee to debate the amendments that my hon. Friend will propose to deal with that problem. That shows clearly that I have been here listening to some of the speeches.

Because others wish to make speeches longer than mine, I am happy at this stage to sit down and await the continued debate in Committee—and I can say with certainty that I will be on that Committee.

8.11 pm

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): I apologise to the House for missing the Front-Bench speeches. Unfortunately, I had to attend an important meeting about today's statement.

I am pleased to see the Under-Secretary of State in his place—the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton). I was grateful for his support some years ago when I dealt in a private Member's Bill with problems of under-age drinking.

I welcome some of the measures in the Bill; I just hope that the Minister will not lose sight of the great need for legislation to protect our young kids who are getting hooked on booze. The evidence from the good work that the Minister helped me with two or three years ago points to the fact that matters are getting worse, not better. I hope that the Minister will reassure me later that the Government will move to deal with the real problems besetting our kids and affecting the communities in which they live. There is also a great deal of evidence to show that they are moving from alcohol abuse to drug abuse. Many of our young kids are being pushed down the road towards criminality, and that is alarming. It is time this place did something about it.

Another omission from the Bill seems to be summed up by the need to improve our court proceedings for taking police evidence. Rightly, there is a great public demand for more police on our streets and in our housing estates to deter crime. I am alarmed by the amount of police time taken up unnecessarily in our courts. Police officers turn up in court and sit there all day, only to be told to go away and return another time. Those policemen are being paid overtime—money which comes from budgets—or are getting time off; either way they are off the streets where they perform a much needed function. I hope that the Government will look into that at some future date. The police want a change; the community wants the system improved; and we as politicians want to provide our communities with a better police service. We are already trying to relieve the police of civilian jobs, and now we must take them out of the courts and get them on the streets where they can deter crime.

I agreed with quite a lot of what the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) said. That will come as a surprise to him: it certainly surprises me. I agree with his remarks about youth organisations—the Boy Scouts, the Boys Brigade and the Girl Guides all do tremendous work in our rural areas and in my constituency.

Clause 17 refers to the revocation of licences. I should like to mention a constituent of mine as a way of highlighting this problem. The case has gone on for some time and has been compounded by recent events. In 1976 George Beattie, who lived in Carluke in my constituency, was convicted of murdering a young woman there. It was a dastardly crime against a woman in the prime of life. George Beattie was released from prison 13 years later on licence. A few months ago he attended an interview with a social worker where tempers became frayed and he is alleged to have kicked the social worker in the knee. I do not judge whether the allegation is true.

The dilemma posed by the case is made all the more acute because there is compelling evidence that George Beattie did not commit the murder. There was a great deal of alarm when he was first convicted because even his defence lawyers, who deserve some criticism, thought that there was not case to answer. Tragically, therefore, their preparation for his defence was less than professional. They thought that the judge would throw the case out. He did not, and George Beattie was convicted by a majority verdict of the jury—despite the fact that there was no corroborating evidence, no forensic evidence, and no confessional evidence that he was guilty. All there was was a spot of blood on a handkerchief which was thought to be the blood of the victim but was proved subsequently not to be.

George Beattie has been pulled back into prison and is serving a life sentence for a crime that he almost certainly did not commit. I accept that all the legislation in the world would not resolve the problem posed by such a case, but I raise it to increase public awareness of the problem. It is insensitive of me, perhaps, to mention the case because I know that it distresses the family of the victim of this terrible crime against a young woman, but two "Rough Justice" programmes on the incident in question have concluded that George Beattie could not have committed the crime.

As a Member of Parliament I cannot sit back and do nothing when I see what I believe to be a grave injustice —regardless of whether George kicked the social worker a few months ago. As I see it, an innocent man is in gaol. Even more disturbing is the fact that if George Beattie is innocent, as he almost certainly is, the guilty person may be walking the streets of Carluke today. I understand that the Minister was formerly a member of the Bar, but I am not a lawyer; I was a humble miner. Tragically, Scottish law does not allow George Beattie another appeal. We must look at that and I hope that in the name of common decency and justice the George Beattie case can be re-examined because regardless of legal procedures something has to be done.

Clause 20 refers to parole boards. The hon. Member for Tayside, North said that he visited Perth prison. Hon. Members do not make a practice of such visits but I visited Cornton Vale women's prison in Stirling on Friday to see a young woman who in June 1993 will have been in prison for 10 years. She was convicted of a murder that she did not commit together with her father and brother following a fracas outside their home when a knife was drawn and a man died as a consequence. Four police officers in civilian clothes were chasing her young brother after an incident earlier that night. There was a barney during which there was a tragic death. The brother of about 18 admitted that he had used a knife. As a result one of the policemen died.

The Bill mentions heeding the wishes of a judge. At the trial the judge ruled that the case could not be viewed as a police killing because when the fracas started the mother phoned the police on a 999 call which was registered, as are all such calls. Therefore, evidence was produced to show that the family thought they were being attacked by four people and had phoned the police for help. They were unaware that the four plain clothes men involved in the fracas with the family were police officers. That was a tragic incident for all concerned and certainly for the policeman who died. As a result a young man's life has been destroyed. The father and the young man's sister were convicted for what is known as act in part. The Minister will correct me if I have used the wrong phrase.

The young woman that I visited on Friday is called Margaret Smith and she is married with children. The last time she sought parole it was denied for reasons known only to those who give guidance to the parole board. Any guidance not supporting her application for parole did not come from the prison because on Friday after seeing Margaret I spoke to the prison governor, Mr. Abernethy, and to Margaret's immediate governor, Mrs. Carroll, who said that from the time that the young woman entered prison she has been a model prisoner who has never given a minute's trouble. She was described as a most trustworthy prisoner. Every member of the prison staff said, "Why is this young woman still in prison?" Her father has been given a parole date of October 1993. I visited him four years ago to hear his view of the case and found that he was the governor's trustee. Everybody thought that he was a model prisoner and he was not seen as a real criminal. He was the victim of an unfortunate circumstance which ended up in the mincing machine of our court procedures.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) made a relevant point about giving judges discretion on sentencing. In the case I am describing there was a majority verdict, but the judge had no alternative but to impose a life sentence on the father and the young woman who was caught up in the act. It is a great tragedy that so many lives have been ruined.

I am not wishy-washy on crime—far from it. Prisons are there to contain people who threaten our community, but people should not be imprisoned unless they deserve it. My hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), who is the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, has conducted much work on mental health. A civilised society should not allow mentally ill people to be imprisoned. I am sure that none of us can put our hand on our heart and say that we support that. At the other end of the scale a man was recently convicted in Lanark, a town in my constituency, for breaking into a house while wearing a ski mask, assaulting the man and woman in the house and robbing them, and hitting the man on the head with a hammer. Believe it or not, he was sentenced to three months' imprisonment. I intend to write to the Lord Advocate to seek an explanation because when I am asked how such things can happen I have to say that I do not know. How can one defend a system that sends a man to prison for three months for breaking into someone's house and assaulting him with a hammer?

Mr. Gallie: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman because I have had similar cases in my constituency. On a charge of murder a person was eventually sentenced to nine months and another received two years. People in Ayr do not understand how such sentences can be passed.

Mr. Hood: I cannot comment on that case, but in the case that I have mentioned it is beyond my comprehension how such a sentence could have been imposed. People are now sent to prison for speeding in cars, but it seems that the sheriff in Lanark thinks that three months in prison is enough for a masked person who breaks into a house and hits the occupant over the head with a hammer. We must look at how we can balance the extremes on both sides. In a democracy, the penal system must be addressed to the need to punish and to deter, but also to the need to rehabilitate.

Nobody's interest is served by Margaret Smith, whom I visited on Friday, being kept for one minute longer in prison and she should be released, as should her father. As for her brother, who was caught up in the fracas, I am told that the average term of imprisonment for those given a life sentence for murder is 10 to 12 years, so his case should be looked at seriously as well.

During my discussions on Friday, another point came to my notice—perhaps the Minister would like to answer this because I cannot. I am told—I am sure that the Minister will correct me if it is not the case—that a young woman serving a life sentence in Scotland serves, on average, two years longer than a man. Furthermore, C-category lifers are given certain privileges such as visits and permission to work outside the prison. However, a D-category woman prisoner is not allowed to work outside the prison. When I checked the privileges given to C and D-category prisoners—I hope that I am not being too technical—I found that D-category prisoners are allowed to work outside prison only if they have been given a date for their release on parole. This policy has been implemented in Cornton Vale prison where this young woman is imprisoned. However, in men's prisons, C-category lifers are working outside the prisons in preparation for their release.

If the Minister cannot pursue that point tonight, perhaps he will write to me. I am sure that his first response will be to say that it does not happen and that the judicial system administers the same punishments for men as for women but it is strange if the statistics prove that women given life sentences serve longer sentences than men. I hope that the Minister can give me some information on that.

The Bill contains a number of good measures—for example, that on children giving evidence. I am sure that that is not a party political issue. I have spoken about the need to deter through the law and the administration of the law. I meet my local police officers often, and I say this

[Mr. Hood]

for no other reason than that I firmly believe it. I am fortunate in that my chief superintendent is the best that one can get and I do not say that because he has moved in to live in my little rural village and is now my neighbour. I have good relations with the police, and I believe that we have different functions in the community. He polices the community and I represent it.

The problems created within our communities can be solved only there. There is no one solution to problems. In solving crime in the community, the police have their functions and the local authority has its functions. The community also has a function—to give assistance to the agencies within it as they seek solutions. That has always been my approach to dealing with the community. A penal system should be created, formed, managed and administered to deter, to punish and to rehabilitate. It must give security to the community by taking crime out rather than by creating crime and thereby putting people in prison.

8.34 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I welcome this long-overdue Bill, although with some reservations because it has some quite remarkable elements. The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), who, as he is not here, is presumably involved in yet another interview, said that the Bill would elicit little interest outside the House. He is wrong. The Bill is important, so important that the Government should seek, by way of Standing Order No. 91, to commit it to a Special Standing Committee, which would allow the Committee to take evidence. Among other things, the Standing Order says:

> "A special standing committee to which a bill has been committed shall have power, during a period not exceeding 28 days . . . from the committal of the bill, to send for persons, papers and records, and, for this purpose, to hold up to four morning sittings of not more than three hours each."

The Bill warrants such a Special Standing Committee and I hope that the Secretary of State and the Minister will consider that request sympathetically.

Although I was unsympathietic to what the hon. Member for Tayside, North had to say, I had a great deal of sympathy for some of the remarks made by the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Kynoch). My constituency has also suffered recently from a dismal increase in the incidence of violent crime. On this very day, in the High Court in Glasgow, a case involving the murder of a constituent has been set in motion. About 119 constituents of mine will have to give evidence during that trial, which is predicted to last three weeks.

The incidence of violent crime and street crime in my constituency will be diminished only by the presence of more police officers on the streets. I should like to see Chief Superintendent Laurence Macintyre and his fine force of men and women being assisted by the recruitment of at least 20 to 25 uniformed police officers, who should be put on to the streets of Greenock and Port Glasgow. I am convinced that, if that could be achieved, their presence would lead to a diminution in the incidence of violent crime.

I have a couple of comments to make about visiting committees. One object of the Bill is to manage, in a sensible and civilised way, the tensions that arise in our prisons. Some of the measures in part I will reduce those tensions. I was not happy with the response of the Secretary of State to my comments about the establishment of a visiting committee in Her Majesty's Prison, Greenock.

I have here a letter from Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, dated 29 September, which he sent in response to a letter from me about a recent visit that I made to Greenock prison. In my letter, I referred to the report of Her Majesty's chief inspector following his examination of Greenock prison, in which he had a number of criticisms to make of that establishment. Lord Fraser said:

> "I accept the point you make about the lack of a Visiting Committee appointed specifically to HM Prison Greenock. Ian Lang gave an undertaking in his reply to the Chief Inspector's report (copy attached) that an amendment to the Prison Rules designating Greenock as a prison in its own right, with its own Visiting Committee, will be promulgated when the current Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Bill becomes law."

I want to see a visiting committee set up in Greenock at the earliest date possible. The Minister knows, as does anyone with experience of prisons, that the members of visiting committees play a vital role in grievance procedures within such establishments. At present, two overworked members of the Barlinnie committee visit Greenock prison. I think that too great a burden has been placed upon them.

In Greenock prison there is a good relationship between staff and prisoners and it is essential that harmonious relations are maintained. That can be helped to a considerable extent by the setting up of a visiting committee at the earliest possible moment.

An indirect object of the Bill appears to be improving relations between a prison and the community within which it is located. I refer again to the letter of Lord Fraser of Carmyllie and his response to my demand that there should be a creche established in the visiting area of Greenock prison. Lord Fraser wrote:

> "Due to lack of space it is, unfortunately, not feasible to provide creche facilities in the visitors' reception area itself. However, a creche has now been opened in a room in the prisoner's visiting area, supervised by a local community on a voluntary basis."

I welcome this development by the local community in Greenock, but the prison department has much more to do at the prison, including working on relations between the prison and the local community.

The Minister and I have engaged in some correspondence over these matters, and I remind him that prisons and local communities must maintain harmonious relations. I am pleased to say that that is the case at Greenock, except for my constituents who live in Nimmo street. I note from the Minister's response that that rings a bell with him. My constituents in Nimmo street—Mr. William Marshall at No. 10 and all his neighbours—live in the shadow of the prison. They have made the reasonable request that that side of the prison's perimeter be illuminated at night. Lord Fraser refers to that in his letter but it would seem that the prison department has been a little less than efficient in this instance.

I make no criticism of Governor Gunn and his staff, who are doing an excellent job in difficult circumstances, but the lives of prisoners and perhaps more importantly, in some respects, those of the staff could be made better if the prison department were to get its collective finger out.

The Bill contains some useful and sensible measures in respect of the parole system. I speak with some experience —I think that the Minister knows this—because I used to be a member of the local review committee at Saughton. I have seen the parole system working as a member of a review committee.

I seek an assurance from the Minister that the measures in the Bill will not place additional burdens upon those hard-working people who are members of the parole board. They have a massive amount of work to do each year in carrying out their tasks and I hope that their work will not be increased by any of the measures in the Bill.

If the Minister has sufficient time—I promise that I shall not speak for too long—I hope that he will add to the comments made by the Secretary of State about clause 21 and the parole advisers. The right hon. Gentleman was a little vague about those who would be taking up this extremely important role. Surely we have a right to know who will carry out the role as specified in the clause.

The part of the Bill that I welcome most of all—this will not surprise the Minister—is set out in clauses 33 to 35. It seems that child care law reform of this sort in Scotland, England and Wales proceeds by way of a leap-frogging system. I have complained in the House in the recent past that Scots law has begun to lag behind English law in terms of certain provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1988. However, to be fair minded to those who drafted the Bill, it appears—I am not a legal expert—that clauses 33 to 35 will give much greater protection to child witnesses in Scotland than the recent legislation that has been introduced in England.

I was struck by what John Spencer, reader in common law at Cambridge university, wrote in a recent edition of *Archbold News,* issue 17. When commenting upon developments in England and Wales and those in Scotland, he finished his article by saying:

> "Meanwhile the Government, which stubbornly resisted allowing the whole of a child's evidence to be taken pre-trial in England, has just introduced a Bill for Scotland that will enable this to be done on the other side of the River Tweed. Is this a controlled experiment in comparative law, one wonders? Or another case of the right hand not knowing what the left is doing?"

Despite John Spencer's mildly sardonic comment, it is an important development. I wish to ask the Minister some questions, but before doing so I think that tribute should be paid to the members of the Scottish Law Commission, who have played an important role in these developments. We should all be grateful to Sheriff McPhail and his colleagues for their report, which largely, I think, has provided a genesis for clauses 33 to 35.

I have some reservations about certain of the details that appear in clauses 33 to 35. As I suspect that I shall be a member of the Standing Committee that examines the Bill, I shall have the opportunity of taking them up with the Minister. Clause 33(3) refers to a commissioner who will be an advocate or a solicitor. He or she will be appointed by the court to take the evidence of a child. If Lord Hope's recommendation is met, I presume that the commissioner will take the evidence in informal surroundings. Presumably those concerned will remove their wigs and gowns and everyone will sit round a table in as informal a way as is possible.

Clause 33(3) provides:

> "An accused shall not, except by leave of the commissioner, be present in the room where such proceedings are taking place but shall be entitled by such means as seem suitable to the commissioner to watch and hear the proceedings."

The words

> "except by leave of the commissioner"

should be deleted. A child giving evidence should not have to be in the same room as the accused, although I accept that the accused has every right, under common justice, to observe the proceedings.

If the accused were to be physically present, that would make nonsense of clause 34, which authorises the use of a screen. The Law Commission, in the form of Michael Clancy's brief, has certain reservations about the use of screens. Will the Minister confirm that it will be a one-way screen, so that the accused will be able to see the child, but that the victim will not have a view of his or her alleged attacker?

That is particularly important given the architectural style of some modern sheriff courts, such as that in Glasgow, where a child might have to give evidence within 10 ft of the accused. The child must be given maximum protection, while at the same time ensuring that the interests of the accused are safeguarded.

I have a number of reservations about clauses 33 to 35, but they signal a remarkable transformation in child care law reform in cases of sexual or violent child abuse or those involving appalling neglect. They will give children the protection that they so rightly deserve.

In some circumstances the accused may be the father or the older brother or sister. I want to see added to the Bill —or to a Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill—a measure allowing for the removal of the accused from the family home where sexual or physical abuse is involved. At present, not only the victim but his or her brothers and sisters may be removed by social workers. It would be better if the person accused of appalling offences should have to leave instead. I crave the indulgence of the Chair, in that I may be technically out of order in seeking to introduce such an amendment.

The Bill offers a significant development in child care law, and for that reason only I give it a sincere welcome.

8.54 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Following the Conservatives' comprehensive defeat in Scotland in the general election, they promised a so-called stocktaking exercise in a bid to devise new ways of improving Scotland's future government. Six months later, the Government have produced nothing new—only a rehash of old ideas, including the concept of a separate legal system.

It is dishonest to argue that Scotland has a separate legal system when it is controlled by a United Kingdom Parliament comprising only 72 Members of Parliament representing Scottish constituencies and 579 outwith Scotland. If it is argued that Scotland should have different laws, a different legal system, and different methods for dealing with crime, it should also have its own legislature.

The Bill should have been introduced in a Scottish Parliament established after the general election in which 75 per cent. of Scottish voters asked for one. It reflects badly on the Government that the House is tonight debating such a Bill, because it is not the business of a United Kingdom House of Commons to legislate for Scotland's separate legal system. That should be done by a Scottish Parliament, meeting in Edinburgh.

The Secretary of State for Scotland said that the Bill was based on the Kincraig report and referred to its specialised nature. However, as the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) said, there is

[Mr. John McAllion]

a wider public interest in a debate that concerns the treatment of offenders and the operation of the criminal justice system in Scottish society.

Although the Bill appears wide-ranging at first glance —covering as it does young offenders, penalties for prison offenders, criminal investigations, court proceedings and the nature of evidence—its most striking and disappointing feature is the narrowness of its scope. Even the Secretary of State mentioned that.

The Bill is introduced at a time when Scotland's criminal justice system has never been held in lower esteem or been in greater need of wide-ranging reform. Most right hon. and hon. Members have a horror story to tell about the spread of disorder through Scottish society, which has become badly divided by the unemployment, poverty and social injustice that are the fruits of 14 years of Tory government. We also have our horror stories to tell about the way in which the Scottish criminal justice system is failing to deal with the problems created by those social divisions.

I feel that we should ask whether the Bill is an adequate reaction to the Government's current position in Scotland. A centre-page spread in today's Scottish *Daily Record* gives details of 24 hours of crime in Scotland. It refers to a

"wave of crime now sweeping the country",

and to "open season" having been declared on

"innocent people who just want to get on with their lives".

It lists a series of offences—73 assaults, 187 house break-ins and 248 thefts from cars—that took place in Scotland in just 24 hours.

Is the Government's response adequate, given the crime wave that has hit Scotland in recent years? Rather than tinkering with the system, the Government should present a Bill to tackle the crime wave that has left so many ordinary Scots living in fear following the many years for which the Minister has been responsible for law and order in their country. The Minister nods: I am sure that he feels deeply embarrassed about his Government's failure to tackle those problems.

I should add that the Scottish *Daily Record* is not alone in complaining about the current position. I have letters from the Tayside police drawing attention to the increase in crime and lawlessness and expressing special concern about offences committed by those under 16.

It is all very well for the Government to present a Bill dealing with young offenders. That means people in the 16 to 21 age group. Many serious offences are now being committed in Scotland by people below the age of 16, who do not come within the scope of the Bill. That, surely, is a glaring gap in the Government's approach. The police refer to "anti-social behaviour" on the part of under-16s, but "anti-social behaviour" is often serious criminal behaviour. I refer to assaults on individuals, fire-raising, housebreaking, theft and even attacks on policemen.

Surely it is not an adequate response simply to ignore those offences, but at present that is what the Scottish criminal system does. Currently offenders under 16 are dealt with by the children's panels—which have no powers to send them away to secure accommodation—putting them on remand, in young offenders' institutions or in prisons. They no longer even have the option of sending such offenders to list D schools: because of the Government's public expenditure cuts, list D schools have been closed across Scotland. Local authorities now cannot afford to send children away to secure accommodation.

Nowadays, offenders under 16 are immediately returned to the community. Police representatives tell Members of Parliament that many youngsters regard themselves as flameproof—untouchable by the law and order system. The police have shown me long lists of offences committed by 14 and 15-year-olds, who have been charged again and again, taken before a children's panel, warned and put straight back into the community. They have been sent to children's homes which are not secure accommodation and cannot restrain them; then they are back on the streets, committing the same crimes again, utterly untouched by the system of law and order. What are the Government doing about that? Absolutely nothing.

The Bill could have tackled the problem. The Government could have asked, "What shall we do with this group of offenders in Scottish society?" But the Government have decided to do absolutely nothing—and that is a black disgrace, both to the Minister and to the Secretary of State. They claim to care about law and order, and about the wave of crime that is sweeping Scotland. In reality, however, they will not lift a finger, because to lift a finger would be to incur public expenditure.

In the past week, we have learnt that the Government have no energy policy and no economic policy. Tonight, we have learnt that they have no policy to tackle law and order on the streets of Scotland. That is a glaring omission from the Bill. The remainder of its contents may be worthy in their own way, but until the Government begin to tackle the real problems of law and order in Scottish society they will remain condemned by the people who are suffering from those problems, and who receive no assistance whatever from the Government.

9.3 pm

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): It is a privilege for me to address the House from the Front Bench.

First, let me thank the Secretary of State for the kind remarks that he made at the beginning of the debate. It is typical of him to make such kind personal remarks. In the same vein, I thank the Minister, who has already approached me informally to give me the opportunity to receive briefings on this technical Bill: I appreciate that very much. Having said that, however, let me add that there are deep political divisions between us, and I expect them to come to the fore during our debate on the Bill.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) said that this was not a lawyer's Bill. I am thankful for that, as I am not a lawyer but a mere schoolteacher, and the prospect of dealing with a highly technical legal Bill fills me with trepidation. The hon. and learned Gentleman added, however, that there was a public interest in the Bill, and I agree with that. The public interest aspect is paramount.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Davidson) on his witty maiden speech. He grabbed the attention of everyone, particularly when he mentioned Govan Rangers. By doing so he aroused passionate feelings among some Back Benchers. My hon. Friend said that he was a big fish in a small pond there, but I am sure that here he will use the same skills as he used in Strathclyde regional council and that he will show the same sensitivity towards education and other issues as he did in Strathclyde. *[Laughter.]* I do not know what hon. Members are laughing at.

This is a Government of many shades. If they were to act with the same alacrity on prison reform as they acted last week when they took their instant and unilateral decision to condemn 30,000 miners and tens of thousands of others in related industries to the dole queue, the criminal justice system in Scotland would be in a much healthier state. Sadly, however, the Government seem to adopt only negative and destructive policies at top speed. Those that demand careful consideration and attention are left on the back burner. That certainly applies to the Bill, the main part of which relates to the implementation of the Kincraig committee's report on parole and related issues. I shall concentrate on the part I aspect. I welcome the part II aspect, as other hon. Members have done tonight, but part I of the Bill on parole is the main part.

I pay tribute to Lord Kincraig and his committee for the sensitive and constructive way in which they approached their remit. If only the Government had adopted the same approach. The committee was established in December 1987 and published its report in March 1989. To date, no debate has taken place on the report. In its 1991 annual report the Parole Board for Scotland said that it was extremely disappointed that Lord Kincraig's proposals had failed to gain a place in the Government's legislative programme for 1991-92 and that delays in implementing the changes to the system in Scotland had led in their opinion

> "to uncertainties and loss of faith among prisoners and staff."

Meanwhile, Scotland is becoming more and more out of line with what is happening in England and Wales. We are creating anomalies between the English and the Scottish jurisdictions.

The new English provision came into effect on 1 October 1992. We are still waiting for ours. Kincraig points to this in paragraph 2.32 where it says that it is clear that since 1973 the parole systems north and south have diverged, reflected in the current annual success rates for parole applications. As my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) said earlier, 57·3 per cent. of eligible prisoners in England and Wales were granted parole, while the equivalent figure for Scotland was 28·4 per cent. The Kincraig committee said that there was no explanation as to why this should be so, given that the British crime survey had shown that there are no great differences in the rates or types of crime between the two jurisdictions.

I should like to look at the Bill in its true context—first, in the specific context of Scotland and the fact that the Bill has emerged from a period in the 1980s of unprecedented upheaval in the Scottish prison system. The mid-1980s saw a series of prison demonstrations and protests, hostage-taking incidents, dirty protests, the destruction of prison property, food protests and overcrowding in particular wings of individual prisons. Notwithstanding last year's Scottish Office proposals for reforming the system in documents such as "Opportunity and Responsibility", it is arguable that the situation in some Scottish prisons remains extremely volatile. How far the proposals in the Bill will affect that is debatable, particularly if the prison population begins to rise again, as the latest figures appear to suggest.

According to an answer to a parliamentary question, the average daily prison population on 3 July 1992 had climbed to 5,294. It is important to note that Scotland's prison population has been consistently higher, in terms of rate of detention per 100,000 of the country's population, compared with the vast majority of other Council of Europe countries. Taken as a whole, the United Kingdom was first in the table, well ahead of countries such as Greece, Portugal, Spain, France and Denmark. Council of Europe figures for 1987 show that Scotland was first in a league table of 17 countries, with 767·7 per 100,000 people, compared with 350·7 for the United Kingdom. Even allowing for the problems of definition between different states, in a comparative sense Scotland's sentencing policies in the 1980s appeared to be problematic.

The second dimension of the Bill is the Government's attempts to deal with the prison crisis in the United Kingdom in general. The process began with the publication in July 1988 of the Green Paper, "Punishment, Custody and Community", and culminated in the implementation of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 in England and Wales in October 1992. A number of the Scottish Bill's provisions follow on from those already implemented in England and Wales and are linked to an attempt to provide a twin-track approach to sentencing. That approach attempts to reduce the use of custody for less serious offenders while promoting longer sentences for serious crimes. It is important to note, however, that the trend towards longer sentences had been apparent before the implementation of the Bill. The number of prisoners, for example, serving life under section 205 increased from 269 in 1989 to 386 in 1990, while the figures for those serving three years or more increased from 1,176 to 1,211.

There will be little opposition to the general principle of the Bill, but Labour Members regret that the opportunity to address the wider issues of prison legislation and prisoners' rights has not been seized. We are mindful that the Prisons (Scotland) Act 1989 consolidates earlier legislation, but what is needed is a new prisons Act rather than the present piecemeal arrangements for prison legislation.

Although the Bill has a narrow remit from Kincraig's recommendations on parole, we cannot escape the fact that it has wider implications, the first of which is resources. The foreword to the Bill says that its net financial effect will be broadly neutral. That is a stab in the dark. The Government assume that because an increased number of prisoners will be included in the new parole arrangements the prison population will be lower and therefore that savings can be made. But for many offenders, the effective length of sentence will increase as a result of parole considerations from about one third to about half of their sentence. Offenders will now be liable to serve the full term of their sentence if reconvicted for an offence committed before the expiry of that full term. That could lead to a substantial increase in the prison population. The sentencers—the judges and sheriffs—are therefore the key to the impact that the Bill will have in practice. It is essential that the sentencers realise the meaning of many of the sentences that they impose and that a significant number of sentences will become much longer than they are at present.

The danger of implementation of the Bill is that it will be followed by a substantial increase in the prison population. So much is still left to the discretion of the sentencers that there is nothing to stop sheriffs and judges

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from scaling up sentences from their present level. That was mentioned by my noble Friend Lord Macaulay of Bragar in the other place.

Clause 16 is the major negative of the Bill. It deals with prisoners who are released on licence who may reoffend. Its inclusion could have the opposite effect of what the Government intended by increasing the prison population. If a prisoner is committed for a minor offence, on release he is tried not only for the minor offence but in addition has to serve the remainder of the offence that he or she was originally serving. For a minor offence, that person could be referred to a higher court, a sheriff court or even the High Court.

It should be borne in mind that in Scotland 99·9 per cent. of offences can be punished by imprisonment. Let us take an example. An offender who is serving a long prison sentence is out on licence and commits a breach of the peace. Normally, there would be a £30 fine, say, in a district court, but because he is out on licence he could be referred by the magistrate to the sheriff court or to the High Court. That could result in him going back to prison for four or five years or even longer as a result of that minor offence. The Bill presently allows that possibility. That would most certainly have the consequence of increasing the prison population.

We must also remember the power given to the local police. As hon. Members have said, it is not difficult for the police to charge an individual with a minor offence, but for a prisoner out on licence it could have immense consequences because of the court's discretion as a result of the Bill. It is a matter of public interest, certainly, but should the consequences be so dramatic for minor offences? Should not the Government look again at clause 16 and, instead of relating it to all offences, relate it only to minor offences? If clause 16 related to minor offences, the court could look at them in isolation.

Resources and local authorities have also been mentioned. Local authorities have to supervise prisoners who are out on licence—not only those who are released at the half-way stage but those who are eligible for parole at the half-way stage and automatically released at the two-thirds stage. They will be licensed but not unconditionally. Previously, people volunteered for parole. They got something back; there was a quid pro quo. Now long-term offenders who are released at the two-thirds stage will have no quid pro quo and there will be enormous social work implications with people on licence who are reluctant. This will result in major changes for social workers.

What is the Government's estimate of the number of people who are recalled for further offences? Have the Government made any projections on that matter? We understand that the Government's intention is to abolish the statutory after care for 16 to 20-year-olds. Presently, for 16 to 18-month sentences, that care lasts six months. For those with sentences longer than 18 months it lasts for 12 months. On 31 December 1991, Strathclyde regional council had 299 after care cases. As a rule of thumb, we can double that for Scotland and thereby find that we have fewer than 600 after care cases. That will not be much of a saving as there will be more long-term prisoners who are released on licence. There will be greater pressure on local authority budgets which, in the next week or two, will be under enormous pressure.

Still on the subject of finance, many social work departments would concede that their ability to provide adequate supervision and adequate after care is limited. To add the parole requirements contained in the Bill without providing funds for increased staffing levels would make a mockery of implementation. Without a commitment to introducing and financing community care provision, it is unlikely that offenders will be high on the political agenda, especially given that offenders are not a designated group under the community care provisions.

What is the present state of public expenditure and what are its implications for individuals recently released from prison? Last week, I received a letter from a constituent, a woman who was helping a teenager who had just come out of prison. The teenager applied to the DSS for a clothing grant but was refused. The boy in question had just finished a nine-month sentence for robbery. My constituent said:

> "This is not an isolated case, indeed according to the official we spoke with, most prisoners are now considered low priority."

The young boy got nothing extra with his grant. My constituent pointed out that

> "This does nothing to stop the reoffending process which we see so often in our community."

She continued that

> "the employment situation in this particular area is very low and jobs for ex-offenders practically non-existent."

Like most offenders, that boy risks turning to crime in order to clothe himself. My constituent has asked me to look at that case carefully and I will do that. However, I remind the Minister of the Government's policies over the past 13 years. They have increased deprivation in our communities. It is undeniable that there is a direct link between levels of deprivation and levels of imprisonment. Opposition Members see that day in and day out.

Another aspect that the Bill does not deal with is the particular experiences of women in prison. Clause 14 relates to "Supervised release orders." That provision is intended "to protect the public." That is a dominant criterion for the utilisation of supervised release orders. However, where does that leave women in prison? The overwhelming majority of women are not dangerous and the public do not need protection from them. A whole range of literature shows that women prisoners are different in terms of their crimes and experiences and perhaps need a different response, particularly in the establishment of alternatives to custody.

Sadly, the question of alternatives to custody is not considered in the Bill. Again, we are behind England and Wales where one of the central debates in criminal justice legislation has been alternatives to custody. For example, the Criminal Justice Act 1991 introduced radical alternatives and improvements and restrictions in sentences. One restriction is for sentencers to consider the nature of the offence before them. That does not happen in Scotland. Someone in Scotland might still go to prison for a substantial period for stealing a bottle of whisky because the fact that that person has stolen on a number of occasions in the past is taken into account. The criminal justice system in England has removed that and I suggest that the Minister should consider that aspect in relation to Scotland.

Clause 24 allows governors to take remission from a remand prisoner

> "conditionally on his eventually becoming such a prisoner".

That is very unfair and is inconsistent. Remission may be taken off even before a sentence is begun. The Bill still allows that to happen and the Minister should also consider that point.

Clause 20(4)(c) and clause 20(5) are also matters of concern. They allow the Secretary of State to give direction to the parole board about what it should take into account when considering cases and how it should discharge its functions. It appears—and this is all I would say at the moment—that that provides an avenue for the possibility of the exercise of political influence over the board such as the overnight imposition of a new parole policy undertaken by the then Secretary of State, Mr. George Younger, in 1984. That imposition has been roundly condemned and was considered to be a contributory factor to the prison riots in the 1980s. It is very important that the Minister considers clause 20 again.

Clause 20 gives cause for concern if one is suspicious about such matters. However, should we be suspicious about the Government today when they flag up perhaps a few days in advance all the mistakes that they are going to make anyway? However, the Minister should reflect on the implications of clause 20.

In respect of clause 20(4), the Law Society notes with concern that children who are convicted under section 206 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 are excluded from the present practice of granting remission to prisoners serving a determinate sentence. It is unjust for a person under the age of 16 to be denied remission for any crime attracting a custodial sentence purely on the basis of age.

That unfairness was highlighted in a recent High Court trial in Glasgow which concluded in identical sentences of custody for adults and a 15-year-old juvenile. The adults were subsequently released on remission, but the juvenile was required to serve the sentence in full. The Government should accept that if automatic remission is available it should also apply to juveniles. Presently the position of juveniles is anomalous.

As hon. Members have said, clause 1 relates to life sentence prisoners. The Bill distinguishes between mandatory and discretionary life sentences. That procedure has been the subject of widespread criticism because of its secrecy, discretionary nature and the detrimental effect that such mandatory sentences have on prisoners and their families. Indeed, the Kincraig committee made several criticisms of the current practices. The committee was drawn to the argument that life should be the maximum sentence, rather than the mandatory penalty for murder. That argument was also supported in amendments tabled by their Lordships in another place and by the Law Lords in their House of Lords Select Committee report on murder and life imprisonment. Their recommendations would have brought release procedures for lifers into line with several European Court judgments. The Government opposed the amendments, despite being defeated by a wide margin in the House of Lords. I ask the Minister to think again about those matters.

What about the merits of this Bill? I would describe it as a hesitant step forward. The main question that we should address is whether the Scottish criminal justice system imprisons too many people unnecessarily and for too long. On the evidence in the league tables, I suggest that, compared with the rest of Europe, we do indeed imprison too many people unnecessarily and for too long.

The wider implications and their impact on the Bill are even more important. Rather than reducing the prison population, the arrangements set down in the Bill could increase it. I have already mentioned the resources resulting from the implications of the Bill. They are extremely important. The impact of the Bill will not be neutral, so extra money is needed. The Government cannot improve the criminal justice system in Scotland without providing extra money. If the Government care about the people in prison, they must examine those resources. Education is an example which is dear to my heart. The estimates for teachers' salaries were £1·02 million for 1990-91 and £1·03 million for 1991-92. We do not yet have a proper, structured education system in the prisons. Even today, we do not have a proper screening process for all prisoners for standards of literacy and numeracy. The Government should attempt to tackle that particular issue if the necessary rehabilitative effect is to work.

In order to minimise recidivism, links with families are important. We know that abrupt separation between arrest and remand has consequences for relationships and can have a significant effect on the incomes of families. What have the Government to offer in this respect, particularly for poor and disadvantaged families? Extra home leave has been provided in a number of cases, but it results in extra pressure on the family budget, which is inadequate in the first place. The Government have not dealt with the additional cost of a five-day home visit for some prisoners. So they have put more rather than less pressure on the prisoner and his or her family. I should like the Government to examine the philosophy of home leave and perhaps extend it to limited custody, under which a prisoners' obligations to his family are maintained and he is not allowed to duck those obligations.

The Government and the Scottish Office have so far failed to offer any predictions or projections about the future prison population. Indeed, I asked the House of Commons Library to examine that issue for me. It wrote back to say that the Scottish Office does not publish projections of prison populations. Again, that is out of line with England and Wales and the Government should pay attention to that. Previous comments about sentencers scaling up sentences and about the degree of recidivism mean that substantial increases in the prison population are likely to result. Given the large number of people who go through the prison system, putting us at the top of the European league, it could be argued that projections of increased prison populations are even more applicable given the predilections of sentencers for sending people to prison.

In the present law and order climate, it is highly debatable that the position of the reformers on crime and punishment will be adopted. If that is the case, the Bill will fail to alleviate the crisis inside prisons and outside in the wider criminal justice system. That could have detrimental and perhaps dire consequences for both prisoners and prison staff as well as for society.

Whilst Opposition Members welcome the introduction of the Bill and consequently will not vote against it, we shall, however, examine it in detail to discover whether the

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Government's rhetoric stands up to examination. For our part we shall ensure that our deliberations contribute towards improving the criminal justice system in Scotland.

9.29 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Davidson) on his speech. It was a well delivered, excellent speech, showing good humour. He made a patriotic reference to the many attributes of his constituency, for which I warmly congratulate him. His experience of education will be of benefit to the House. I think that Coplaw street, which I know well from having attended the drill hall, is in his constituency. The standards of Scottish piping were extremely high. I wish the hon. Member well and look forward to his future contributions in the House. His reference to the formidable intellect of his predecessor, Bruce Millan, will be appreciated by those who well remember having to spar with him across the Gangways.

The hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall), who made his first speech from the Opposition Front Bench, mentioned many interesting and important matters. I can reassure him on one. The Bill rectifies the anomaly on remission for children, which he rightly pointed out, and it gives children and adults the same early release entitlements.

Many important issues have been raised. The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) mentioned prisoners' rights, prison rules and the role of social workers. I hope to go into those matters in detail. The hon. Member for Dumbarton mentioned the difference between Scotland and England, and I shall go into the figures. The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) supported early release, which I welcome, and the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) mentioned children's evidence, which we regard as extremely important. My hon. Friends the Members for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) referred to the extremely important matter of public protection, which will remain uppermost in our minds.

Virtually every Member supported the statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that he wished to reverse the policy of the other place in trying to reverse the decision on war crimes through the back door, and I shall return to that.

To set the subject in perspective, I suggest that we deliberately developed an important theme during the last Parliament—the decision to open up the prison system to public scrutiny and to introduce what I would describe as glasnost to a world which literally operated behind closed doors, a world which was secretive when I first became a Minister, and which was the subject of much rumour and speculation. That policy was put into effect by the then director, Peter McKinlay, and the press and public were invited into prisons to see for themselves the truth behind the rumours and speculation. Greater openness is now a regular feature of our prison life and of the way in which prisons are run. Prisons have been demystified, and that is a big change. It has become normal practice to publicise the facilities which prisons offer, to allow inmates to be interviewed and to promote full discussion of the aims and objectives of the Scottish prison service.

We have made a survey of the views of prisoners. One issue that came out of the survey was the need for excellent visiting facilities and for improvements to them. That was on the top of their list; that was useful to know because we can direct our energies and attention towards those aspects.

The move to openness, which I strongly supported, has been of great benefit to prisoners and their families. It has also benefited the staff, who have become accustomed to a culture of openness and accountability. They are being trained to regard prisoners as responsible individuals who, within the confines of their sentence and the restrictions that it imposes, can be encouraged to take responsible decisions for themselves. The provisions of part I of the Bill must be seen against that background, and that policy is steadily being taken forward in the Bill.

For prisoners serving longer terms of imprisonment the parole decision is of fundamental importance. The Bill will lead to a fairer, more consistent and more open parole system, in which prisoners will know the factors that count and how their cases will be assessed. The new scheme will provide a better fit with other key initiatives in the prison service, such as sentence planning. In that connection, we favour open reporting—the hon. Member for Monklands, West touched upon that.

The Kincraig committee recommended that prisoners should be able to see reports on them which formed the basis for consideration of the outcome of their cases with the parole board. Although there is no statutory provision to that effect, we intend that there should eventually be full disclosure. But the process of moving from a closed to an open system must be carefully managed. There will need to be adequate safeguards for information in case disclosure damages a third party or a prisoner personally. Those issues are now being looked at carefully and I am glad to report to the House that open reporting by prison service staff is now being piloted at Perth prison. That pilot scheme is being evaluated by the central research unit of the Scottish Office and the findings of the evaluation will pave the way for the introduction of open reporting in other establishments.

Prison staff are not the only contributors to parole dossiers. Open reporting by other professional groups, such as social workers and psychiatrists, is a more sensitive area and in the next few months we plan to go into the issues more thoroughly to achieve more openness for the other parties.

I also accept that prisoners should be given reasons for decisions on parole. The criteria for parole are to be set out in policy directions given under the provisions in clause 20(5), which makes protection of the public the central consideration. In future, reasons for parole decisions will be given to prisoners in terms of those criteria. It will be for the parole board to consider how the reasons should be communicated. The ideal solution would be to communicate the decision by letter to prisoners, but it would take careful planning and management to ensure that letters are sensitively worded and properly dispatched.

An increase in permanent staff allocated to service the board will be required and will have to be considered against other priorities. Again, statutory provision is not needed.

In a thoroughly prepared and interesting speech, the hon. Member for Monklands, West mentioned fine defaulters. I am glad to say that it is not correct that 40 per cent. of the prison population are fine defaulters. Forty per cent. of the receptions and only 5 per cent. of the average daily population are fine defaulters. However, I accept the thrust of the hon. Gentleman's remarks. Indeed, the Bill's purpose is to introduce tougher measures for long-sentence prisoners who are a danger to the community, and more generosity and leniency for minor offenders.

Mr. Tom Clarke: I do not seek to score a point, but during the debate we have been looking for clarification. What is the difference between 40 per cent. of prisoners regarded as "reception" and the reduction to 5 per cent.? What happens to those people in between?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: That was puzzling to me and I made inquiries on that point. Many receptions have their fines paid quickly by relatives, which clogs up the whole prison system with extra administration. I accept the hon. Gentleman's point but I am glad to assure him that we are taking measures. For example, we now have a pilot scheme of supervised attendance orders in place of imprisonment for defaulters. We have also engaged in the deduction of fines from benefit, along the lines of deductions for electricity and gas. Both measures are alternatives to imprisonment for fine default.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about the duration of post-release supervision. The Bill does not require supervision for the whole period of release on licence. Supervision will normally be fairly intense shortly after release, but as the prisoner settles down within the community the need for contact with his supervising officer should diminish. Within a year or two following release, contact with the supervising officer may not be necessary more often than once every few months and may even become wholly unnecessary. At that point, the supervision condition in the former prisoner's licence may be cancelled.

Dr. Godman: Who will decide whether the supervision is to continue—the social worker/probation officer?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall make inquiries and write to the hon. Gentleman.

I believe that the hon. Gentleman also asked about the training of parole advisers, and who they would be. They will be volunteers and will no doubt be well qualified to carry out their function. Parole advisers will need to be trained to carry out their duties, but it is not intended that they should act as prisoners' representatives. Prisoners should make their representations in their own words to the parole board.

Parole advisers will need to understand the requirements and procedures in order to explain them to prisoners and help them to make representations if the prisoners want that help. Members of the parole board and staff of the Scottish Office Home and Health Department will provide the necessary briefing and training for parole advisers. If a prisoner wants legal advice, he or she should get it from a lawyer; it is not intended that parole advisers should take over such work.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): Will the parole board have—as at present—information about a prisoner that may not necessarily involve convictions? Such information may relate to suspicions of crimes which may have been committed but of which the prisoner has not been convicted in court.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have witnessed the parole board in action and I am not aware of activities along those lines. I shall have to make inquiries and write to the hon. Gentleman to inform him fully on that.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West spoke of prison rules and grievance procedures—matters which we shall be taking forward. There is a small working group on grievance procedures; its report and recommendations were published and given wide circulation. We plan to begin to introduce new procedures in 1993 following consultation. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that as soon as we are clear on every detail of the revised rules we shall lose no time in laying the provisions before the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) raised the issue of corroboration to be used to enable the prosecution to succeed in cases involving the stealing of birds' eggs. The requirement for corroboration may mean that the evidence of a single witness corroborated by evidence of another type may be sufficient to enable a successful prosecution. The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East said that we should be careful in changing the law on corroboration because what is at stake is not the admissibility but the sufficiency of the evidence.

As for the parole board being used as a court, the European Court of Human Rights has ruled that where detention is justified purely on grounds of public risk such grounds must be determined by a body constituted as a court: that means the holding of hearings, legal representation for the parties and the disclosure of documents. The rules that may be made under clause 20 of the Bill will provide for those aspects. The rules will be laid before the House in the form of a statutory instrument.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East spoke of children detained without limit of time. I wish to dispel one or two misunderstandings that have arisen in the past. The sentence passed when a child is detained without limit of time does not mean detention without the possibility of release but is equivalent to the mandatory life sentence. Anyone so sentenced can be released at any time by the Secretary of State after consultation with the judiciary, provided he has a positive recommendation from the parole board.

In an effort to give residential establishments greater flexibility in managing young people, we have introduced a scheme whereby those young people may be taken on escorted outings at regular intervals for sporting and other leisure activities. In the last Parliament, I sometimes had the responsibility of deciding whether prisoners should be released for educational courses. Uppermost in my consideration was the protection of the public and if I had any doubts about that I said no. Although none of the cases with which I was involved came before the House, they did involve a great deal of care and trouble. I have no doubt that the same will apply in future.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ayr is anxious that we should have a vigorous law and order policy and that we should not be unnecessarily lenient. I think that I can reassure him. We take parties of constituents around the Houses of Parliament; we come across a marble statue in the other place of Queen Victoria flanked by celestial

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supporters representing justice and mercy. I believe that a great nation should be capable of each quality, and it is vital that we should know when to apply each one.

Although the Bill promotes greater fairness and consistency, it will also strengthen the deterrent effect of long sentences. Offenders sentenced to four or more years will have to wait until they have served at least half their sentence before being considered for parole, instead of one third as at present. So the Bill restores the meaning to the full duration of a long sentence by ensuring that release, when it comes, will be on licence, with a liability to recall for breach of licence. It also makes all released prisoners subject to recall by order of the court should they commit a further offence punishable by imprisonment during the outstanding part of the sentence.

Mr. McFall: Can the Minister confirm that such release will have implications for social work and that the financial effects of the Bill will, therefore, not be neutral in that respect? Will he undertake to look at the implications for local authorities and social work departments?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Yes, of course it will have such implications, but the hon. Gentleman correctly said that we cannot exactly estimate what they will be, for the simple reason that three factors are difficult to assess exactly: the number of supervised release orders that will be made by the courts, the duration of supervision that will be specified and the average duration and intensity of that supervision. Taking all the factors into account, however, we estimate that the costs will probably be somewhat less than £1 million. On the other hand, it should be borne in mind that the release of short-term prisoners at half sentence rather than two thirds will tend to reduce average daily prison populations and hence marginal costs. On the whole, we expect the increase in costs and the savings attributable to part I of the Bill to be roughly in balance. We shall have to keep a careful eye on this issue and provide the necessary resources—the hon. Gentleman's point was well made.

The hon. Member for Dumbarton also drew comparisons with the rate of parole in England. For instance, he suggested that the 1984 policy was to blame for the fact that fewer Scots prisoners, relatively speaking, were recommended for parole than prisoners in England and Wales. But there is another reason—in England and Wales, from June 1984 until recently, the minimum period qualifying for parole was six months, while in Scotland it was and remains 12. Also, in England and Wales, local review committees have operated for some time under a presumption in favour of parole for all those sentenced to less than two years. The parole rate for this category in England and Wales has been between 75 and 80 per cent. That is part of the reason for the significant difference in the two jurisdictions.

Another significant fact is that the recall rates north and south of the border are different. In England and Wales a far greater number have had to be recalled to custody for breach of licence. In 1991, according to the respective parole board reports, there were 964 recalls of determinate sentence prisoners in England and Wales and only 17 in Scotland.

I suggest that as of 1 October a new system will have been implemented in England and Wales under the Criminal Justice Act 1991, so when we are in a position to compare like with like we can make good progress.

In the other place, Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen complained that we had considered the Bill at too short notice. There is much to be said for making haste slowly. Two years have elapsed between the publication of the Government's response to Kincraig and the introduction of the Bill in May. The Carlisle report for England and Wales was published about five months earlier, but there was also in prospect a far-reaching criminal justice Bill and it is appropriate to have a Bill to deal thoroughly and in depth with these matters.

The policy announced in 1984 by the Secretary of State still stands, but we are committed to ending that policy in so far as it applies to determinate prisoners as soon as the statutory criteria for public risk are in place. We instigated the Kincraig report to measure the effectiveness of that policy in the light of experience and consequently have decided on this course.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North and the hon. Member for Monklands, West spoke about the important issue of compassionate early release. The people primarily in mind are those who may be dying and have been imprisoned for committing serious crimes. If they are no longer a threat to anyone, the issue of their release should command some consideration. The Bill will benefit the small group of prisoners whose immediate release is justified on, for example, grounds of health. It will be a necessary condition that the person concerned should not pose a threat to the public and the advice of the parole board will be obtained.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North spoke about discretionary life prisoners. Hon. Members have welcomed the introduction of new offences other than murder. Clause 2 expressly recognises that where the court passes a sentence of life imprisonment for crimes such as culpable homicide, attempted murder, rape or wilful fire-raising, it may have two purposes in mind—to deter or to protect the public, or both. The European Court of Human Rights has determined that the matter of detention on grounds of public risk requires periodic review by a body which has the constitution and functions of a court. Clause 2 complies with that judgment by providing that, after a period specified by the sentencing court has elapsed, the life prisoner will have the right to have his or her case reviewed every two years by the parole board. We intend to make rules to provide for the parole board to take on the character of a court in order to conduct these reviews with appropriate legal representation.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: It may be difficult for the Minister to answer within the confines of the debate, but has he been able to form a view about what I said earlier —clause 6(2) appears to contain an infelicitous, indeed inept, reference to the contents of section 206 of the 1975 Act?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The point was technical, but I agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman that perusal of the terms of section 206 might lead one to suppose that only a determinate sentence is possible. There is one case in which, without limit of time, a sentence was passed under section 206 as a maximum not a mandatory sentence, and that was upheld on appeal. Clause 6(1) makes provision for such a case by applying the provisions of part I of the Bill as they apply to adults. Should such a sentence ever again be imposed, it is most probable that the judge will order that the relevant provisions in clause 2 are to apply—in other words, that the child should be treated in the same way as a discretionary life prisoner.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have many questions to answer but I shall give way to my hon. and learned Friend.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Does my hon. Friend not think it strange that, for whatever reason, a life sentence is up for review every two years? Therefore, the sentence may be only two years, whereas a mandatory sentence has to be served for at least part of the pronounced sentence. Is it not rather odd that the longest sentence—the life sentence —should be the one that can be shortened the most, whereas the statutory sentence cannot be shortened more than by two thirds? Should not my hon. Friend look at the fatuosity of a life sentence that says, "We shall send you to prison but it might be for a week or it might be for ever"?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The duration of licence is potentially until the end of the full sentence. My hon. and learned Friend has defended those who have been in prison for life and who are now out in the community. When and whether they should ever be allowed to return to the community depends first and foremost on the protection of the public.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow mentioned children's evidence. Evidence can be taken in three ways, of which the first is by live television link, as authorised by the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990—the hon. Gentleman and I both participated in the Committee examining that Bill. Evidence can also be taken on commission and recorded for video transmission, as authorised by clause 33, and taken with the accused shielded from the view of the child, as authorised by clause 34. In each of these cases, in the interests of justice and fairness, the evidence will be subject to cross-examination on behalf of the accused person, who will continue to be able to see and hear the evidence being given. Like the hon. Gentleman, I pay tribute to the Scottish Law Commission report in this connection.

This brings me to the issue of evidence by live television link in relation to war crimes—a subject raised by several hon. Members. In opening the debate, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made clear our intentions in relation to clause 32 and, in particular, subsection (5), which was inserted in the other place. The provisions of clause 32 can be invoked either by the prosecution or by the defence. Briefly, they enable either party to apply to the court in any solemn proceedings for the issuing of a letter of request to a court or other authority in a country outside the United Kingdom in which resides a witness whose evidence is relevant to the case.

The letter of request would seek assistance in facilitating the giving of evidence by the witness through a live television link. The application for a letter of request is to be granted only—this is important—if the judge is satisfied as to the matters specified in subsection (3) and in particular that the granting of the application is both in the interests of justice and is not unfair to the accused where the application is at the instance of the prosecution. In other words, we see this as being entirely in the interests of justice and not unfair to the accused.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): In his last couple of minutes, will the Minister respond to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) about the treatment of women offenders, because women are far less likely to be guilty of violent crime?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Lady is taking me out of the sequence of my remarks, but I can tell her that I once had to defend a lady who had killed her husband by shooting him, and she was put on probation. Therefore, I know from experience that not all ladies are discriminated against in these matters. We should be against such discrimination, if there were any.

We propose that the giving of evidence by television link should be fully and carefully debated on the Floor of the House at a later stage. I can see nothing wrong in principle with the use of today's advanced technology to facilitate the giving of evidence by witnesses whose presence in court is not possible, provided that is in the best interests of justice. The House will, I think, agree that the proposed new provisions contain every necessary safeguard.

I have only a few seconds remaining for my speech. I conclude by saying that the Bill has a strong reforming purpose. It will be in the best interests of Scotland's prisons, prisoners, prison officers and the public at large, and I strongly commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

PRISONERS AND CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS (SCOTLAND) BILL *[LORDS]* [Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]* it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament—

(1) of any sums required by the Secretary of State for defraying the expenses of the Parole Board for Scotland;

(2) of any expenses incurred by the Secretary of State in paying remuneration and allowances to parole advisers appointed under that Act;

(3) of any administrative expenses incurred by the Secretary of State under that Act; and

(4) of any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

PRISONERS AND CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS (SCOTLAND) BILL *[LORDS]*

Ordered,

That the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with as if it had been certified by the Speaker as relating exclusively to Scotland.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Bloodstock Industry

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

10 pm

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): I welcome the opportunity to use the first Adjournment debate after the summer recess to raise a subject about which I have spoken before in the House. Its significance has come into stark reality during the recess.

I am privileged to represent the principal bloodstock breeding constituency within the United Kingdom. My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) and I represent the centre of the United Kingdom racing industry in and around Newmarket. I am also the chairman of the relevant all-party committee. From these two positions I have witnessed the problems of the racing and bloodstock industry develop over the past few months and years.

I welcome the many hon. Members on both sides of the House who have remained in their places to be part of this evening's debate. I hope that their presence is not lost on my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, who is standing in for my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General. My colleagues, like myself, have witnessed over the past few months a number of events, not least the fact that the BBC has presented two separate programmes in which it examined the severe financial constraints facing the industry, the decline in the number of horses in training —half the yards in Newmarket are supposed to be for sale —the decline in the number of owners and the efforts that are being made by the industry to help itself by the establishment or the creation of the British Racing Board.

I shall quote from a letter written by a Member of the other place to his trainer. The passage reads:

> "I have really reached the end of the line with British racing and breeding, and facing up to the economics are just ridiculous. Perhaps one day the Government will see the error of their ways, and then I will be back."

That is typical, unfortunately, of the attitude that is being taken by many owners.

I do not need to rehearse all the facts about the industry. Suffice to say that "Panorama" stated that it is the sixth largest industry in the country. It is even larger, dare I say, than the coal industry. It is estimated that the breeding side alone employs about 17,000 people. The entire racing industry involves about 100,000 jobs. It has a positive balance of payments, with exports direct from the sale ring of about £20 million. They amount to considerably more when private sales are taken into account

As the House will be aware, the changes in value added tax brought about by the single market and the end of certain special arrangements mean that as from 1 January 1993 our industry will have to compete with those of Ireland and France at 2·3 per cent. and 5·5 per cent. respectively. The inevitable result is that bloodstock breeders in the United Kingdom will send their horses abroad to be sold. It is certain that the studs will follow, especially the larger ones, which are often owned by overseas residents. We shall be left only with the breeders of second-class animals. There will be many fewer jobs, and less tax revenue for the Government.

Also, overseas owners of mares will not send them to stallions in the United Kingdom because, unless there is some extension of the current temporary import arrangement, they would have to pay VAT on the charges. Stallion investment as well is now in serious jeopardy.

The good news during the recess was the decision by Tattersalls, this country's leading auctioneers, to remain in Britain as a result of the measures already taken by the Government to mitigate the problem. They deserve credit for that, but the issue goes beyond the location of Tattersalls, which, as with many other service sector companies, reflects the industry's financial health at any one time.

The House could be forgiven for believing that the difficulties I have described are new and have been brought about by the single European market. Sadly, that is not the case. The problem has existed for many years. I have a letter from a former Treasury Minister relating to the belief that the French would not apply VAT law correctly. Nothing has changed in that regard. He wrote:

> "I gave an assurance that the Government would follow up the earlier official protests made to the Commission in May. It should become clear in the course of the next month whether we can realistically progress within an acceptable time scale. However, should it become apparent that we cannot, then the Government will give further and urgent consideration to the bloodstock problems as a whole."

That Minister was Peter Rees, and the date of his letter was 30 August 1979. As my hon. Friend the Minister acknowledges by his smile, that month has become somewhat extended—to 13 years and two months. Still that unfair discrepancy exists, worsened by the rise in VAT rates and single market changes.

The lesson to be learnt is that any protest to the Commission is a waste of time. France, or any other nation, will do what is in its special interest. Although my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General and his predecessors have consistently referred to the need to press the Commission to take action, my right hon. Friend must understand that the industry and many right hon. and hon. Members view such pronouncements with a degree of scepticism.

A year ago, the Select Committee on Home Affairs, under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), undertook a highly regarded investigation into the financing of the racing industry. The Select Committee concluded that the Government must act quickly to alleviate the serious discrepancy that I mentioned. Consequently, the Minister then having responsibility for such matters—my right hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard)—undertook a considerable amount of work to devise the flat-rate scheme for farmers that is now embodied in the Finance Act 1992. The industry made it plain, however, that it would not help most of the major United Kingdom breeders—and that is proving to be the case.

More recently, my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General devised an extension of the rules governing distant selling to provide for temporary export as a means of avoiding the full VAT implications. That is of benefit only in respect of horses valued at more than 15,000 guineas, because it still costs the owner about £700 to export an animal to Ireland to complete the necessary paperwork —only for the new owner to bring the horse back. My right hon. Friend deserves credit for that concept, but it is not in itself sufficient. Most breeders of such horses would rather pay that £700 and sell them in a foreign sale ring.

The results of the first two sales at Tattersalls this autumn fulfilled the worst prophecies. The combined total income fell from £24 million last year to £16 million—a decline of 32 per cent. That itself cost the Government £1·4 million in lost VAT revenue. I emphasise that that money has gone already. The Treasury loses out regardless, and the country loses out because our blookstock industry is severely damaged.

My hon. Friend the Minister—and, indeed, others—may be tempted to dismiss the reduction in prices as simply part of the recession. Before they do so, they should study the catalogues for the Deauville sales in France: they will find that in the past two years there has been a substantial increase in the number of consignments of horses from British breeders who had previously sent their horses to Tattersalls. Furthermore, in the past few weeks the Maktoum family—whose racehorse interests in this country are extensive—has decided to reduce its activities here. That family has given as one of the two main reasons for its move the VAT rate. Already the family had been approached by a senior official of the French Government, who were anxious to encourage it to remove all its racing interests to France and prepared to offer help to that end. The Maktoums may be the most well known, but many smaller breeders and owners are tempted to follow.

My right hon. Friend the Paymaster General has taken a considerable interest in the matter, and that is of course very welcome. His attendance at various meetings has been widely recognised. None the less, the industry, in which Britain has always been pre-eminent, is going into permanent decline, not because of any inefficiency on its part or because of poor quality of production or lack of competitiveness, but simply because of Government-created inequalities in taxation. I have always supported my Government's policy of harmonisation through the market place rather than through regulation. Now the market has clearly spoken, and the Government should respond.

Let me make it clear to the House, and to my hon. Friend the Minister, that I am not looking for a subsidy. I would not do that, because I do not believe that the industry needs or should have such a subsidy. I must add that the Paymaster General's comments on the subject in *The Racing Post* were not very well received by the industry. Nor am I looking for special treatment for the industry—and for that reason I am not speaking in favour of a special low rate of VAT, which, although perfectly legal, I accept is not a realistic proposition at this time.

I am not looking for something that no one else has. What I am looking for is business registration for VAT purposes for racehorse owners. That would place United Kingdom owners back on a level footing. It would enable them to reclaim VAT on their inputs, and, indeed, to pay it on their outputs. It might well be possible to combine it with VAT on prize money—that is what happens in many other countries—and it would give the Government some payback. The horse race advisory council's taxation committee has worked on the whole question of output and its definition.

As the House will know, the question of businesses and their definition comes under VAT law—specifically, under the sixth VAT directive, article 4, which defines a taxable person as any person who carries out any economic activity, whatever the purpose or results of that activity.

My right hon. Friend the Paymaster General has said that, because racehorse ownership is, in his view, a hobby and not a profit-making activity, it is in some way excluded. I must tell him that at no place in the directive does the motivation for carrying out an economic activity come into the matter. In no place does the directive refer to the profit motive as being necessary. Indeed, in article 6 —which defines the supply of services—it is specifically stated that the following should be treated as supplies of services for consideration:

"supplies of services carried out free of charge by the taxable person for his own private use or that of his staff or more generally for purposes other than those of his business".

That clearly encompasses racehorse ownership, and my right hon. Friend really could use that as a basis for assisting the industry.

Of the other 11 countries—all tied by the same sixth VAT directive—eight allow, in one way or another, racehorse ownership to be registered as a business. I hope that the Minister will tell my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General that I know that Customs and Excise states that in many countries it is not allowed and that he should look not at the official position but at what in reality is happening in those countries. If he does so, he will find that the vast majority of racehorse owners are able to register and that in most of those countries prize money is taxed at VAT rates. The industry in this country would accept that as part of the quid pro quo for this movement. Touche Ross carried out an investigation into the question of VAT on bloodstock in all Community countries. I am sure that its information could be made available to the Government, if they do not already have it.

The simple conclusion, therefore, is that if all countries in the Community are tied by the same VAT directives as we are, how can it be that this country can resist—I accept that Ireland does the same—the registration of racehorse ownership as a business for VAT purposes? Before my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General says that he believes that the other countries are wrong and that he will protest to the Commission, I have to remind him of the letter from Peter Rees in 1979 which demonstrates that these protests are absolutely fruitless. The Customs and Excise lawyers should look at the directive to see how it can be used to help us rather than at how it can be used not to help us, or just to hinder others.

I do not pretend that this proposal is the panacea for all the problems of the bloodstock industry. O that it were so simple. However, it would be a very considerable step forward, particularly for the breeders in my constituency and for those in the constituencies of both my hon. Friends and hon. Members in all parts of the House. I know that the issue of prize money is also of great significance. There is to be an attempt next month to stage an owners strike on that subject. It is to be led by one of my constituents. I intend to concentrate simply on the VAT issue, but I hope that sooner or later the House will have an opportunity to spend much longer on debating the problems that face this important industry.

I hope that the Minister who is to reply to the debate will take back to my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General what I have said and what I believe may be said by the vice-chairman of the all-party racing committee, if he is fortunate enough to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker. I hope that he does not intend to dismiss my proposals. If he does, I urge him to tear up the speech that he has in front of him. I simply remind him of the words of the Prime Minister and of the Chancellor of the Exchequer two weeks ago—that British interests must

[Mr. James Paice]

come first. Clearly we are talking about a British interest. It goes far beyond the owners and stud farmers who are directly involved. It affects the employees of the industry—the many thousands of them. It affects the interests of the nearly 5 million people who attend race meetings and who, with countless millions of other people, last year paid £482 million in horse race betting duty to the Government.

If my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General intends to play the cost card, perhaps he will ponder on this: the flat-rate scheme and distance selling are ways to avoid paying VAT. My right hon. Friend has already conceded that he will not get that money. If the sales go abroad, not only will my right hon. Friend not get the VAT but all the other revenue that the Government get from the industry will likewise disappear. If stud owners do not make a profit, there is no corporation tax. If the studs go abroad, there will be no business rates either. The real cost to the Government will be the tax revenues. The real cost will also detrimentally affect the heritage of this country where horse racing has always played a major role. I believe that it must continue to do so.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will put meaning into the words of the Prime Minister. We are not crying wolf. The events of the last few months have shown clearly that the expectations that I spoke about in the House two years ago have started to happen. My constituents, and those of all my hon. Friends and of hon. Members in all parts of the House, now look to the Government to come up with solutions.

10.19 pm

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh): I reinforce the points expressed by the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) and his factual assessment of the state and plight of our bloodstock industry.

There is some consternation that after 1 January 1993, when the differentials in VAT between the French, Irish and ourselves come into force, purchasers in the bloodstock market will make a vast percentage of their purchases in Ireland.

There is no division on the subject between the parties. The hon. Gentleman, who is chairman of the all-party racing committee, pleaded a logical case. If the bloodstock and breeding industry is to make a reasonable commercial return, it is imperative that the playing field is level, that the differentials are equitable and, with respect to my Conservative friends, that free market competition is based on honest criteria. I say that in the nicest sense, especially being a miners' sponsored Member of Parliament.

When we met the right hon. Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder), who is now the Government Chief Whip, he expressed sympathy with us. However, as my old boss, Joe Gormley—I was his adviser—used to say, it was a bit like giving us mustard without the beef. Our concern is that people who buy bloodstock and breeding stock in the same market will inevitably buy where the lowest taxes apply.

Every member of the all-party racing committee is saying one thing—that unless the Government take notice and prompt action to enable the bloodstock industry to compete on an equitable basis with our European competitors, a valuable source of trade and revenue may be lost.

10.23 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) on drawing the House's attention to this important matter in the first Adjournment debate of the autumn Session. He and I met regularly in Adjournment debates when I was a Health Minister, but he never succeeded in securing the same interest among our colleagues as he has this evening. I note that this interest is pursued not only by my hon. Friend as chairman of the all-party racing committee and by its other officers but is a subject that elicits substantial interest and sympathy in all parts of the House.

I apologise for the absence of my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General, who has been chairing a meeting of ECOFIN today. The House will know that, in the normal course of events, this subject would have come within his sphere of influence in the Treasury. It is a subject to which he has devoted a substantial amount of time because he understands the importance of the industry to the Cambridgeshire economy, but, much more widely than that, as a major contributor and a major successful British industry—a British success story which any Treasury Minister should be interested to secure and to underwrite and want to continue to be a success story in the years ahead. As my hon. Friend emphasised, it creates a significant number of jobs, it creates real wealth for the British economy, and it is one that we all should want to continue to succeed. That at least is common ground in all parts of the House, and it is an ambition and an objective that is shared by Treasury Ministers.

I stress that my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General is the master of all the detail in this subject. Whereas he looks after the Customs and Excise within the Treasury, I look after the Inland Revenue. Until this evening, I had thought that that meant that my cup overfloweth. However, I will undertake to the House to report to my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General and, of course, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor the arguments that have been put by both hon. Members who have contributed to the debate and also to transmit the attendance in the House at this relatively inconvenient time on a relatively lightly whipped evening to ensure that the issue is taken seriously by the House of Commons.

My hon. Friend asked me to depart from whatever text had been provided for me by officials. I propose to keep the text in front of me but to elaborate a little in a way that I hope that my hon. Friend will find acceptable. He drew particular attention to the importance of VAT as one of the factors which either contributes or fails to contribute to the continued success of the livestock industry. I want to address the application of VAT to the racing livestock industry, but in particular——

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Dorrell: Is my hon. Friend going to be very brief?

Mr. Shepherd: I shall be very brief. Will my hon. Friend confirm that it is open to the Government to apply a lower rate of VAT if they so wish?

Mr. Dorrell: I will touch on the point about lower rate VAT, but my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East particularly wanted me to dwell on the proposition of the——

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Dorrell: Will my hon. Friend forgive me? I have three minutes left.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East wanted me to dwell particularly on the subject of the registration of racehorse owners, and I want to touch on both of those points. Taking first the point about low-rate VAT for horses, my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General is very well aware that many in the industry want us to introduce a low-rate VAT uniquely for horses or limited to defined categories of valuable horses. My hon. Friend will be well aware that it is the Government's basic proposition in dealing with the tax system that we seek to maintain a system that is as simple as possible with the minimum of discontinuities that are the inevitable consequence of a multiplicity of different rates. There would inevitably be pressure for reduced rates of VAT from a wide range of lobby groups who would feel that their case was at least as strong as that for racing bloodstock. The Government must of course be seen to be fair to all taxpayers. I understand my hon. Friend's point, but he will understand that it flies in the face of the established tax policies that the Government have pursued in this and many other matters.

I now refer to the point about VAT registration of racehorse owners because that is the point on which my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East dwelt. My hon. Friend quoted the sixth VAT directive which provides, as he said, that a trader is eligible for registration if he carries on an economic activity whatever the purpose. But the question is whether the ownership of racehorses and the racing of racehorses in race meetings constitutes an economic activity.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): Of course it does.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) says, "Of course it does," but that is the question around which the argument revolves. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East rightly says, it is simply a matter of the enforcement of the law. This much I am clear about—whether we are talking about the Inland Revenue or the Customs and Excise, the interpretation of the law is not properly a matter for Ministers. If there is a dispute about whether the law is being properly enforced in allowing a certain racehorse owner to register for VAT, there is a well-established procedure by which a racehorse owner who feels that he is being unjustly denied the opportunity to register for VAT may prosecute that argument through the courts. As my hon. Friend quite rightly said, it is a matter of law whether an owner is entitled to register or not. The decision whether a racehorse owner falls within the categories defined within the law is a matter for decision ultimately by the courts and certainly not by Ministers.

I stress to the House and to my hon. Friend that the Government share my hon. Friend's ambition to ensure that we have in this country a system of tax law which makes possible the continuation of a successful racehorse-breeding industry. That we shall continue to do.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 20 October 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[Madam Speaker *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

Durham Markets Company Bill *[Lords]*
Read a Second time, and committed.

London Regional Transport (Penalty Fares) Bill
(By Order)
Lords amendments agreed to.

Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) (No. 4) Bill *[Lords] (By Order)*

London Docklands Railway (Lewisham, etc.) (No. 2) Bill *(By Order)*

Price's Patent Candle Company Limited Bill *[Lords] (By Order)*
Read the Third time, and passed.

City of Bristol (Portishead Docks) Bill *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday next.

South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit Bill *[Lords] (By Order)*
Read a Second time, and committed.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION

Student Loans Scheme

1. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his latest estimate of the number of defaulters on payments granted under the student loans scheme.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Nigel Forman): As at 30 September, 5,174 borrowers owed two or more monthly instalments. That represents 9·1 per cent. of those who should be repaying their loans on time.

Mr. Hanson: Is the Minister aware that that figure is without doubt an underestimate for the future? There will be many more people struggling to pay and many people leaving their courses. Why do not the Government begin to scrap the scheme, so that people like me—who come from backgrounds that are not academic and who are not used to taking on debts in the family—are not dissuaded from taking up further and higher education? Many people will not take up higher education because of the Government's student loans scheme.

Mr. Forman: There is absolutely no evidence that the student loans scheme has deterred participation in higher education—indeed, quite the contrary. The numbers have increased staggeringly during the past 10 or 12 years and will continue to do so while quality is maintained.

Mr. Pawsey: Will my hon. Friend confirm that student support in the United Kingdom remains the most generous in the western world? Will he confirm that the number of students has increased, from a low point of less than 700,000 under the Labour Government, to substantially more than 1 million today? Will he further confirm that the target group of students was one in eight when Labour was in office, has fallen to one in four and is set to fall to one in three?

Mr. Forman: My hon. Friend is absolutely right: the package of support for students in this country is generous by international standards. Grants and loans together are now worth about 40 per cent. more than three years ago when there were grants alone.

Teachers' Pay and Conditions

2. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what recent meetings he has had with teachers' trade union representatives to discuss teachers' pay and conditions of service.

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten): I have asked the School Teachers Review Body to report on schoolteachers' pay and conditions in 1993-94. Teachers' pay is not a matter for negotiation between teachers' unions and the holder of my office.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Secretary of State aware that, with mass unemployment growing like a cancer in every town and city in Britain, teachers have got one hell of a job to do in trying to motivate young men and women to do better, because those young people see their brothers and sisters and friends without a job for three or four years? At this time, is it not totally wrong for the Government to say to teachers and their representatives that they are not fit to do their job and that they should have a pay freeze?

The Secretary of State should take it on board that I believe that, instead of a pay freeze for teachers and assessment of teachers, this Cabinet should be assessed. If members of the Cabinet had to pass a test, they would not qualify to do *The Sun* crossword.

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman is certainly a very vigorous exponent of the National Union of Teachers' case. He is a much better exponent of it than many of its leaders—I increasingly think of the hon. Gentleman as a kind of thinking man's Doug McAvoy.

I believe that teachers do an excellent job. Since 1979, they have received an increase in their pay of 46 per cent. in real terms. There is a minimum number of vacancies for teachers and people are crowding to join that very popular and successful profession.

Mr. Rowe: Is it possible for my right hon. Friend to invent a better system for dealing with those teachers who, through either sickness or incapacity, need to leave the service? It often takes months and months for them to do so, which means that the schools of which they are a member of the staff are left paralysed as to whether to appoint another teacher. Frequently those schools have to appoint another teacher, to the detriment of their other expenditure.

Mr. Patten: I am not aware of any recent complaints about this issue, but if my hon. Friend wants to draw any particular complaints to my attention I shall look at them. The average age of retirement for teachers is 59, but, occasionally, some teachers, for a host of reasons, have to leave the profession early. It is quite right that their departure should be part of a smooth transition, in their interests and those of their families.

At the moment, many people wish to join the profession. This autumn we expected 24,000 student teachers to enter teacher training colleges for the first year, but 29,000 did so because the profession is so appealing and buoyant under the Government.

Mr. Don Foster: Does the Secretary of State accept that his attitude towards teachers' pay and his many other recent attacks on teachers are lowering the morale of the teaching profession? What is his reaction to the comments made in an allegedly confidential document from the Conservative research department which, referring to the Secretary of State, spoke of

> "Too much 'fire and brimstone' and ill-defined attacks on education 'experts'"

and said that he was doing little to raise morale in the education profession?

Mr. Patten: In view of the personal attacks that the hon. Gentleman has made on me, I should like him to substantiate them by placing in the Library of the House any evidence of a single occasion when he can find attributed to me—in quotes or in any other form—attacks on the teaching profession. If he cannot do that, I hope that he will come here to apologise, because I greatly value the teaching profession. During our very successful party conference in Brighton a week ago, we could see just how the teaching profession was applauded during my excellent speech.

The boy who prepared the alleged report from Conservative central office was apparently a pretty inefficient character. He has now left the Department and he has resigned from the Conservative party. It is generally thought that he was a sleeper for the Liberal party.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: I welcome the large increase in real pay given to teachers in the past 10 years and the fact that record numbers wish to join the profession now. Does my right hon. Friend agree that most good teachers welcome appraisal and incentive systems that are based on school needs rather than those of the local authority? As a result, most of them welcome the local management of schools, which gives them the opportunity to have their salary related more closely to their performance.

Mr. Patten: Good educational standards such as those promoted by teachers underpin the values of our nation, and we should be grateful to them for that. The other side of that coin is to make it possible for performance-related pay to be available for the teachers in schools so that their performance may be recognised. The fact that there has been a 46 per cent. real terms increase in teachers' take-home pay since 1979, with the average salary for a teacher in England now being £20,630, speaks for itself.

Two-year Degree Courses

3. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the Government's policy on the introduction of two-year degree courses.

Mr. Forman: The Government believe that there is scope for providing some existing courses on a more intensive basis, including accelerated degrees. It is for institutions to decide whether to develop such courses. The Government have no intention of imposing a uniform pattern.

Mr. Cousins: If the Minister really believes in quality and standards in higher education, he must face the fact that many vice-chancellors are telling their staff that they have a Government who do not understand their problems and do not support them. Is he aware that, in every institution of higher education, people are being told that they must expect during the lifetime of the present Government a doubling of student numbers, with no increase in real resources? Is he further aware that we are facing the prospect of standards and quality in higher education being gradually reduced to something like fourth-rate battery chickens, directly as a result of the Government's policies and their decisions on resources?

Mr. Forman: I am not sure that that supplementary question deserves a reply, but, as I am in a generous mood, I will tell the hon. Gentleman that the funding of higher education will continue to attract a fair share of resources within public expenditure and that the expansion of higher education, which is viewed on the basis of projections rather than targets, is likely to continue in the 1990s, while quality is maintained. We intend to maintain quality by ensuring that proper arrangements are in place at the institutional level and the level of the funding council.

Student Loans Scheme

4. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many students applied for student loans during the last academic year.

15. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many students applied for student loans in the academic year 1991-92; and what was the figure for the previous year.

Mr. Forman: About 264,000 students applied for a loan in 1991-92. That compares with some 192,000 students in the previous academic year.

Mr. Battle: Is the Minister aware that, even before the term begins, students in Leeds are forced to pay half their maximum loans—about £400—on securing their accommodation? How on earth does he expect students to avoid being in debt to the tune of about £2,000 before their courses end? It is all very well for him to say that they will have jobs and therefore will be able to pay that money off, but why will the Government not bring forward proposals so that students are not saddled with crippling debt?

Mr. Forman: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman has not discovered as a result of his investigation of the issues that regional variations in housing costs are among the factors taken into account when access funds are used. The hon. Gentleman was talking about hardship cases—a familiar cry from Labour Members. The vast majority of students are not in hardship, there is no evidence of such hardship, and my evidence for saying that is that the take-up rate of student loans in the last full academic year—the loans are available to all students who want them—was about only 37 per cent.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does the Minister recall that, when we debated the Bill applying to student loans, we were told that there would be a big reduction in the numbers taking degrees? What has been the reduction?

Mr. Forman: There has been absolutely no reduction in the number of people taking degrees. Indeed, the number of degrees taken has gone up consistently under Conservative rule and the quality of those degrees has been maintained. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point.

Mr. Rooker: Although we welcome the recently announced Government survey of student incomes, we argue that such a survey is not strictly necessary. The Minister claims that there is no hardship among students. I urge him to check at random among all the higher educational institutes throughout the country to see the true situation. Will he take it from me that at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 72 per cent. of students eligible for the full grant are on an overdraft, one fifth of students whose parents are due to pay a contribution do not do so, or do not do so in full, and two thirds of students receive no extra support at all from their parents? Is he further aware that 22 per cent.—more than one fifth of students—have had to consider leaving university because of the financial hardship which they are suffering?

Mr. Forman: May I begin my reply in a conciliatory spirit by welcoming the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) to his new responsibilities on the Front Bench. Many of us on this side of the House think that he should have been there a long time ago.

It would be good to know whether the evidence that the hon. Gentleman quotes includes students who have applied for a standard student loan. The first question that he should ask is whether they have done so. Access funds are targeted at students in greatest need and the hon. Gentleman will know from his research that there is provision in certain cases—mature students and those with dependants or disabilities—for special help to be available through the social security system. The overall package of student support is generous in this country; indeed, it is more generous than in most of our competitor countries.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Our excellent university of Lancaster has 10 applicants for every place available because we offer the courses that students want and have the fifth highest pass rate in the country. We are building more student accommodation.

Mr. Forman: I congratulate my hon. Friend on always speaking up for Lancaster university. I can vouch for the fact that it is an excellent institution. It was the first university that I visited when taking up my responsibilities, and I agree with the main points that my hon. Friend made.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Do students from other European Community countries studying at universities in the United Kingdom have a right of access to those student loans?

Mr. Forman: I shall need to let the right hon. Gentleman know about that and shall write to him accordingly.

Local Management of Schools

5. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will alter the LMS budget formula.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): The local management of schools budget formula is a matter for each local education authority to determine within the statutory framework. We shall, however, be consulting later in the year on the need for revisions to the LMS framework to take effect from April 1994.

Mr. Cohen: I welcome that reply, although I hope that the revisions will be brought forward to April 1993. Will the Minister assure us that there will be no Government-originated cuts next year in LMS budgets in schools? Does he understand that many experienced teachers are ending up on the scrap heap because the LMS formula discriminates against them?

Mr. Forth: There is no evidence whatever for the hon. Gentleman's over-dramatic assertion. I assure him that the local management of schools systems is working extremely well and that all the heads and teachers to whom I talk say that they would never want to go back to previous systems. We believe in the system, in local school decision making, and we think that there is growing evidence that the more decision making is given to heads, teachers and governors, the better is the quality of education decision making at local level. We are fully committed to that.

Sir Malcolm Thornton: My hon. Friend will know of my concern about certain aspects of how the formula operates, particularly with regard to the average in and actual out of teachers' salaries. Will he assure me that, at the end of the review period, the matter will be looked at in detail? The curious effect is that it does not extend choice to governors in their appointment of staff but limits it, if the formula continues to discriminate against that aspect of our budgets.

Mr. Forth: I am well aware of my hon. Friend's concerns, which he has expressed frequently and most eloquently. I assure him that the review will cover all matters relating to the local management of schools, including the average actual that he mentioned. However, we must not lose faith with those authorities and schools that have demonstrated that they are well able to make the local management of schools system work, including the average actual salary matter. In our review, we shall take that very much into consideration. We must not penalise those who have made it work well, in an effort to bale out those who cannot or will not make it work properly.

Access Funds

6. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received regarding the criteria used for determining the allocation of access funds.

Mr. Forman: Very few. The allocation criteria are a matter for institutions, provided that they are consistent with the Department's general guidance on the use of access funds.

Mr. Michie: The Minister should be aware of the reasons for setting up the access fund. It was to provide financial help to students in further and higher education whose education was being inhibited because of financial constraints, problems and difficulties. The Minister must be aware of the problem that I brought to his attention —a lone parent with two children was refused an access grant to finish her degree course, and that jeopardised her course's future. Will he look at the criteria again to make sure that it does not discriminate against lone parents, who are mainly women? Will he also increase the measly £26 million a year? After all, the Government can afford it because they took £70 million from student housing benefit.

Mr. Forman: As the hon. Gentleman says, he and I have corresponded about his constituent, Sheena Borthwick, who is a student at Sheffield Hallam university. As he knows, decisions in this case and in similar cases are best taken by the higher education institutions themselves because they are closest to the problems. Access funds are generous if properly targeted, and the £26 million for this year is perfectly adequate for the task if institutions manage the funds properly and concentrate on cases of real need.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does my hon. Friend agree that students appreciate the availability of access funds which are directed to those who are most in need? Does he agree also that, during the general election, the Labour party was callous to suggest that there was money for all, money for the mushrooming number of students who are entering further and higher education, because Labour did not say where the money would come from and did not come clean and tell young people who wanted to enter further and higher education how many of them would have been deprived of the opportunity to benefit from that education?

Mr. Forman: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Labour specialises in uncosted promises and unbankable assurances. There is no reason why we should pay any attention to Labour's higher education policy.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The Minister speaks about uncosted promises. Will he confirm that when the hardship funds were set up the Treasury saved £100 million on housing benefit and income support that students could no longer claim? Will he also confirm that many local authorities are no longer able to provide discretionary grants to students who want to enter further education? Yesterday, there was an announcement about pit closures. The nation and many of the people who will be thrown out of work could benefit from training and education. Has the Secretary of State been asked by the Department of Employment to make extra money available through hardship funds and discretionary grants in areas where unemployment will result from the closures?

Mr. Forman: I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his new Front-Bench responsibility. The answer to his latter question is that the training and enterprise councils are taking a lead.

The hon. Gentleman asked about discretionary awards and the position of local authorities. In 1992-93, local authorities enjoyed an overall increase in their education funding of some 7 per cent. Well-managed local authorities, of which many are Conservative, are able to manage within that sum and provide discretionary awards where they are justified.

Mr. Hendry: Will my hon. Friend look into the unnecessary hardship being caused to students from Derbyshire where, for no reason other than budgetary and administrative incompetence by the county council, many students have not yet received their mandatory awards? Many others have been on their courses for more than a month and have not been told whether they will receive their discretionary awards.

Mr. Forman: My hon. Friend mentions a regrettable fact which merely shows the typical behaviour of Labour-controlled Derbyshire council. I note what my hon. Friend says and urge all councils to pay mandatory awards as efficiently and swiftly as possible.

School Governors

7. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has had about changes in governors' responsibilities following the passing of the Education Reform Act 1988.

Mr. Patten: Many governors have told me of the considerable satisfaction their role brings. I pay tribute to them for the job they are doing in such large numbers.

Mr. Jones: I am surprised that the Minister has not had representations on this matter or has not noted Denbigh high school in my constituency which is worried that under LMS, and possibly under grant-maintained status, it may well be penalised under any number of Acts, such as the

Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 and the Employment Protection Act 1975, because there is no provision for the protection of the corporate identity of governing bodies. Does the Minister propose to do anything about that?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman should not be surprised that I have not noticed his letter because if he sent it to me, it was a mistake to do so. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is responsible for education in Wales. Perhaps I can help the hon. Gentleman by telling him to whom to address his letters. On his other point, about the corporate identity of governing bodies, we shall be addressing this in the forthcoming education Bill. I shall draw the point made by the hon. Gentleman to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, who has responsibility for the school to which the hon. Gentleman refers.

Mr. Harry Greenway: When my right hon. Friend looks at the responsibilities of governors, particularly in administration of LMS funds, will he see whether it is possible, in the review that has been announced to the House, to look at the cost of inspections under the admirable new system? Is he aware of a school not far from the House that is being required to pay £25,000 for a school inspection out of budget? Is that not an enormous imposition on a school in one year?

Mr. Patten: Charging for school inspections will be a matter for Professor Stewart Sutherland, Her Majesty's inspector of schools and the head of the Office of Standards in Education. If my hon. Friend will give me the name of the school, I will draw his point to the attention of the chief inspector.

Nursery Education

8. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to increase the numbers of children in nursery education.

Mr. Forth: It is for local authorities to determine the scale and form of provision for the under-fives, but the House would wish to be reminded that 175,000 more under-fives attended maintained schools in England in 1991 than in 1979 and that 90 per cent. of three and four-year-olds now enjoy education or group child care or both.

Mr. Flynn: That is a complacent answer. Is it not a continuing waste and a disgrace that 32 local education authorities in England provide no full-time nursery education whatever? Will the Minister congratulate the Welsh Labour-controlled local authorities which provide such splendid quality and such a high proportion of nursery education? Can the Minister explain why a child is far more likely to get a chance of nursery education if he lives in a Labour-controlled area than if he lives in a Conservative-controlled area?

Mr. Forth: That illustrates the rather pathetic dogma peddled by Labour Members, which roughly runs along the lines of, "If it is not supplied by a local education authority, it cannot be supplied at all." Nothing could be further from the truth. The truth is that what we have seen develop over the past 12 or 13 years is a mixed and diverse system which responds to the real needs of people in communities. Some of that may well be provided by local education authorities. A lot will be provided by the excellent other sources which make provision of the kind that parents want. I cannot accept what the hon. Gentleman said.

Mr. John Marshall: How many European Community countries start compulsory education at the age of five?

Mr. Forth: I thank my hon. Friend for making that important point. The answer is, hardly any.

Mr. Cryer: How many?

Mr. Forth: It is difficult to be specific as the criteria by which the starting age is defined vary from country to country. However, we can be certain that this country is providing universal provision at age five and substantial provision before that in the maintained sector. That is well up with most of our European partners, and ahead of most.

Physically Handicapped Children

9. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps the Government propose to take to help integrate more physically handicapped children into the general school system.

Mr. Patten: It has been the Government's policy since the enactment of the Education Act 1981 that all pupils with special education needs should, wherever practicable, be integrated into the mainstream of school education. Our proposals for legislation will significantly improve all aspects of the arrangements for provision for these pupils.

Mr. Jones: Will the Secretary of State note that before coming to this place I spent 10 years teaching in a school in which physically handicapped children were integrated? I can testify to the benefits of that experience both for those children and for able-bodied children. I am worried, however, about whether the Government will ring fence the money necessary to adapt schools so that physically handicapped children can be integrated, especially at a time when schools are being charged from their own finances. As I understand it, there is no extra funding for physically handicapped children but only for children with learning difficulties.

Mr. Patten: I had not realised the hon. Gentleman's experience in these matters. I pay tribute to what he did in the circumstances that he has outlined. If ever he wants to talk to me about these issues, I shall be pleased to see him. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that in England—my figures are for England only and not for Wales—the numbers of handicapped children being educated in mainstream schools has risen from 15 per cent. in 1985 to 37 per cent. during the current year. The Audit Commission has recently drawn to the attention of local authorities in its excellent report entitled "Getting in on the Act" just how much more local authorities could and should do in this direction.

Sir John Hannam: Is my right hon. Friend aware that part of the campaign against grant-maintained schools is that they will not provide places for children with special education needs? Will he allay that fear and the fears of the parents involved?

Mr. Patten: I can certainly do that. All grant-maintained schools will have to take pupils with special education needs. I deplore the attacks by some on grant-maintained schools, including the claim that such schools will not take pupils with special education needs. That is a straight insult to the professionalism of teachers in grant-maintained schools. We have only to consider excellent secondary schools which have gone grant maintained, such as Bishopshalt school in Uxbridge and St. Helen's school in Bluntisham, Cambridgeshire, to realise what centres of excellence grant-maintained schools are in dealing with children with special education needs. The schools should be congratulated.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Will the Secretary of State rectify an omission by his junior Minister? When his hon. Friend met the Spastics Society in September he welcomed the society's report, "A Hard Act to Follow", but somehow omitted to mention another report which found in favour of the Spastics Society and the National Union of Teachers on exactly the same subject, entitled "Within Reach: Access for Disabled Children to Mainstream Education". In both reports the underlying theme is that resourcing is crucial. Will the Secretary of State confirm that provision of resources for children with special needs will be made over and above the general education budget?

Mr. Patten: I welcome any report made by the Spastics Society which is directed to this important area. The society has responded positively to the consultation document issued by my noble Friend Baroness Blatch, the Minister of State, and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Schools. The response has been positive. Resources and available moneys are always important, but equally important is the way in which money is spent. In that respect, report after report has pointed the finger at local education authorities.

Grant-maintained Schools

10. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on progress with the development of grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Patten: There are now 278 grant-maintained schools educating some 200,000 pupils. A further 30 schools are now approved. I announced yesterday that Sawtry village college, Cambridgeshire had become the 300th school to be approved for grant-maintained status. The applications of 179 more schools are currently being considered within the Department or being published. I am delighted that so many schools and parents have opted for this successful new way of managing themselves in such a short period.

Ms. Estelle Morris *rose—[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. There is so much noise in the Chamber that I can barely hear what is happening. I ask the House to calm down so that I can call Mr. Jacques Arnold to ask his supplementary question.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: My right hon. Friend will know that three of the schools that he mentioned are to be found in Gravesham, where parents voted by a majority of five to one, rising to nine to one, in favour of grant-maintained schools. Has my right hon. Friend noticed that since such schools were established, thanks to local decision taking and local value for money, those schools are showing greater flexibility and providing better education for the young people concerned?

Mr. Patten: The schools in my hon. Friend's constituency are beacons of excellence, providing improved standards while also looking after those children who need help and support, including those with special education needs.

The point about my hon. Friend's question is that debate in his area about whether to go grant maintained was free and open and without political bias. I utterly deplore the tactics of a number of Labour party members, and particularly of some hon. Members in sending parents unsolicited letters on House of Commons writing paper making the most vindictive threats about education in their area.

Ms. Estelle Morris: The Secretary of State made it clear in his White Paper that he wishes all schools to seek grant-maintained status. Will he explain to the House what evidence he had about the performance of grant-maintained schools before encouraging mass opt-outs? In particular, will he tell the House how many grant-maintained schools have been subject to a full inspection by and report from Her Majesty's inspectorate?

Mr. Patten: The answer to the hon. Lady's last question is none, but they will be inspected shortly because all schools will be subject to full inspection under the four-yearly cycle. The answer to the hon. Lady's first question will be evident in November when we publish the A-level and GCSE results of all schools in Britain.

I forgot to mention who had written the worst of the recent circular letters in Birmingham on House of Commons writing paper. For the avoidance of doubt, it was the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley).

Mr. Wilkinson: Such problems as there are with grant-maintained schools are problems of success. In that regard, what steps is my right hon. Friend taking to reassure local authorities such as mine—Hillingdon borough—with a high proportion of secondary schools which have opted out, that there will not be a disproportionately large withdrawal of Exchequer grant from those local education authorities?

Mr. Patten: We always look after Hillingdon as well as we can. The Hillingdon local education authority should be congratulated on the way in which it has promoted grant-maintained schools. It has done an excellent job. It has brought schools to maturity, to the edge of the nest as it were, and they have flown. They are now running themselves and producing excellent standards in an efficient and caring environment.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: If opt-out was meant to highlight dissatisfaction with local education authorities, is it not clear that Conservative councils cause far more dissatisfaction? Is the Minister aware that there have been more opt-outs in Tory-controlled Kent and Essex than in all Labour authorities put together?

Mr. Patten: I congratulate the hon. Lady on her appointment and I am glad that she got her question in before closing time. It is not surprising that in some parts of the country the number of schools opting to go grant maintained has thus far been small because Labour local authorities have done everything possible to prevent ballots. However, within the past two weeks, in Bradford, Nottingham and Salford schools have balloted and have opted for the first time to become self-governing, seizing the chance given to them by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister during the general election campaign.

Pre-school Education

11. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the national average of the proportion of three and four-year-olds in pre-school education in each local educational authority area; and what is the figure for Redbridge.

Mr. Forth: In January 1991, 48 per cent. of three and four-year-olds in England attended maintained nursery or primary schools. In Redbridge, the proportion was 29 per cent.

Mr. Gapes: Information that I obtained from the Library shows that in the current year the Government are giving nearly £745 for every three and four-year-old in Redbridge—yet the figures that the Minister just provided reveal that Redbridge, which is controlled by a Conservative council, has a deplorable record by comparison with the average local education authority. When will the Government ensure that the standard spending assessment paid by taxpayers to the Conservative council in Redbridge is spent on educating three and four-year-olds in that borough?

Mr. Forth: That is rich coming from the Labour Benches. The hon. Gentleman has obviously forgotten, if he ever knew, that the last Labour Government inflicted —*[Interruption.]* Oh, yes! Labour Members will hear this, Madam Speaker, even if it is so long ago that they have forgotten. It was the last Labour Government who inflicted damaging cuts in the provision for the under-fives, which fell substantially from 440,000 in 1976 to 415,000 in 1978. We will take no lectures from Labour Members about provision for the under-fives.

Several Hon. Members *rose.*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Before we proceed, I ask for order in the House, so that we can hear right hon. and hon. Members' questions. There has been a great deal of barracking from the Benches on my right as well as from those on my left. I would like less of that from now on.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 20 October.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Arnold: Bearing in mind my right hon. Friend's commitment to putting Britain first, will he confirm that the Government attach priority to getting this country out of recession and creating jobs?

The Prime Minister: All across Europe and beyond, economic circumstances are very difficult and in recent months have worsened noticeably in a number of countries. We are seeking the right policies to bring back not just recovery to this country but recovery with low inflation. The interest rate reductions that we have been able to make and the increasing competitiveness of the exchange rate will enable us to lead this country back to recovery with the low inflation and sustained growth that we need.

Mr. Bell: In the light of the statements made by the president of the Bundesbank and by the chairman of the Italian central bank that a general realignment was available to the British Government prior to Black Wednesday, will the Prime Minister answer the question that his Chancellor of the Exchequer failed to answer when he appeared before the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee or at the Dispatch Box? Was there or was there not a general realignment—either formal or informal—on the table?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to answer that categorically. No, there was not—formal or informal.

Q2. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 20 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Adley: Referring to matters that are in the minds of right hon. and hon. Members, does my right hon. Friend accept that there is some linkage between electricity privatisation and the current problems in the coal industry? This morning I heard from British Rail that if the proposed mine closures go through, British Rail will face a bill in excess of £200 million in terms of lost revenue and redundancy payments. Will my right hon. Friend please give a clear assurance that if there are to be any further privatisations, either of industry or of the nation's transport infrastructure, a full cost-benefit analysis will be provided to the House so that it may assess the full national implications?

The Prime Minister: Many of the problems faced by the coal industry—those that it faces at present and those that it has faced over many years—preceded privatisation. They have far more to do with the demand for coal and the changing energy market in this country. It is for that reason that there has been a severe contraction of the coal industry, not only in this country but in France, Belgium and Germany, and elsewhere.

As for my hon. Friend's specific question about the railways, the White Paper published in July was preceded by a great deal of thought, discussion and consultation inside government, and consultation continues on all matters.

Mr. Ashdown: Having been found out seeking to close down the coal industry quickly by rigging the market, are not the Government now asking to be allowed to close down the coal industry slowly by rigging a review? Is that not the proposition that their Back Benchers are being asked to swallow?

The Prime Minister: No, that is not an accurate reflection of the policy that the Government are following —as yesterday's statement by my right hon. Friend the

President of the Board of Trade made perfectly clear. No one doubts, and no one has disputed, that over many years, under all Governments, there has been a continuing and severe contraction of the coal industry, owing to factors that were unavoidable.

The Government now face the fact that, even at existing coal prices—which we are now aware will be noticeably lower in future—the market is contracting, and coal stocks are growing daily. The Government cannot ignore that problem. The sooner they deal with it, the sooner we shall be able comprehensively to establish assistance measures that will provide alternative employment and alternative security in areas where people know that existing jobs have at best only a limited life.

Q3. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 20 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Spink: Will the Prime Minister join me in welcoming the 1 per cent. cut in interest rates that was made on Friday, which will do so much to help all the people who have to repay mortgages and to help businesses, large and small? Does he agree that the key to resolving our unemployment difficulties and taking us out of the teeth of the world recession is low inflation, which we are achieving?

The Prime Minister: We have now achieved low inflation in terms of both the retail prices index and the underlying inflation rate, at a level that we have not seen for many years. It is undoubtedly helpful to British industry that it has been possible to reduce interest rates to 8 per cent. I was particularly pleased by the consequential mortgage rate reductions that were announced today.

As my hon. Friend suggested, however, we must bear it in mind that it is not simply a question of low interest rates. It is also vitally important for our future prosperity to restrain any reinflationary surge that may follow. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has made it clear that keeping inflation low—one of the essential ingredients for the sustained encouragement of jobs, prosperity and growth—remains central to the Government's policy.

Mr. John Smith: It is crystal clear that, whatever else he did yesterday, the President of the Board of Trade did not announce a review of the pit closure programme. Will the Prime Minister now agree to establish a genuine and independent review before any pit is closed for ever?

The Prime Minister: So that there is no dispute or misunderstanding anywhere in the House, let me make clear the position of the 10 pits identified by my right hon. Friend, and that of the others that he mentioned in his statement. In our judgment, the 10 pits that he specifically named have no sustainable economic future, but the full statutory review procedure will take place. I have no doubt that, during the moratorium on the other pits, the Select Committee on Trade and Industry will wish to hold its own inquiry, and the Government will give that their fullest co-operation.

During the moratorium, the President of the Board of Trade will himself take views and evidence to consider alongside the information already available to him on all matters. In due course he will publish that material, in time for consideration by the House and before any future debate in the House. His statement will be set in the context of the Government's energy policy and will set out the consequences of that policy for British Coal, the implications for individual pits and the employment prospects for the industry. It is after that debate that future decisions will be made.

Mr. Smith: I remind the Prime Minister of the question that I asked him, which was whether he would establish a genuine and independent review. If the Prime Minister really believes that he has a strong case, what has he to lose from an independent inquiry? What is he afraid of?

The Prime Minister: Let me refer the right hon. and learned Gentleman to the answer that I gave. When we have completed the consultation and the examination—which, I repeat, will be made public and which, I repeat, will also be laid before this House—there will be every opportunity for every view to be taken into account before matters proceed.

Mr. Smith: Is it not now clear that the only satisfactory alternative to constantly shifting statements from the Prime Minister and the President of the Board of Trade, and to the unseemly Dutch auction which is going on among Conservative Back Benchers, is for this House tomorrow night to vote to refer the whole matter to our own Select Committee and for that to be the responsibility of Members in all parts of the House?

The Prime Minister: It is clear that the right hon. and learned Gentleman was not listening, for I said that it was an assumption of the Government that the Select Committee on Trade and Industry would wish to consider this matter and that we would provide whatever evidence was necessary to the Committee. Notwithstanding the tremendous emotions that have arisen about this whole affair, it is bogus of the right hon. and learned Gentleman not to recall the vast number of mines that were closed by the Labour Government, the large number of miners who were put out of work by his Government and the activities of his Government in recent years that played a significant part in reducing employment in the mining industry from 700,000 down to the present level.

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the concern that is being expressed about the closure programme is very much bound up with the wider concern about the direction of our economy, post-ERM? Does he not agree that with a low value for sterling it really is essential that we have a policy of import substitution, of "Buy British", and that we should not build gas-fired power stations when we have already got 50 per cent. too much gas generating capacity? If my right hon. Friend were to put those facts into the review, he would find that he had the enthusiastic support of people like myself, who are deeply concerned about what is being proposed.

The Prime Minister: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend that the changing level of the exchange rate offers the most remarkable opportunities for British exporters and also offers a better incentive for import substitution than we have seen for many years. My hon. Friend also needs to remember that we are by instinct a trading nation and that we must bear that in mind in all the policies that we follow. As I made clear a few moments ago, what the Government are seeking to do and will continue to do in the period up to and including the public expenditure round is to look at the difficulties that this economy faces and at the right possibilities and the right policies, in order to build on present economic circumstances a proper level of growth for the British economy and for British industry.

Q4. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 20 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Smith: Can the Prime Minister understand that it is my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) who has spoken for Britain? Can the Prime Minister name one independent expert who is prepared to say that gas will produce cheaper electricity than coal? The President of the Board of Trade could not name one yesterday. Can the Prime Minister name one this afternoon—yes or no?

The Prime Minister: If that were not the case, perhaps the hon. Gentleman could explain to the House why the demand for gas among consumers across the country is rising dramatically and shows signs of rising even further.

Mr. Rathbone: Despite all the difficulties being faced at this moment by this country and by other countries, will the Prime Minister give the House and the nation reassurance that we shall continue our efforts to aid countries in the developing world which suffer even greater difficulties than we do?

The Prime Minister: We have a very proud record indeed in that respect, in terms of the quantum of aid that we provide, in terms of the quality of aid that we provide, and in terms of keeping open markets in this country for the exports of those countries which, in many ways, is the greatest assistance that we can provide to the developing world. In my statement in a few moments on the European Council, I shall also set out some extra help to other countries which face particular needs at present.

European Council (Birmingham)

3.30 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): With permission, Madam Speaker, I shall make a statement about the European Council in Birmingham on Friday last. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and I represented the United Kingdom.

I should like to thank the city of Birmingham, its leaders and its people—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I know that hon. Members who are leaving the Chamber have business elsewhere in the House. Will they leave quietly so that we can hear what the Prime Minister has to say?

The Prime Minister: I should like to thank the city of Birmingham, its leaders and its people for the effectiveness and speed of their organisation of the European summit.

Following the events in the financial markets a month ago, a number of EC member states asked for this meeting to help to restore confidence throughout the Community and to address the issues raised by the market turbulence. Amongst those concerns, clearly evident in the referendums in Denmark and France, was the unease that too many decisions were being taken centrally in Brussels. The summit conclusions on these and other issues are in the Library of the House.

Let me deal first with economic and monetary co-operation. At Friday's meeting we reaffirmed our commitment to pursue open market policies, to control budget deficits, and to reduce inflation. It was unanimously agreed that these are the basis for recovery and for the creation of new and lasting jobs here and in the Community as a whole.

The European Council also reaffirmed the necessity of the work set in hand by Finance Ministers after the recent turmoil in the currency markets. It was agreed that the work will involve Finance Ministers, the Monetary Committee, Central Bank governors and the Commission. It will cover recent economic and financial developments in Europe and the implications of changes in the economic environment in recent years. In particular, it will look at the impact of the increasing size and sophistication of financial markets and greater capital liberalisation.

One critical discussion concerned the negotiations for a general agreement on tariffs and trade Uruguay round settlement. Over the past two weeks, significant progress had been made between the Commission and the United States in all sectors of the negotiation. I asked Commissioner Andriessen to report to the European Council. At the end of our discussion, the Commission was given the authority to continue to negotiate with the intention of reaching a satisfactory conclusion within the next 10 weeks. Subsequently, further useful progress was made in talks in Canada over the weekend. A GATT settlement would make a vital contribution to recovery and would be very much in Britain's interest. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, it would lead to an extra $200 billion in annual world output.

In the Birmingham declaration we also took significant steps towards bringing the Community closer to ordinary people. The declaration agreed at Birmingham has a number of distinct elements. It recognises the importance of national identity. It acknowledges that the Community can act only where member states have given it the power to do so in the treaties. It lays down that action at the Community level should happen only when necessary. It calls for new guidelines, so that when Community action is taken it takes the lightest possible form. It introduces better consultation by the Commission before proposals are brought forward. It calls for a greater role for national Parliaments in the work of the Community.

The declaration provides, for the first time, a proper framework for the practical definition and implementation of subsidiarity. We agreed that, at the Edinburgh European Council in two months' time, we must make a reality of that principle. All members of the European Council agreed to take decisions at Edinburgh to make subsidiarity an integral part of future EC decision making. That change of attitude by the Council and the Commission is as important as the procedures and criteria to be introduced.

Prime Minister Schluter of Denmark reported to the European Council on the present state of discussion on the Maastricht treaty within Denmark. The Danish Government have published a White Paper and will produce specific ideas shortly. It remains their aim to ratify the treaty, and we plan to set in place at Edinburgh the framework that will allow them to do so.

The Birmingham Council also gave us an opportunity to review our action to relieve suffering in Somalia and Yugoslavia. The Community has given a lead in both countries. In Somalia we called for an immediate ceasefire to allow for the rapid deployment of United Nations troops and for the distribution of aid and agreed to try to expedite these deployments.

In Yugoslavia, at British initiative, a Community humanitarian force will be established. It will support the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in delivering humanitarian aid. The Community will speed up aid already pledged, which includes 120,000 tonnes of food. We have invited the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to hold a meeting of experts as soon as possible to make sure that that aid gets through without delay. There will be a follow-up meeting in a few weeks' time to ensure that effective action is being taken. Member states also pledged further staff and resources to strengthen the UNHCR effort. I can today announce a further £15 million of bilateral aid to provide 22 more trucks, 10 Land Rovers, shelter, medical supplies and personnel. Deliveries will start very shortly.

A confident and successful Community is a vital interest of this country. Sixty per cent. of our visible trade is with the Community. Much of our external investment comes from the Community. Eight of our top 10 trading partners are in the Community. With less than three months to go to the completion of the single market, which could raise Community output by more than 4 per cent., it was vital to re-establish confidence in the interests of stability, recovery, growth and jobs in all our countries. The Birmingham European Council did precisely that.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): Let me make it clear at the outset that the Labour party welcomes the discussions and decisions on the former Yugoslavia and on Somalia.

We agree with the emphasis laid on providing winter shelter for the very large number of people who are now at risk in the former Yugoslavia and on the strengthening of support for the humanitarian aid and relief provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

We are glad that the seriousness of the situation in Somalia is recognised, but does not the fact that it is so widely accepted that more needs to be done illustrate how irresponsible it would be to cut overseas aid even further as the problems of famine spread, not just in Somalia but throughout east, central and southern Africa?

Although the importance of a GATT agreement was acknowledged at the summit, little progress appears to have been made towards achieving it.

Those important matters apart, is it not now clear that this was a summit conceived in panic after Britain's humiliating withdrawal from the ERM, a summit which should have had jobs, growth and investment at the top of its agenda but did not, and a summit which turned out to be another missed opportunity of the inept and fumbling British presidency?

As we were told that a principal reason for calling the summit was to make a major reform of the so-called fault lines in the ERM, why was that brushed aside in anodyne references to the need for further reflection and analysis? If the Government had a case on that matter, why did not they use their presidency to make it? Was it because if they had done so other participants in the events leading up to black Wednesday such as the German and Italian Governments would have exposed the gross incompetence displayed by the Prime Minister and his Chancellor of the Exchequer? Can the Prime Minister tell us whether during the presidency his Government have produced one initiative which tackles rising unemployment, falling investment and low growth?

In the context of the declaration on greater openness, the Prime Minister said:

> "The Community must send a signal to the citizens of Europe that we will listen to their worries and respond to their needs."

If that is such good advice, why does he not lead by example? What evidence is there that he listens to the deep worries and real needs of British citizens as our economy slides from recession into slump?

When the Prime Minister agreed at Birmingham that promoting subsidiarity involved greater openness, a better informed public, decentralisation of decision-taking and better consultations before proposals were made, did it ever occur to him that those desirable characteristics of good government were signally lacking in his own Administration at home? Is to refuse an independent review of the pit closures consistent with his profession at Birmingham about the need for a more informed public debate and more open government? Is that an example of better consultation procedures before proposals are made?

When the Prime Minister said that his EC partners should give the Maastricht treaty what he described as a human face, did he not appreciate that the social chapter is precisely that part of the treaty which other member states see as its human face but which his Government reject? Does he not realise that the social chapter is essential in transforming a market for business into a Community for people?

In summation, was not the Birmingham summit typical of the British presidency as a whole—inconclusive and largely irrelevant?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for occasionally touching on the summit, even though when he did so he showed how little he really knows or understands about the Community. On the few summit points that he made, I am grateful for his support for what is being done for Yugoslavia and the humanitarian aid that is being dispensed there. It is the British Government and British aid that is leading the way in Yugoslavia. It is British medicine that is reaching people in Yugoslavia, and it was largely British planes which led the way in carrying that aid into Yugoslavia.

On the GATT round, it is not the case that little progress was made at the summit. But the right hon. and learned Gentleman must understand as leader of his party that it is not normally always possible to state in public what has taken place in private among Heads of Government. But we have made progress towards a GATT settlement.

On the right hon. and learned Gentleman's remarks about the fault lines in the exchange rate mechanism, for market reasons that is a matter which needs to be discussed in private. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman is a former shadow Chancellor, I am astonished that he has no apparent understanding whatever of that. As for the summit being called, as he put it, in panic, it was demanded by France and other countries and not by the United Kingdom. So I trust that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will direct his remarks and criticisms to other sources rather than to us.

On the question of conversations with the Italian and German Governments, perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman should consult them. He would then be better informed about what they had to say.

On the question of openness and other matters, as I made clear in my statement a few minutes ago, these are matters on which detailed decisions are now committed for the Edinburgh summit in just 10 weeks.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman returned yet again to the social chapter, utterly failing to understand yet again the impact that he is told by every employer and business man that it will have on jobs, prosperity and employment in Britain. If he is to lecture us on unemployment and jobs, let him drop his affiliation to the job-destruction measure which we in Britain will not accept.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): Following the Birmingham declaration, does my right hon. Friend feel that he can claim the prize of 200,000 ecu offered by Mr. Delors for the first person who can define subsidiarity?

The Prime Minister: The prize might have to be divided among all the Heads of Government, including the President of the Commission, who introduced a paper which dealt with subsidiarity—a paper of great clarity which moved the Community's position forward.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I understand that the summit is already known in Brussels as the summit that never was: called to discuss the exchange rate mechanism, it never discussed it; called to put pressure on the Danes, it did not do so; called to explain Maastricht to the people, it only briefly began that task.

I shall concentrate on the area that the Prime Minister said in his statement was a British initiative, an area that has been regarded by many as one of the successes in Birmingham—the action taken in Bosnia. We have to be grateful for small and for late mercies, but it was not the action taken too late at Birmingham which will cost lives

[Mr. Paddy Ashdown]

in Sarajevo and throughout Bosnia; it was the lack of action during the past three months. I ask the Prime Minister to reflect on the fact that every measure taken in Birmingham was a measure that he told me in August was impractical. I ask him to reflect on the fact that, as a result of that delay, humanitarian aid will have to go over winter rather than summer roads in Bosnia, and that the failure to stockpile food in Sarajevo, which I and others called for in August and September, will result in miserable deaths in a European city which we shall see writhing in its agony on our television screens as we come up to Christmas.

The story of the Prime Minister's actions as leader of the European Community—he was not alone in the lack of leadership but had a duty of leadership as President of the EC—will be a story that will look miserable and tortured for the next six months, and the epitaph written on it will be, "Too little and too late."

The Prime Minister: I have rarely heard a more arrogant assertion of inaccuracies. As the leader of the party that barely is, the right hon. Gentleman ought to be better informed about what this country has done. He ought to spend less time running down the work that has been done by British aid agencies, pilots, individuals and Government. We were among the first to put planes and aid into Yugoslavia. We put in as much aid as anyone. We put troops in, against the opposition of many people, because we believed that it was right to assist people who will face difficulty this winter. The medicines that are treating people in Yugoslavia come from this country, and so do many of the doctors. The right hon. Gentleman would be better employed bearing in mind the work that we have done and the leadership that we have given rather than attacking on every occasion what this country has done.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the effectiveness of the European Community will be judged not by its internal institutions but by its relations with the outside world, and in particular in the GATT negotiations? Will my right hon. Friend give the House an assurance that no country in the European Community will be allowed to prevent a successful outcome of the GATT negotiations upon which so much hangs?

The Prime Minister: I shall certainly endeavour to ensure that that is the position. Once the Community's negotiators recommend an outcome to the Community, a decision can be taken by qualified majority. If there is an overwhelming majority in the Community, because negotiations were permitted to proceed last week, it is not now possible for one Community member to block an agreement, provided that the Commission reaches an agreement and that, as the Community's negotiators, it recommends that agreement to the European Council.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Did the Prime Minister refer at any time from the chair in Birmingham to the common agricultural policy? In that regard, if it is right to protect British agriculture against cheaper food from outside the EEC, at substantial cost to every British family, not to mention the food mountains, why is it wrong to protect British coal?

The Prime Minister: There was a very heavy agenda at Birmingham, as will be apparent from what I said a few moments ago, and on this occasion there was not a discussion on the common agricultural policy. We have had that discussion frequently and will no doubt return to it in the future, not least because of the reforms that have taken place, many of them led by the British Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, in Birmingham, he was congratulated upon his very interesting speech at the Conservative party conference in which he said that the Maastricht treaty was not about immigration? I wonder whether he would comment on page 84 of the treaty, article K.1.3, which appears to read:

"immigration policy and policy regarding nationals of third countries"

I wonder whether my right hon. Friend could confirm that he obtained the legal advice upon that speech from my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

The Prime Minister: I am sure that my hon. Friend is familiar with article K.4.3, which makes it clear that the Council shall act unanimously in this area unless it decides, unanimously, that implementing action is to be adopted by qualified majority.

As I made clear the other day, the only common interest in immigration in the European Community is the external girdle around Europe. The justification for that is that over the next decade a genuine difficulty may be faced across the whole of western Europe by immigration from Africa north into Europe and from eastern Europe west into Europe. British immigration policy is not damaged by anything in the Maastricht treaty, and I repeat that point to my hon. Friend in case he is in any doubt.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Is not the Prime Minister aware of the obvious contradiction in the Birmingham declaration between its passage about a Community close to its citizens and the passage that follows immediately which deals with proceeding, without hesitation, to ratify the Maastricht treaty?

Is it not a fact that the Danish people have said no in their referendum on the Maastricht treaty, that the French managed to get a majority by a knife edge in favour of the treaty, and that the British people have not even been asked? Can the right hon. Gentleman assure us that he has not gone back on the promise that he made to the House in his statement on 29 June after the Lisbon summit that we would not proceed with the Bill to ratify the Maastricht treaty until the Danish Government had made clear whether they would present new proposals to their people in order to obtain their consent? Is it not clear that the Danish White Paper is simply a consultative document and that, therefore, we have not reached that stage? May we therefore be assured that there will be no early move to reintroduce the European Communities (Amendment) Bill?

The Prime Minister: The fact is that the Danes are going to go back at the end of their consultation period to seek the assent of their people in the constitutional referendum that is necessary. The Danish Prime Minister has made that clear. The right hon. Gentleman referred to the French result, but the fact is that the French won the referendum by the same sort of majority that the Danes lost by. In the United Kingdom the long-standing principle is that these matters are decided in this House, in the United Kingdom Parliament. In due course, after we have had the paving debate that I promised the House, we shall reintroduce the Maastricht treaty in this Session of Parliament.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the conference was a successful occasion as it showed further progress towards developing the European Community? Can he say a little more about the plans for greater openness by the Council of Ministers?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly say that a whole series of proposals are now being examined in the hope that they will be finalised by the Edinburgh summit. That is our intention. Among the matters we have in mind, for example, before decision making is done, is the much greater use of Green Papers, familiar to the House in our legislative procedures but less familiar to the House in terms of the European Community's activities. That is an illustration of the sort of matter that is at present under consideration.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): Did the Birmingham summit advance the cause of European union?

The Prime Minister: The Birmingham summit was called not for that purpose but for the purposes I set out. European union—depending on its definition—*[Interruption.]* There have been many disagreements about the definition, from the time it was first set out in the treaty of Rome—is certainly not imminent. If by European union the right hon. Gentleman means currency union and a single currency, I have expressed the view that I have expressed to the House before: I believe that the required convergence of European economies will take far longer than is set out in the timetable to which others signed up at Maastricht but to which we did not, and I believe that current events make that clearer hour by hour.

Mr. Tim Renton (Mid-Sussex): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the progress made at Birmingham, but can he ensure that by the time of the Edinburgh summit there is a list available, agreed by the Commission, of those detailed areas from which it will withdraw on the ground that such matters are better handled at national level? Is he aware that in that way we shall be able to worry not just about the meaning of the word "subsidiarity" but see how it will work in practice?

The Prime Minister: I can confirm that that is the intention.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Will the Prime Minister confirm that at Birmingham Chancellor Kohl put forward proposals on subsidiarity that are much more far reaching than those the right hon. Gentleman outlined today and were in line with the proposals put forward by the Germans to the Council of Ministers in Brussels? Are Her Majesty's Government actively considering those proposals put forward by Chancellor Kohl?

The Prime Minister: Chancellor Kohl's proposals were certainly far reaching, but they were not more far reaching than those put forward by the United Kingdom Government. We have been in discussion with the German Government for some time over the question of subsidiarity. We share the view that we need to move in that direction. That is no longer just the view of the British Government, as it was some time ago. It now has solid support from the German, French and other Governments. There has been a sea change in attitude among the European Heads of Government, brought about by a range of events over the past year or so, not least the continued advocacy of the case by the British Government. So that the hon. Gentleman is right to say that the Germans are in favour of greater subsidiarity, but he is incorrect in saying that their proposals are more far reaching and wide ranging than are ours.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Will my right hon. Friend confirm, and not be too modest about it, that it is as the result of his personal intervention with our French partners at Birmingham that the dispute between Europe and America over farm subsidies is likely to be resolved and that there will be concluded a GATT agreement which will do far more than anything else for world trade and getting the economy out of recession?

The Prime Minister: It is absolutely clear that nothing could be more beneficial for world economic circumstances at present than a satisfactory speedy GATT agreement. I confirm that I have had a number of conversations with the Commission, with individual Governments in the Community and with the United States. I shall continue to do so for the reason I set out, which is that there is nothing more important on the economic agenda at present than the satisfactory conclusion of a GATT agreement.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): In seeking so unsuccessfully to put flesh on subsidiarity, did the Prime Minister draw to the attention of his fellow Heads of State the opinion of Lord Mackenzie-Stuart, the jurist and the former president of the European Court, that the definition as given in the treaty is gobbledegook? What is the right hon. Gentleman's reaction to that view?

The Prime Minister: My view is the same as that of the Lord Chancellor of this country, who does not agree with the noble Lord to whom the hon. Gentleman referred.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the greatest adverse consequences of failure to reach agreement in the GATT round is that not only would it be extremely damaging to ourselves but would be devastating for third world countries? Is he aware that agreement will be best achieved by the way in which he is proceeding rather than by silly megaphone negotiations? Does he accept that, generally speaking, the weird notion that we can solve Britain's economic problems independently of and in isolation from the Community is the greatest delusion since the Indian rope trick?

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend's final point. In terms of economics and trade, nowhere in the world is an island these days and international co-operation is vital in the self-interest of jobs, prosperity, growth and our future.

My hon. Friend is also entirely right in saying that the principal gainer from a satisfactory GATT agreement will be the third world. On the one hand, it now receives aid from the west and, on the other, it must be deeply frustrated by seeing the west then close its markets to third world exports and products. The third world wishes to export, become self-sustaining and build up its own

[The Prime Minister]

industries. That is vital, as is an early settlement of the long-running and damaging oilseeds dispute between the Community and the United States.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): The Prime Minister has expressed his support for the principle of subsidiarity and a greater role for national Parliaments. How does he reconcile that principle with his refusal to allow the nations of Scotland and Wales to have Parliaments of their own? Before he goes to Edinburgh, will he recognise the overwhelming demand of people in Scotland that there should be a Parliament to serve the people of Scotland so that they may have a greater role under the principle of subsidiarity?

The Prime Minister: I am inclined to refer the hon. Gentleman to the 40 or 50 times that I have answered that question before.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Did the Danish Government say in Birmingham how soon they expected the completion of their inter-party talks on the conditions for a second referendum in Denmark? If those conditions are not acceptable in Brussels, does not that mean that the second referendum in Denmark will not take place and that the Maastricht treaty will be dead, regardless of anything that we do?

The Prime Minister: The Community is anxious to assist the Danes in the difficulties that they face at the moment. We hope to put in place at the Edinburgh summit a framework to do that. That was agreed at Birmingham a few days ago. The Danish Prime Minister is in the process of consulting the other Danish political parties and much wider. He then proposes to set out what he believes is necessary to enable him to put the treaty for consideration before his people again at a further referendum. It is impossible to put a precise timescale on that at present, but it is clear that the Danes wish to proceed with it as speedily as practicable.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): On behalf of all my colleagues who are privileged to represent the city of Birmingham, may I thank the Prime Minister for his expression of thanks to the people of that great city and its city council for their efforts in making arrangements for the summit? May I also, on their behalf, invite the Prime Minister back to Birmingham as soon as possible so that he can explain directly to those people and their city council what positive results came from that summit, or what positive results he expects from the Edinburgh summit, which will get the people of the west midlands back to work?

The Prime Minister: On the hon. Gentleman's first point, I am grateful for his remarks. The organisation in Birmingham was remarkable and was dealt with at great speed. The convention centre there is of a high order and everything that was necessary was readily provided, including the striking of a remarkable memento coin that was handed to all the European Heads of Government. I reiterate my thanks to the people and council of Birmingham.

On the second half of the hon. Gentleman's question, I shall happily send a copy of the Birmingham statement immediately, but he will have to wait for a copy of the Edinburgh statement until after we have had the Edinburgh summit.

Sir George Gardiner (Reigate): In the light of my right hon. Friend's experience at Birmingham, is he confident that the Edinburgh summit will produce not only a practical definition of subsidiarity but a precise legal definition that will stand up to tests before the European Court?

The Prime Minister: That is certainly our intention. The definition is already legally underpinned by article 3b of the Maastricht treaty. We must negotiate and agree a definition among all the 12 members of the Community, but I believe that there is a will among the Twelve to reach an agreement, and we committed ourselves to doing so in Birmingham.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Did not this jamboree prove to be a grossly embarrassing sideshow, a gross waste of public money, which served only to increase opposition to the Maastricht treaty? Is it not clear that there is no escape via subsidiarity because nobody knows what it means? If the Prime Minister knows what it means and puts it on a piece of paper, Jacques Delors is willing to give him 200,000 ecu.

The Prime Minister: I think that the hon. Gentleman's wish is father to the thought. I doubt that those people in Yugoslavia who have got extra aid, those in Somalia who will get extra help, people who see the prospect of a GATT agreement moving that bit nearer and people who can now see the changes that will clearly come about in terms of subsidiarity would recognise an iota of truth in what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): In present circumstances arising from Birmingham, what is more important to my right hon. Friend—the good will of a couple of elderly European politicians intent on imposing their blueprint on an increasingly reluctant Europe, or the good will of his hon. Friends? If it is the latter, would not it be the height of political wisdom for my right hon. Friend to delay the return of the Maastricht treaty to this House until such time as the Danes have ratified it? God willing, they may never do so.

The Prime Minister: Surely there is no doubt about the good will of my hon. Friend. I for one have never doubted it. I look for his support now and in the future on the programme on which we jointly contested the general election. He mentions our colleagues in Europe. This country, as with their countries, always has to put the national interest first and always will. A part of our national interest must mean that we have a central say in the decisions taken in Europe that affect this country, its jobs, its industry and its prosperity, and that we are determined to do. It may be the ambition of some to see this country isolated as a sour little outpost of western Europe, but it is not my ambition.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Does the Prime Minister understand that the case for subsidiarity from Brussels to Westminster, which he supports, is the same as that for subsidiarity from Westminster to Edinburgh, which he does not support? As he has such poor understanding of the concept of subsidiarity, I advise him not to take up Jacques Delors' offer of a job in the

Commission and 140,000 ecu for the first person to explain subsidiarity on one side of a piece of paper. Alas, as with his present employment, that is another job for which the right hon. Gentleman is uniquely unsuited.

The Prime Minister: I have no wish either now or in the future for a job in the Commission.

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that the role of national Parliaments will be fully recognised and reflected in the work of the Community?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir; and one of the agreements made at Birmingham was that we shall be looking for ways to agree at Edinburgh that will enhance, not diminish, the role of national Parliaments.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Will the Prime Minister stop wringing his hands at the Dispatch Box in an attempt to explain to his Back Benchers the cosmetic changes to Maastricht? Why did he not seize the opportunity at Birmingham to sell British coal from the most efficient coal industry in Europe to our European partners instead of announcing last week plans to butcher that industry?

The Prime Minister: There is no hand wringing at all; the hon. Gentleman is mistaken about that. He spoke about British coal. If, for example, he had spoken about imports from Germany and German subsidies, I would have had to tell him that the scale of such imports to the United Kingdom coal market is ·002 per cent. Much of it is anthracite and other coal that is not readily available here, and virtually none of it goes to power stations. The hon. Gentleman would be wise not to raise too many myths.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Did the Birmingham summit consider the serious situation that is developing as a result of the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia insisting on the continued use of that name? Is he aware of the great strength of feeling about this in our Community partner of Greece? Will he take all possible steps to avoid conflict in that area?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend raises a question that has been discussed on a number of occasions in the Foreign Affairs Council and in the European Council at Lisbon. It is a particularly intractable problem which the Community is actively seeking to solve. There were no discussions in the formal meeting, but I understand that there were bilateral discussions at the Birmingham summit even in the limited time that we were there.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Reverting to the Delors prize for the definition of subsidiarity, would the Prime Minister be interested to know that I am putting in a 95-word attempt at that competition? Does the Prime Minister recall that, on a number of occasions, and particularly on 29 June at column 594 of *Hansard,* he asserted that there is a definition of subsidiarity in article 3b? Indeed, on that occasion he said that it was justiciable. Does this not mean that either the Prime Minister has signed a treaty containing an unsatisfactory definition of this concept or that all this kerfuffle is unnecessary? Which is right?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is probably too late for the award, although I am sure that he would be a powerful contestant. At the summit at Birmingham, Mr. Delors made a substantial presentation on subsidiarity, how it would be brought about, and how it would proceed. From that, the hon. Gentleman will find that a clear, practical definition, apart from the legal definition that is justiciable and that exists in article 3b, will be available. Therefore, he is too late for the prize.

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, in a speech on 7 September in the Queen Elizabeth hall, he said that he would not wish to bring the Bill ratifying Maastricht back to the House until what he called the "Danish difficulties" had been resolved? As Birmingham showed that the "Danish difficulties" have not been resolved, will he consider not bringing back the Bill until at least after the Edinburgh conference?

The Prime Minister: It is now clear from my discussions with the Danish Prime Minister and from what the Danes have said how the Danes will resolve their difficulties. They have set out alternative options on which they are negotiating. They then propose to come to the European summit at Edinburgh and then to proceed. Therefore, the way is open, at a time convenient to the House, for us to reconsider the treaty to which, on behalf of the country and with the consent of the House, I gave our name.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): The Prime Minister said earlier that there was discussion of Government deficits. Later, he said that he did not believe that we would move to economic and monetary union in the timescale laid out in the Maastricht treaty. He knows, as we know, that the times for convergence imply an enormous cut in Government expenditure. As we in Britain are on the brink of a terrible slump and need to borrow to invest, and as there is a terrible depression spreading across Europe, was there discussion of modifying the terms of convergence so that the people of Europe can borrow money to invest, thereby creating jobs rather than furthering depression?

The Prime Minister: There was not a discussion of deficits as such in the way suggested by the hon. Lady. There was an agreement, based on discussions on deficits that we have had on many occasions, of the desirability of containing deficits as one of the essential prerequisites to growth and prosperity. As I said in an earlier answer, I do not believe that the convergence timetable is practical at the moment. With the possible exception of Luxembourg and France, none of the countries, including Germany, meet all of the convergence timetable, and some of them seem very far away.

On the basis of sound economic policies, quite apart from any convergence criteria set at Maastricht, these convergence principles are right for sound economic management—nobody doubts that, certainly among the European Heads of Government. However, as I said earlier, in the present circumstances it is becoming increasingly unlikely that countries will reach convergence conditions on the timetable set out in the Maastricht treaty. That is not a new judgment; I made it when I declined to commit the country to entering a single currency on the timescale agreed by our European partners.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): With national economies in recession throughout the world, does my right hon.

[Mr. Peter Viggers]

Friend agree that what we most need now is a restoration of trading confidence, which will most easily follow from agreement under the general agreement on tariffs and trade? Does he agree also that as a major trading nation we would stand to benefit greatly from such an agreement? Does he believe that there is now a genuine political will within Europe to achieve a GATT agreement?

The Prime Minister: I agree unreservedly with every word that my hon. Friend has spoken. I believe that there is a genuine political will across Europe. I hope that it extends in precisely the same measure to each and every country in Europe. Certainly the Heads of Government agreed on the desirability of securing a settlement. Our negotiators have been sent back to negotiate first with the Americans. When those negotiations are completed, they will return to the general negotiations in Geneva to reach a settlement. I fervently hope that that will be possible.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Given that one of the stated objectives of the United Kingdom's presidency was the widening of the Community, or the speeding up of that process, will the Prime Minister accept that there is genuine concern among many of us on both sides of the Chamber that there seems to be an inability within the Community to resolve a European problem, which is that of Bosnia and the surrounding areas of that state?

As the Prime Minister has already said that there was not a substantive debate at Birmingham on the issue, will he tell us what diplomatic initiatives he envisages between members of the Community in addition to the humanitarian aid, which we all welcome while recognising the complexities of the situation? What is being done to ensure that refugees from what appears to be genocide are shown the hand of friendship by this country as well as by other members of the Community?

The Prime Minister: Many refugees—I do not have the number immediately to hand—have been admitted to this country in recent months. The London conference set out a series of objectives that few people expected to be met in terms of seeking to reach an agreement in respect of the tangled conflict in Bosnia. It is not an agreement that is readily available with the ancient hatreds—I can put it in no other way—that have been reopened by the combatants in the dispute. United Nations negotiators are in constant touch to see what can be done. Progress appears to have been made time and again. It has then been broken, as it were, and the word has been broken of one or other of the combatants who put their hand to progress. That is a matter of great regret to me and everyone else.

There is a difficulty that the hon. Lady and the House generally must face. I share her view of the humanitarian difficulties that will be faced this winter, and that is why the United Kingdom has taken so much action, but I do not believe that it would be a practicable proposition for this country, or any collection of countries, to put troops into the middle of the dispute to hold the combatants apart. With great regret, I do not believe that that would be possible or practicable. I believe that there would be a blood bath of unprecedented proportions and that the troops who would be there would be there for an indefinite period. I do not believe, given the terrain and the circumstances, that such a move would be possible. That means that we are driven back to negotiations, and negotiations are being carried out on behalf of the United Nations.

We must rely on the good will of the combatants—to my great regret, it has not always been forthcoming. We shall have to continue to try to do that and in the meantime alleviate the hardship as much as we can. In terms of alleviating the hardship, there is a decision to send 1,800 British troops, who will stay there. There will be rather more initially to establish the troops in post. It is a difficult decision. It will not be an easy task for the troops, nor will it necessarily be a safe one. I took the decision because I share the view that has been expressed by the hon. Lady and by the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), the leader of the Liberal Democrat party, that during the winter, whatever we do and whatever anybody else does, many men, women and children will die, quite apart from those killed in conflict, as a result of the terrible dispute in former Yugoslavia.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. On that note I am drawing this session of questions to a close—*[Interruption.]* I am always in a no-win situation when it comes to statements. We must now move on.

Points of Order

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am not seeking to extend Question Time, as you will readily appreciate, but my point of order arises from education questions. At the end of questions, the Secretary of State for Education impugned the integrity of Salford city council, which I represent in this place. He suggested that Salford city council unfairly interfered in a successful ballot in which 70 per cent. of parents at Earlham community high school in my constituency voted last week and yesterday to stay with the local education authority. I have to place on record in this House that that ballot was carried out fairly, without interference, and the people spoke. The Secretary of State should not abuse the procedures of the House in the way he did at Question Time.

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will find other methods of making his point known.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. One of the most essential democratic rights in Britain is the right to lobby Parliament. You will know of the demonstration and lobbying which is to take place on Wednesday as a result of the grave situation in the coal industry. Will every effort be made to ensure that as many as possible of those lobbying—obviously a limited number, we know that, and there is no doubt about it—will be able to see their Members of Parliament and that those involved in the coal industry will not be told at St. Stephen's entrance that they cannot get in? I hope that every effort will be made by the Serjeant at Arms and his staff—I am sure that that will be the case—and by the police to ensure that those exercising their democratic rights in Britain will be able to lobby just as others do and that there will be no form of discrimination because the people who happen to be lobbying are miners.

Madam Speaker: I am deeply concerned that British citizens who want legitimately to lobby their Members of Parliament should have access to these premises so to do. I am already involved in negotiations to ensure that as many people as possible will be able to do that tomorrow, although the House will understand that there are limits.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I worked in the steel industry for about 20 years before I entered the House and I wish to raise a matter on which the House was seriously and inadvertently misled yesterday concerning that industry. Yesterday, the President of the Board of Trade said:

> "I had to go to Corby in 1979 when the Labour party closed the steelworks".—[*Official Report*, 19 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. 209.]

On 1 November 1979, the then Member of Parliament for Kettering applied for a debate under Standing Order No. 9 on the urgent matter of

> "the announcement by the British Steel Corporation today"—

1 November 1979—

> "that it will begin a speedy run down of the iron and steel works in Corby."—[*Official Report*, 1 November 1979; Vol. 972, c. 1479.]

Is it not right that that matter should be corrected tomorrow by the President of the Board of Trade along with his other U-turn? Would it not be a good thing if he relinquished his responsibility for energy and concentrated on——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is trying to continue yesterday's debate, but he knows that there are ways and means by which he can do that, either by tabling a motion or by raising the matter, if he catches my eye, in tomorrow's debate.

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has already raised a point of order. I have to deal with those of other hon. Members.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick). There is a story going around that members of the public will be admitted to Parliament square tomorrow—Parliament square, not the precincts of this building—only if they are in possession of a letter from a Member of Parliament saying that they have an appointment to lobby that Member of Parliament. *[Interruption.]* I am rather surprised that the Government Whip should be supporting that process.

Will you confirm, Madam Speaker, that the Sessional Orders carried at the start of this Session of Parliament make it clear that the public have a right of entry to Parliament square and have a right to lobby their Members of Parliament, as you have just explained to us? I should be grateful if you would make it clear to the police that any restrictions, such as that members of the public should carry letters from Members of Parliament, would be contrary to the Sessional Orders that we have agreed.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. With reference to the remarks of my hon. Friends, and particularly to those of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), Labour Members of Parliament are happy to send such letters to their constituents because they support the motion to save the pits. Some Tory Members of Parliament might not want to do so. The result may be an imbalance in the lobby, with members of the public who do not have letters from Tory Members of Parliament kept out.

I refer also to an earlier point of order raised during Question Time. You, Madam Speaker, know that there will be a close vote tomorrow. It is supposed to be an orderly vote, yet the hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) was hauled out of the Chamber by the Government Whip, the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight), to be told how to vote tomorrow night. A lot of arm twisting, bullying, and intimidation is going on. We want to make sure that it will be a clean vote and a clean Lobby.

Madam Speaker: Right hon. and hon. Members will make up their own minds how to vote tomorrow. That has nothing to do with the Chair. I made it clear earlier that I am as keen as anyone here to see that citizens of this country who want to lobby their Members of Parliament are allowed to do so. Tomorrow will be an extremely difficult day for the House authorities and the police. I am already involved in talks, and I will do my utmost to ensure that as many people as possible have access to this place.

Mr. Winnick: I am genuinely grateful to you, Madam Speaker—as I am sure my hon. Friends are—for your remarks. However, if the position is that described by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn)—if British citizens who come to see their Members of Parliament are stopped by the police when they try to enter Parliament square—and if that information is communicated to you as quickly as possible, will you make arrangements to hear our point of view and to negotiate with the police accordingly?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) began his point of order by using the words, "There is a story going around." I do not work on rumours; I work on fact. Perhaps right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House will leave it to me to deal with the matter as best I can.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you give serious consideration to allowing Prime Ministerial statements on European Community matters to run for one hour for the remainder of the United Kingdom's presidency of the EEC? Given that part of that presidency was, in a sense, lost to Parliament because of the summer recess, that is a reasonable request, particularly in respect of those right hon. and hon. Members who take a deep interest in all things European. I therefore respectfully ask that you, Madam Speaker, accede to my polite request.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is always polite when making requests to me, and I hope that I am always polite in trying to dodge them. If I were to allow the Prime Minister to spend one hour on EC statements, I would next be asked to allow a different Minister one hour on another matter. The hon. Gentleman knows me well enough to leave the matter in my hands. I am not at the end of the line in which medals are given for the time allowed for statements. Yesterday, I allowed two hours on yesterday's statement, and I allowed just over three quarters of an hour on today's statement. I am in a no-win situation. The House will just have to leave it to me. However, I take the hon. Gentleman's point. I noticed that he rose in his place throughout today's statement—I know that he is very keen. [HON. MEMBERS: "And me."] Yes, I am sure that is true of other right hon. and hon. Members as well.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Ordered,

That the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 (Amendment) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Regulation of Wheel-Clamping

4.29 pm

Mr. John Spellar (Warley, West): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to control the wheel-clamping of vehicles on private land; and for connected purposes.

Let me begin, Madam Speaker, by offering you my congratulations—and, I am sure, those of the whole House —on being made a freeman of the borough of Sandwell, together with my predecessor Peter Archer, now Baron Archer of Sandwell. I am sure that that is fitting testimony to the service that both of you have given your constituencies and our borough.

My Bill would regulate wheel clamping on private land. It is important in itself, because of the growing evidence of abuse by clampers; but it is also important in a wider sense. It is about time that we stopped treating the motorist as a second-class citizen. It is about time that we recognised the reality of the 20th century, and the role that the motor car has played in it.

Currently, in England and Wales, there is effectively no legal framework to regulate the clamping or removal of vehicles on private land. We talk expansively about "cowboy clampers", but the position is indeed somewhat akin to that in the old West: there is no law west of the Pecos that relates to clamping.

The motor car is probably the second most expensive asset that the motorist owns; in some cases, it may be the most expensive. Yet motorists can be deprived of its use: it can be forcibly removed without either due process or accountability. Furthermore, although I do not wish to tar all clampers with the same brush, there is definitely a disreputable element—people who have scented rich pickings, and are behaving in a very unprincipled way— and all the evidence that I have received suggests that the position is worsening.

They order things a little differently in Scotland; or, at least, they have done so since the summer. Faced with a decision on private clamping and a demand for payment, the Scottish courts observed, in a short, sharp and effective judgment, that such action was

"extortion and theft under Scottish law".

I have asked Scottish colleagues about the effects of that judgment. Has traffic ground to a halt in Scotland? Are Glasgow and Edinburgh gridlocked? Will the House be besieged by Scottish landowners seeking redress? None of that seems to have happened: the position seems to have remained fairly normal. It appears that the abuse has been rectified without the great problems that might have been expected.

As a result of the Scottish decision, I tabled an early-day motion which was supported by hon. Members on both sides of the House. After one or two abortive attempts in the early hours of the morning, I introduced an Adjournment debate on 16 July, just before the summer recess. I was supported by the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller), who, I understand, is chairing a Committee elsewhere. I hoped that we would make some progress with the Home Office over the summer; its representatives have been very courteous, and I am pleased to see that the Minister is present today. Unfortunately, however, we have not yet secured a definitive result. I hope that, as a result of our discussions, the Home Office now recognises the size and dimensions of the problem caused by private clamping.

I also hope that those in the Home Office understand that the problem will not go away. Every day, more private citizens are wheel clamped, and more and more feel aggrieved. This is a constituency that is increasing in size. Accordingly, I hope that the Bill's next stage will not be blocked by the Government, and that the Home Office will try to work with us positively to achieve a satisfactory solution.

On 16 July, I drew the attention of the House to many of the abuses that have taken place. I mentioned cars being blocked in while their owners were still inside, with the engine still running, after which the clampers would emerge and clamp them. I mentioned cars being parked on empty land to entice motorists into believing that it was an open parking area, and the motorists' vehicles then being clamped. I mentioned the clampers who wait until someone has gone around the corner, and then come out to clamp that person's car. I mentioned the clamping of cars in inner-city zones late at night: motorists—often they are women—come back and discover that they must find a telephone and wait for perhaps an hour or two to be released.

The action of those who wait before clamping vehicles highlights one of the problems. If the clampers' concern was to stop illicit parking, they would tell motorists immediatly that they were parking in an inappropriate place. Instead, they let motorists park, wait until they have gone round the corner and then come out and clamp them.

It is all down to motivation, and the main motive seems to be to extort money from the motorist. I suspect that if a clamping operative does not catch enough victims, he loses his job. It is very much like the problem that has been revealed in regard to Westminster council, which is involved in a row with its traffic wardens because they are not issuing their quota of parking tickets. It all sounds remarkably Stalinist. Some clamping firms advise their employees to get the clamp off as quickly as possible so that other motorists will not see any clamps and will therefore be enticed on to the property. Some clampers offer landowners a profit-sharing scheme if they will allow them to clamp on their land.

The money involved is not insignificant—far more than is involved if one parks on the street and is caught by the public authorities. The minimum amount seems to have moved up to about £50. When I talked today to Radio WM on its Ed Doolan programme, I gathered that in the Birmingham area it has moved up to £70 if one pays straight away. If, however, one has to go away and come back the next day with the money, one finds that the amount has gone up by another £50. The record is held by Hebden Bridge. If one is clamped there, it costs £240. I am waiting for somebody to improve on that figure.

With such rich pickings, it is no wonder that dubious characters have been attracted into the business. All that one needs are a few wheel clamps, a van of whatever quality and a mobile phone. I have been warned that the only danger in mentioning these facts is that other people might be attracted into the business.

As a result, many hon. Members, of all parties, have been approached by their constituents who had been personally inconvenienced and aggrieved. A number of those hon. Members have passed correspondence to me, as have a number of broadcasting programmes and the national press, all of which have been running campaigns. I have handed to the Home Office a considerable number of letters that were received as a result of one of the broadcast programmes. Many of them make distressing reading.

The AA and the RAC, the two main motoring organisations, have also provided a long list of complaints from their members. Those two organisations tried to bring many of the complaints to court but, unfortunately, either the clampers settled at the doors of the court or they went out of business. Unfortunately, therefore, the AA and the RAC have been unable to obtain effective case law in the way that has been possible in Scotland.

We have to consider what clamping is trying to solve. Is clamping trying to solve the problem of obstruction? It strikes me that to immobilise the obstructing vehicle is the most bizarre way to deal with obstruction. Is it a misuse of parking space? I recognise that that can be a considerable problem and a major inconvenience where blocks of flats are involved, but is that the only way in which obstruction can be dealt with?

One of the problems with wheel clamping is that the clampers are judge, jury and court bailiff, all rolled into one. There is no redress. There is no effective due process. Sometimes, not even the landowners are able to provide redress. One example that has been drawn to my attention is that of a motorist who parked his car in a British Rail car park. He had a British Rail season ticket. He also had a season ticket for British Rail's car park. That person was clamped. British Rail accepts that he has a season ticket, but all it can do is to refer him to the clamper because British Rail has handed over its rights on that land. That is unsatisfactory. I doubt whether even the citizens charter will solve that problem.

The situation is a mess. It is unacceptable for things to muddle on as they are. It is not a sustainable position. Quite apart from whether clamping is desirable in itself —I do not believe that it is—far too many undesirable elements are being attracted into the industry. Furthermore, to leave vehicles immobilised late at night means that motorists, especially women, are vulnerable to attack. I do not want the Home Office to be forced into drastic action as a result of an incident.

We have, therefore, to look at the possible remedies. In such an easy-entry industry, self-regulation does not seem to be a practical proposition. We need to look at what happens in Scotland or at some form of licensing under the control of local authorities. We cannot leave the position as it is—a free-for-all.

A major abuse of power by private clampers is taking place that is causing considerable public concern, distress and cost to many members of the public. It has been going on for too long. It is time to close down the clamping cowboys. Accordingly, I seek leave to introduce a Bill to control the wheel clamping of vehicles parked on private land.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. John Spellar, Mr. Ian McCartney, Mr. Gary Waller, Mr. Gerald Bermingham, Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. John Battle, Mrs. Barbara Roche, Mr. Tom Cox and Mr. Alan Meale.

REGULATION OF WHEEL-CLAMPING

Mr. John Spellar accordingly presented a Bill to control the wheel-clamping of vehicles parked on private land; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 22 January and to be printed. [Bill 65.]

Orders of the Day

Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Madam Speaker: I should inform the House that I have not selected the motion to recommit certain clauses.

New Clause 1

Development and conservation of flora and fauna

'.—(1) When managing the inland bay (including when doing so to comply with a direction given under section 12(1)(b) above) the Development Corporation shall have regard to the desirability of developing and conserving flora and fauna.

(2) The Development Corporation shall consult the Countryside Council for Wales to seek their view as to ways in which the inland bay may be managed so as to develop and conserve flora and fauna.'—*[Mr. Gwilym Jones.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 11, in clause 1, page 2, line 3, leave out from 'to' to end of line 24 and insert

'provide no less access to a range of pleasure craft and other vessels than at present and to participation and other open-air recreational activities for those of modest means in sailing, other water sports and other open air recreational activities no less than at present.'.

Government amendment No. 1.

Amendment No. 86, in page 2, line 16, leave out 'or expedient'.

Government amendment No. 2.

Amendment No. 87, in page 2, line 24, at end insert

'or for the purposes of developing or conserving flora or fauna'.

Government amendment No. 3.

Amendment No. 16, in clause 2, page 3, line 1, leave out subsection (4).

Amendment No. 93, in page 3, line 2, at end insert

', averting displacement of,'.

Government amendment No. 4.

Amendment No. 18, in page 3, line 6, leave out 'in' and insert 'before'.

Amendment No. 20, in page 3, line 7, leave out 'develop and'.

Amendment No. 21, in page 3, line 7, after 'conserve', insert 'and develop'.

Amendment No. 94, in page 3, line 7, after 'conserve', insert 'and avert displacement of'.

Amendment No. 22, in page 3, line 8, at end insert

'and shall publish a report on the outcome of such consultations and shall publish detailed estimates of the general environmental impact of such works and of specific reductions in the populations of such flora and fauna as are present in the natural environment of the inland bay.'.

Amendment No. 23, in page 3, line 8, at end insert

'(5) Before executing the works authorised by section 1 above the Development Corporation shall have published proposals for mitigating works with respect of any adverse environment impact arising from assessments under (4) above.'.

Government amendment No. 5.

Amendment No. 45, in clause 9, page 5, line 45, leave out 'developing and'.

Amendment No. 46, in page 5, line 45, after 'conserving', insert 'the'.

Amendment No. 47, in page 5, line 46, at end insert

'and developing new flora and fauna in it'.

Amendment No. 48, in page 6, line 2, after 'Wales', insert

'and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds'.

Amendment No. 49, in page 6, line 3, leave out 'develop and'.

Amendment No. 50, in page 6, line 3, after 'conserve', insert 'the'.

Amendment No. 51, in page 6, line 3, leave out 'in' and insert 'of'.

Amendment No. 52, in page 6, line 4, at end insert

'and develop new flora and fauna in it'.

Amendment No. 105, in page 6, line 4, at end insert

'and on any area of land of special interest by reason of any of its flora, fauna or geological or physiographical features which may lie adjacent to any of the works authorised by section 1 above.'.

Amendment No. 106, in page 6, line 4, at end insert

'and displaced from it.'.

Amendment No. 108, in clause 14, page 8, line 22, leave out 'desirability' and insert 'encouragement'.

Amendment No. 109, in page 8, line 23, leave out 'enabling the local community' and insert

'those residing within five kilometres of the inland bay'.

Amendment No. 110, in page 8, line 24, after 'in', insert 'and around'.

Amendment No. 61, in page 8, line 25, at end add

'and to avoid any reduction of access for such craft vessels, sports and activities by those of modest means.'.

Amendment No. 62, in page 8, line 25, at end add—

'(4) The Development Corporation shall make reasonable compensation to owners of pleasure craft presently moored in the inland bay, whose vessels are incompatible with the design of the lock gates.'.

Amendment No. 121, in schedule 2, page 17, line 30, at beginning insert

'Subject to sub-paragraph (5) below,'.

Amendment No. 123, in page 18, line 15, at end insert—

'(5) No reclamation of land for the purpose of creating islands in the inland bay under paragraph (g) of sub-paragraph (1) above shall take place without the express agreement of the Countryside Council for Wales and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.'.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Government have tabled new clause 1 and amendments Nos. 1 to 5 to fulfil a commitment given in Committee. Indeed, the amendments go further than that. As I said in Committee, the Government and the development corporation recognise the need to develop new wildlife habitats in the impounded bay and attach great importance to doing so. That is why I gave the undertaking to table an amendment which put into effect the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) to add the development or conservation of nature to the list of purposes for which the ancillary powers in clause 1(5) may be implemented.

Amendment No. 3 has precisely that effect. The development corporation will be required to exercise its power to carry out ancillary work to develop or protect flora and fauna as well as to facilitate the use of the inland bay and outer harbour for boating, water sports and open air recreational activities. Amendment No. 3 relates to a clause different from the clause to which the amendment tabled in Committee by the hon. Member for Cardiff, West related, but taken with the consequential amendments Nos. 1, 2 and 5, the effect is exactly that which he sought to achieve in Committee.

As I have said, the Government intend to go further on the question of flora and fauna. The development corporation is already obliged to have regard to the desirability of conserving flora and fauna when it carries out any of the works authorised by clause 1, whether they are main or ancillary works. The corporation is also required to consult the Countryside Council for Wales and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds about the measures which should be taken to meet that obligation. It is an entirely appropriate provision which we do not seek to change. At the same time, we believe there to be a parallel need to ensure that any works carried out to that end are appropriate.

Amendment No. 4, therefore, extends the consultation requirements specifically for that purpose. That will ensure that the development corporation has access to the best advice at an early stage so that nature conservation considerations are given the appropriate emphasis in the planning and execution of the works authorised by the Bill.

The amendments are concerned with powers related to the works. The Government have taken the view that there should be some provision for nature conservation within the bay once the barrage is built. New clause 1, therefore, will require the corporation to have regard to the desirability of developing and conserving flora and fauna when managing the inland bay. It will also be obliged to consult the Countryside Council for Wales about the ways in which that could be achieved. If the corporation is obliged to carry out works in the inland bay to facilitate boating, water sports and open air recreational activities, it seems equally right that similar provisions should apply to the development or conservation of flora and fauna.

Such provisions are consistent with the duties placed on the development corporation in respect of the operation of the barrage by clause 9(2)(c) and clause 9(3). I very much hope that hon. Members will welcome the new provisions as a positive step towards creating new and varied wildlife habitats within the bay.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): The Bill has been an immensely controversial proposal, even among Cardiff Members. It is extraordinary that, despite the amount of debate on the Bill and despite the time spent on it, the Government have still failed to address any of the critical issues contained in our reasoned amendment on Second Reading almost 12 months ago.

The Bill started as a private Bill. As some hon. Members may know, I have an especial interest in private Bill procedure given that, during the debate on the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill, we managed to obtain a review of private Bill procedure. Although it has taken a long time, it is soon to be implemented.

The Bill is now a hybrid Bill, so I maintain that proper consideration should be given to the Opposition's views. In Committee, the Government made only one concession on flora and fauna, and even that amendment was not tabled by Opposition Members.

4.45 pm

Let me stress from the start that at every stage our criticism of the Bill has not been to deny the need for economic regeneration. There can be no doubt about the need for urban regeneration in the docklands of Cardiff. There must be more jobs and an end to dereliction in south Cardiff.

There were three components to the Opposition's reasoned amendment, none of which was accepted in Committee. We called for public consultation on ground water and for adequate compensation for householders affected by rising ground water levels, and we drew attention——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. It would be for the benefit of the House if we reminded ourselves that the new clause and amendments are fairly specific. This is neither a Second Reading nor a Third Reading debate. We have clear grounds of debate here and I should be grateful if all hon. Members would now restrict themselves to the specific new clause and amendments associated with it.

Mrs. Clwyd: We refer in one of our amendments to the plan to monitor the quality of the inland water to be created by the construction of the barrage. On water quality arbitration, which is very relevant and vital in deciding whether the development will create a popular amenity or a lake of sludge, the Secretary of State for Wales has reserved for himself the final decision on matters between the Cardiff Bay development corporation and the National Rivers Authority.

On all the criteria relating to ground water—safety, technical and economic—the development corporation has put forward two methods of solving the problem, but the public has had no chance to consider either method. The question that we must put to the Government tonight is: why should the Secretary of State have the last word when there should be public debate on those matters?

In Committee, the Government did not accept any of our amendments. We have tabled our amendments today because our criticisms of the Bill have not been met. The Government have given practically nothing away, although they did a deal with their own quangos, agreeing to provide an alternative feeding ground for waders such as redshanks and dunlin which, during the winter, use Cardiff bay.

We cannot be sure that the deal will stand up to legal scrutiny and that is the matter on which we want assurances tonight. When the President of the Board of Trade was, in his happier days, the Secretary of State for the Environment, he sent the issue of the intertidal mud flats of the Severn estuary to Brussels for registration as a special protection area under the 1975 EC wild birds directive. However, on 1 November 1991, the Welsh Office announced that Cardiff bay was to be excluded from the SPA proposal, although it was designated a site of special scientific interest in 1980. We should like assurances from the Government that the deal will stand up to legal scrutiny.

It is acknowledged by the Cardiff Bay development corporation that the barrage would destroy the entire SSSI, probably only the second time that such an action has occurred. That is why the Opposition have called and continue to call for an independent assessment of the environmental impact of the barrage development.

We should also like to stress the need for local democracy. The environmental officers of the city of Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan will have to decide which water sports are permitted or refused, but every attempt is being made to marginalise the democratically elected councillors and yet again to concentrate decision

[Mrs. Clwyd]

making on the quangos. In the end, however, the environmental officers of those councils will have to make the decisions.

We are also concerned about the reduction of access for small sailing boats and in respect of sports and activities undertaken by those of modest means. All the artists' impressions of Cardiff bay give the idea that it will be possible to sail small dinghies there but, under the present proposals, many owners of small boats will probably be disqualified as the water quality of the lake is unlikely to be of a sufficiently high standard to allow water sports with high water contact. The classification of dinghy sailing is at present uncertain. I remind the Government that not everyone who enjoys sailing owns a yacht.

Those are some of the reasons why we have tabled the amendments, and it is up to the Secretary of State and the Government to attempt to persuade us of the virtue of their case.

The Bill may well set a precedent, as it is estimated that 48 of 130 estuaries in the United Kingdom are subject to some sort of development proposals, including proposals for marinas. There are several barrage proposals among them—some for amenity purposes, others for power generation—and the outcome of the Cardiff bay barrage proposal could influence the consideration of future barrage schemes. That is why we consider this matter to be crucial.

Finally, I fail to understand why important documents such as the updated economic appraisal of the Cardiff bay barrage proposals arrived on our desks so late—in some cases, yesterday; in many cases, only today. Similarly, the large bundle of papers from the Welsh Office dated 24 June 1992 came to some of my hon. Friends in the post last night, to some of them in the post today, and to me, not at all. What explanation do the Government have for that? I consider it a slight on the House that the Welsh Office should have treated us in such a cavalier fashion, depriving hon. Members of an opportunity to give the Bill the close examination that such a hotly contested issue deserves.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): First, let me agree with the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) about the late arrival of the documents. I am sure that the Minister will understand that, in the interests of informed debate, it is important that all hon. Members should have early and prior sight of such documents. The late arrival of the documents is typical of the way in which the Welsh Office—although not the Cardiff Bay development corporation, which, on this count, is excused blame—has handled the matter. The Welsh Office has never taken adequate steps to ensure that we can have a properly informed debate—nor has it allowed us adequate time, either in Committee or on the Floor of the House, to discuss these issues. It is quite in keeping with what my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley described as the cavalier approach adopted by the Welsh Office that we should have been deprived of access—

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): We have had plenty of time.

Mr. Davies: We shall certainly have plenty of time to discuss the matter today, and I shall be happy to give way to my hon. Friend if he wishes to intervene at this point.

Mr. Michael: My only comment is that we have not done too badly over the months as regards time for debate.

Mr. Davies: I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that we shall have plenty of time to debate these matters today. My point is that, if we had had prior sight of the documents, we should have been able to have a more informed debate—although as you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, pointed out, we are on Report and our comments must be very specific.

I refer in particular to new clause 1. It is as well to remind ourselves that the Minister who introduced the new clause, professing concern about conserving flora and fauna and apparently recognising the importance of the bay, is the self-same Minister who, in 1986, used the anonymity of the Back Benches at 2.30 pm to kill the Bill that preceded this one—the County of South Glamorgan (Taff Crossing) Bill. Exactly the same arguments were advanced against that Bill as have been advanced against this one. In considering the political machinations of the Welsh Office, it is instructive to recall that, back in 1986 and from the anonymity of the Back Benches, the Minister saw fit to defend the interests of conservation, whereas now that he has responsibility for the matter and could put his concerns into practice, he has become party to a Bill, which—I believe for the first time ever, although my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) will correct me if I am wrong—will completely destroy a site of special scientific interest.

The Minister is offering us new clause 1 in an attempt to offset some of the worst effects of the development. It states:

> "When managing the inland bay . . . the Development Corporation shall have regard to the desirability of developing and conserving flora and fauna."

It says nothing about placing a responsibility on the development corporation and nowhere states clearly what its duties will be. Instead, a vague form of words has been used:

> "developing and conserving flora and fauna."

The Minister, in his brief introduction, referred several times to wildlife habitats. But "conserving flora and fauna" is a far cry from maintaining, developing or providing wildlife habitats: the two are completely different. "Flora" could refer to the flowers around the lakeside—the roses planted round the bay. "Fauna" could refer to the ducks——

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Rats.

Mr. Davies: We shall come to rats when we deal with water pollution.

"Fauna" could refer to seagulls or to swans or to the tame ducks feeding on bread thrown by occasional visitors. Wildlife habitats are something quite different, and the Minister has failed to understand the importance of the site of special scientific interest to national and international wildlife habitats. He certainly cannot appease us by saying that he will place on the development corporation a responsibiity to

> "develop and conserve flora and fauna."

The new clause continues:

> "The Development Corporation shall consult the Countryside Council for Wales".

It is a bit late for the development corporation to consult the Countryside Council for Wales. When it consulted the Nature Conservancy Council, the NCC told it not to proceed with the development. When, in an attempt to exert political pressure and do away with the independent scientific advice coming from the NCC, the Welsh Office and the development corporation consulted the Countryside Council for Wales, they were told in no uncertain terms—even by the Government's own appointee as chairman—not to proceed. Yet the new clause states that the development corporation will have the responsibility to consult the Countryside Council for Wales. What comfort can we derive from a new clause placing responsibility on the development corporation to consult when we know that the Welsh Office and the development corporation will not consider the views of the Countryside Council for Wales for one moment? The new clause refers to the corporation's responsibility to seek that body's views—hardly an onerous responsibility—

"as to ways in which the inland bay may be managed so as to develop and conserve flora and fauna."

It is absolutely meaningless.

I would have had more regard for the Minister if he had come to the Dispatch Box tonight and said, "I am terribly sorry but the site of special scientific interest will be sacrificed because we want to proceed with this development," rather than proposed this mealy-mouthed new clause which attempts to reassure us that he concerns himself with the need to conserve flora and fauna. He is a different individual from the one who was prepared in 1986 to say that the destruction of this site of special scientific interest should not be accepted.

5 pm

Those were my introductory remarks. I want to come to the substance of my comments on new clause 1. I have already described how new clause 1 and the amendments unsatisfactorily address the need to take into account the wildlife responsibilities of the Welsh Office. In 1980 the site which will be destroyed by the Bill and for which no protection is offered by new clause 1 was designated a site of special scientific interest. It was so designated because it provided a particular habitat, not for the swans and ducks that will, one hopes, be attracted by the new development, or the rats or chaffinches which will be around the site, or even the greenfly on the roses, but for a range of wildfowl and wild birds which depend for their very existence on the unique habitat of the Cardiff bay area. That is why in 1980 it was designated a site of special scientific interest.

South Glamorgan county council recognised the designation and incorporated it in its structure plan for those purposes. The Welsh Office was certainly happy with that designation.

Mr. Michael: I want to make one thing clear. Does my hon. Friend accept that, although the designation is accepted by South Glamorgan county council and others, the original designation was highly questionable and followed processes which would not be followed now? Indeed, it is highly questionable whether an SSSI designation would have succeeded if it had been subjected to the more careful scrutiny which must be applied now.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend makes two points. The first is that the procedure was questionable. As I understand it, there were no objections in 1980. No one said that the procedure was questionable. Certainly, all that has happened subsequently, such as the qualification of the site under the Ramsar convention and the recognition that it qualified for protection under the EC birds directive, suggests that the 1980 designation was appropriate.

Mr. Michael: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Davies: Let me answer the points. Then I shall willingly give way to my hon. Friend. His second point was that it was doubtful whether the site would be designated today. I am perfectly prepared to accept that. We know how little concern the Government have for nature conservation. We know that they have presided over the wholesale destruction of sites which have been designated. We have seen them wriggle dishonestly and illegally out of their international obligations under the EC directive. So I fully accept my hon. Friend's second point.

Mr. Michael *rose*——

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend is eager to undermine the SSSI status of the bay. I am happy to give way to him to allow him to make his point. It is relevant to new clause 1, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Michael: I do not intend to argue with the criticisms that my hon. Friend makes of the Government's position on SSSIs. My point is simply that it is doubtful whether the bay would have been designated an SSSI under objective criteria. There were no objections to the original designation because no one was told that it was to happen. The designation was discovered after the event by many of those who were integrally involved in the environment and future of Cardiff. As one who was involved at that time, I assure my hon. Friend that the original designation had the shortcomings that I mentioned.

Mr. Davies: I am not sure whether I understand my hon. Friend's argument. It is a matter of fact that South Glamorgan county council recognised the site and incorporated it in its structure plan. It is a matter of fact that there were no objections. So I do not know how my hon. Friend can speculate that the site would not qualify for designation now.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Davies: I wish to address the other point that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) made. I shall then happily give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said that if objective criteria were applied the site would not be designated. He has no basis for saying that. The objective criteria apply. If they were followed, the site would have to be designated a site of special scientific interest. The site meets the requirements under the Ramsar convention and the requirements to be a candidate area for protection under the EC birds directive. The only circumstances which could lead to the site not being accepted would be if the Government applied their own interpretation. They did that when they considered developing the entire Severn estuary as a special protection area. They took it upon themselves to apply in a strange way the principle of subsidiarity. They said that they would take it upon themselves to exercise discretion and exclude Cardiff bay from the designation of the Severn estuary as an SPA.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Davies: I will give way to my hon. Friend in a moment. We must make it clear that the designation was valid. All that has happened subsequently supports that assertion.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Davies: I give way first to my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe and then to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones).

Mr. Morley: Does my hon. Friend agree that the original designation was made because the intertidal zone of Cardiff bay had nationally important populations of calidris waders and shelducks? Those numbers have since been confirmed by independent assessments and by other conservation bodies. The Government have never quibbled with those figures. So it is not necessarily true that the designation was wrong in the first place. The same criteria as those used then are currently used for new designations of SSSIs in line with both red data book guidelines and the Government's guidelines. It is not that there was anything wrong with the original designation.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe is an elected member of the council of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. He is a well-known and respected ornithologist in his own right. We must accept his objective comment on the matter.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Davies: I know that my hon. Friend is desperately anxious to develop the debate and I have assured him that I shall give way to him. However, I wish to follow the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe. He brings expertise as both a politician and an objective observer. If my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth maintains that he cannot accept the advice of my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe, he must accept the advice of the Government's scientific advisers. Even if he will not accept our word for it, and even if he thinks that the RSPB is tainted as an organisation, he must accept the view of the Countryside Council for Wales. It was its unequivocal view that the site should be protected and that the barrage development should not proceed. That is the official view of the Government's wildlife advisers.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Davies: I am more than happy to give way but I must tell my hon. Friend that he is in a queue. We have a stacking arrangement and he has booked his place in the queue. I shall come to him in due course.

If my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth does not accept our view or that of the RSPB, he must accept the view of the Government's scientific advisers. That is the objective, authoritative view on the matter.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: One of the ironies about the designation is that there is an unusual density of wading birds in the bay because the mudflats are unusually nutrient-rich. Therefore, the small invertebrates which populate the mud feed the wading birds. However, it is nutrient-rich because the River Ely and, to a lesser extent these days, the Taff are extremely well-nourished by sewerage. Were an ecologically friendly Government—if we had such a thing—to propose to clean up those two rivers, which they will have to do as a result of building the barrage, the nutrient level of the water, the amount of nutrient absorbed into the mud and thus the number of invertebrates will decline, as will the density of wading birds. If the designation——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is making a fascinating speech and may wish to catch my eye later, but that was a very long intervention and it was quite outside normal procedure.

Mr. Davies: I was wondering whether my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central had quite finished.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I called the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies). If he does not wish to continue, a number of other hon. Members wish to speak.

Mr. Davies: I have barely started, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I most certainly want to continue, but my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central was in an unusual position—he was semi-crouching. I intended no discourtesy to you, as I know that you have the respect of the whole House and that you make judgments with great authority and we shall respect them. I was tempted by my hon. Friend's semi-crouching position. He looked rather like a redshank searching for an early supper in the basin.

The argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central is interesting. He suggested that if the water quality in the Taff and Ely rivers were improved, the value of the bay as a habitat would diminish. That has particular relevance to the amendment. I think that my hon. Friend was suggesting that I would oppose the cleaning up of those rivers because it would diminish the value of the bay for wildlife. That is entirely speculative, and we are dealing not with that but with new clause 1. If I were to stray from new clause 1, I know that you would call me to order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so I have no intention of being led down the tempting and fascinating path suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central.

Before I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), I must tell the Minister that I do not think that he has any discretion. We know that the site qualifies under the Ramsar convention, which is an international treaty to which we are signatories. We also have a responsibility under the EC directive, as article 2 on wild birds states that when there is "irreconcilable conflict", priority must be given to "ecological needs". I should have thought that that was a crystal clear explanation of our responsibilities. If a proposed development would destroy an SSSI, it clearly conflicts irreconcilably with the wish to retain it. One cannot have half a barrage, or build a barrage and retain the environment that would thus be destroyed.

The Government's responsibility is to give priority to ecological needs. The directive does not give any discretion to the Government but tells them that they must give priority to such needs. We know that the Government's scientific advisers have also said that that is what they should do. That is important. In the Minister's brief introduction to new clause 1, he gave no sign that he understood the responsibility placed on him. I shall now happily give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham.

Dr. Marek: I am sorry that I have to interrupt my hon. Friend's train of thought, but he is relying a little too much on the Government taking cognisance of the views of the Countryside Commission or acting legally and obeying the Ramsar treaty. The Government have no mandate in Wales—they are a minority Government. They ride roughshod over everything that people in Wales want if, for political reasons, they want something else. If some form of compulsion exists elsewhere whereby we could bring the Government to account, I suspect that the best way to proceed would be by using it. Perhaps we should go to Europe, to one of the European courts, and find out whether anything could be done there. As my hon. Friend knows more about such matters than I, perhaps he could give the House his advice as to the best procedure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Member for Caerphilly is tempted down that route, could we get back to new clause 1?

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham is a tricky customer. I saw the trap that he was laying and I am grateful that you have made sure that I stick to new clause 1, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, his argument can be used in the context of new clause 1, because the Government have a responsibility. They think that they are discharging it by talking about developing and conserving flora and fauna. They think that by so doing they will avoid their international responsibilities. I understand that the RSPB are to consider taking the case to the European Court.

5.15 pm

In framing new clause 1, the Government took into account the findings of the European Court in the Leybucht judgment, which they grievously misinterpreted when they decided to exclude Cardiff bay from the proposed designation of the Severn estuary as an area deserving and requiring protection under the birds directive. Even though that is a path that I cannot follow —much as I would like to do so—my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham may rest assured that the responsibility for exploring the need to safeguard the environment will be taken, even if it means having recourse to the European Court.

We must ask ourselves why the Minister could scupper the predecessor of the Bill, from the anonymity of the Back Benches, by shouting out, "Object", and then come along with this wholly unsatisfactory new clause in an attempt to discharge his responsibilities.

I view the changing attitudes of Ministers with fascination. We know that the Bill originated from a flight of whimsy on the part of Nicholas Edwards—now Lord Crickhowell—who was in Baltimore, saw the bay and thought, "That's a good idea. Let's have one in Cardiff." Every one of his successors in the Welsh Office has been seduced. It is almost as if there were some sort of disease there which rots their brains, or prevents them from exercising any objective consideration of the issues. However, if I go down that track I know that you will say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I am not referring to new clause 1 and the amendments grouped with it.

I must pursue the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central who mentioned the importance of mudflats. How on earth can the development corporation have regard to the desirability

"of developing and conserving flora and fauna"—

the very words of new clause 1—if we interpret those to mean wildlife? How on earth can it have that responsibility when the construction of a barrage will create a virtual desert for wildlife in the bay? That is the question that I want the Minister to answer. If he argues that flora and fauna are not the same as wildlife, I understand why the new clause fits the purpose, but if he believes that they are the same, can he explain how the development corporation can develop and conserve wildlife? It cannot do so, because a barrage will destroy the very wildlife that is of value.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central briefly mentioned the value of mudflats.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: I shall be brief this time, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall listen with great interest to any later arguments about how eutrophic the barrage will make the lake. Eutrophic lakes are quite the opposite of deserts—they are filled with wildlife.

Mr. Davies: They are filled with life, but I am sure that you would rule, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the debate about water quality properly comes under the third group of amendments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not need any guidance from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Davies: I was not seeking to guide you; I was merely speculating about your ruling.

I accept what my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central has said, but we are entitled to ask about the quality of life in such eutrophic conditions, which would be far different from existing conditions in the bay. I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of the mudflats, which are rich in nitrates and provide a home for rich and varied invertebrate life, as a feeding ground for migratory birds.

Apart from the fact that the mudflats are enriched by the downflow from the Taff and Ely, they are also intertidal. The interface between the sea and the land makes the mudflats of particular value. They are regularly flooded, so they are washed.

The mudflats are also ice-free, which is particularly important to the birds from Iceland, Greenland or Eurasia which use them in the winter. They come to the Atlantic seaboard to seek the ice-free coasts for shelter and for winter feeding. If we destroy those mudflats, we will deprive the over-wintering birds of the opportunity to enjoy that special habitat.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central has speculated that if the barrage went ahead and the bay was lost, it would not really matter. That view is not shared by the Government's advisers or by any wildlife organisation. In my hon. Friend's constituency and throughout south Wales, an endless number of organisations are opposed to the development on the ground that the bay is an integral part of the Severn estuary. That is an inescapable fact. If the bay is destroyed, the entire Severn estuary would be damaged. The Government have had that argument put to them by the Countryside Council for Wales, but they have failed to discharge their international responsibilities to

[Mr. Davies]

designate the estuary as a special protection area—an SPA. It is important to consider the damage that will be inflicted on the estuary if the bay is lost.

The Government talk about the glories of biodiversity. They lecture the third world on its responsibilities, they properly try to pressurise the Norwegians to accept their own and they lecture their European partners on their responsibilities and the need to conserve song birds in Italy and France. I applaud those laudable efforts. However, a commitment to conservation is not a hat that can be put on and taken off to suit one's convenience. If one is committed to the cause of conservation, one must accept that commitment even when it is inconvenient. The cause of conservation in the case of Cardiff bay is not convenient to the Government—that is the essence of the criticism of the Government's case. They have disregarded their responsibilities to conservation. It is worth stressing that when we consider the Cardiff bay development, which is highly speculative to say the least.

Mr. Flynn: My hon. Friend may have received a copy of a letter sent to me from the Bristol section of Friends of the Earth about biodiversity and the Severn estuary. It stated that unique forms of flora and fauna in the estuary were liable to be destroyed by developments in the bay. I have written twice to the author of the letter for a list of those unique flora and fauna, but I have yet to receive a reply. Perhaps my hon. Friend can list them.

Mr. Davies: It would be foolish of me to be tempted to comment on correspondence that I have not seen.

Mr. Flynn: It is about biodiversity.

Mr. Davies: I am talking about biodiversity too.

Some time ago, my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) made a similar intervention to say that he had written to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds to ask about its views on the barrage. He tempted me to defend the RSPB, but that is not my job or duty. On that occasion, we were discussing the number of existing SSSIs, the number that had been destroyed and the displacement of estuarine birds.

I accept that estuarine birds are not unique and I should be interested to find out which life forms in the estuary Friends of the Earth judge to be unique. I have not argued that the ecosystem in the estuary is unique, but it is rare and valuable and it will be damaged by the development. In a letter dated 18 December 1989, of which I have a copy, the RSPB put that point to my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West. It stated:

> "The fate of estuarine birds displaced is complex and not fully researched. Experts advising both Promoters and Petitioners against the Bill agree that a large proportion of those displaced by a barrage would not be able to 'fit in' elsewhere, or would displace other birds in turn. The availability of suitable habitat is finite; areas of international importance, such as the Severn estuary, of which the Taff/Ely is a part, are to be treasured accordingly. Loss of an important part would cause an overall net loss in the world population of species affected. The Promoters accept that some loss will have to be compensated for".

I would not argue that the estuary is home to unique life forms, but the bay is an integral part of it. It is a valuable over-wintering area for highly protected bird species for which we have international responsibility. I do not know whether my case is supported by Friends of the Earth in Bristol. If my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West is prepared to let me see the correspondence, I shall write to Friends of the Earth. I shall certainly ask that group for a list of the unique life forms that it believes exist in the estuary. I shall even send a copy of my speech, which I am sure will be read.

The RSPB is the primary voluntary organisation that has campaigned against the barrage. The House will be aware that it is the largest wildlife conservation organisation in Europe. It is highly respected and has about 1 million members, who base all their campaigning work on detailed, scientific, objective analysis.

The work conducted by the RSPB is a lesson to us all. We must acknowledge its views and it is important to put them on record. They are particularly relevant because we can then test how the development corporation could comply with the requirements of new clause 1. It has stated:

> "The RSPB and other wildlife conservation bodies including the Glamorgan Wildlife Trust and the Royal Society for Nature Conservation are opposed to the barrage proposal since it will permanently flood the intertidal lands that provide important feeding grounds for 5,000-8,000 wild birds which regularly use Cardiff Bay in winter. Cardiff bay is of high wildlife importance and has been notified by the Nature Conservancy Council"—

of course, that was before it was disbanded by the Government when they tried to impose political control over science—

> "as a Site of Special Scientific Interest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. In biological terms, the bay is an integral part of the wider Severn estuary, which is of international importance for shelduck, redshank, knot and dunlin and meets the criteria for protection under the European Community Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds and the Ramsar Convention on the Conservation of Wetlands."

That case is put against the barrage.

I shall look briefly at the arguments again. My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West has had some dispute with the RSPB because he argues, "I am not sure that it really matters, because the birds will go elsewhere." He has used the argument concerning Collister Pill, the area in his constituency or in that of his neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes). The argument in respect of Collister Pill is different because it was a different habitat and was not designated an SSSI.

5.30 pm

The argument that it does not matter because the birds will go elsewhere is flawed, because all the science involved tells us that there is a finite and restricted habitat, that the birds cannot go elsewhere and that if they could go elsewhere, they would displace the species in that other area, resulting in a net loss.

As well as being scientifically incorrect, such an argument is politically irresponsible. It is a casual and dismissive attitude towards our responsibilities for conservation to claim that it does not matter because the birds will go elsewhere. It would be like telling the Japanese or Norwegians, "It does not matter if we go whaling," or telling the Brazilian or Equador Governments, "It does not matter if we destroy the tropical rain forests." Is it not equal to telling French hunters, "It does not matter if you shoot skylarks in their migratory passage"? It represents taking a casual attitude.

I find it amazing in 1992, not only having had the idea of biodiversity accepted by the Government but with the increasingly accepted attitude about global responsibilities for our shared natural heritage, that there should be such a casual dismissal of our responsibilities for what I believe would be at best a dubious and transient benefit, so far unproved, to the economy of Cardiff.

Mr. Flynn: It is misleading for my hon. Friend to compare the estuary with the rain forest, where there are literally tens of thousands of unique species—in the Severn estuary there are none. As for the finite site available where the birds at Collister Pill migrated, that was a totally artificial, man-made site that did not exist previously. It was in the ash ponds of the Uskmouth power station.

A decision must be made about birds that are rare and under threat. Here we are dealing with birds that are under no threat whatever. They exist in their millions. A balanced and common-sense decision must be made, reconciling what is required to protect and preserve those birds and the great advantages available to the population of Cardiff as a result of the barrage. My hon. Friend is aware that provision, which has been much praised, is made in a later clause in connection with the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East.

Mr. Davies: The latter point made by my hon. Friend is doubtful, but we can look into it when we debate the clause to which he referred. I concede that the circumstances at Collister Pill were different. My hon. Friend claims that making a parallel with the rain forest is not valid because the birds in question are not unique. In terms of the environment of north-west Europe, they are. They might not be unique to Cardiff bay or to the Severn estuary, but they are unique to the ecology of north-west Europe. Therefore, a comparison should be made not between Cardiff bay and the entire equatorial rain forest but between the ecosystem of north-west Europe and the ecosystem of the equatorial forest.

It is true to say that there are millions of unique species in the equatorial forest. By the same token, there are millions of unique species if the area of definition is the whole of the ecosystem of north-west Europe, and that should be the comparison. My hon. Friend is wrong, therefore, to say that the species in question are not under threat. They are. If he recognises that within the context of north-west Europe they are a declining species and are under threat, he must consider at what point we must call a halt.

My hon. Friend is a sincere and committed defender of the rain forest and agrees that no further destruction should take place there. I do not see how he can reconcile that with saying, "We shall not protect Cardiff bay because man needs it." Is he not aware of the rightness of the comparison? We must stop at some point. We must not let it go on, with further estuaries being destroyed one at a time. We must say, "Now is the time to stop because we have international responsibilities."

I have drawn my line and said that it should stop here. My hon. Friend may say that the line should be drawn somewhere else. I am entitled to ask where he would draw his line. Would it be somewhere after Cardiff bay, after Taff estuary, or after the Mersey, Morecambe bay or the Humber? At what point would he say stop? The point has arrived for me. We must stop here and care for our estuaries. I challenge my hon. Friend to say whether his line is after Cardiff bay, and then no further. He has a strong interest because a proposal for the Usk barrage is, or would have been under other circumstances, coming forward. Would my hon. Friend have drawn the line there? I hope he will answer that question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member may invite his hon. Friend to answer, but he is not in order in doing so.

Mr. Flynn: In view of my hon. Friend's invitation——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) has been developing a speech to which we have listened with interest. Rather than challenging other hon. Members on certain issues, he should concentrate his remarks on the subject of new clause 1.

Mr. Davies: I was not challenging my hon. Friend, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I got the impression that he wished to intervene and I was politely offering to allow him to do so. I accept your ruling and return to the subject I was developing, which is the argument that the development does not matter because the birds will go elsewhere. I hope that, in terms of our international responsibilities, that issue has been adequately dealt with.

The next argument to be adduced is that 10 per cent. of the land area of Britain is covered by SSSIs. Cardiff bay estuary is an important part of that and new clause 1 would have recognised that, were it a meaningful provision. One view is that, because 10 per cent. of the land area is covered by SSSIs, it does not matter if we lose a bit here and there. My answer is again to ask where the line is to be drawn. If we are prepared to see one SSSI destroyed, shall we be prepared to see another destroyed?

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth feels strongly about the issue. I have questioned various people—including him when he was promoting the earlier legislation—the Welsh Office, the Government's advisers and the Department of the Environment because we can test the validity of new clause 1 against the evidence that is adduced in that respect. How many SSSIs are we prepared to see destroyed? Are we prepared to see partial destruction of them all or the complete destruction of some, or is there to be some arbitrary test which results in it being said, "We shall destroy this one but protect that one"? If we are to proceed on that basis, the Government must announce the parameters of that decision-making process.

What criteria will apply? Do they have in mind a super triple SI—a quadruple SI—that will be protected? At what point will they stop destroying triple SIs?

5.45 pm

Wales has 843 triple SIs, of which Cardiff bay is one. In the last year for which figures are available, from April 1991 to March 1992, 45 of them were destroyed. That is disgraceful because those sites were selected on objective scientific criteria and approved as worthy of conservation. They have been destroyed and the Government have done nothing to protect them. The Government are now sending out a clear message that, by Act of Parliament, triple SIs can be destroyed in their entirety. What message is that to individuals who want to destroy triple SIs? How can the Government have any credibility in trying to enforce the protection of triple SIs when they have piloted through the House of Commons legislation that destroys a triple SI? I am sure that I shall receive no answer to that question.

The third case that is put is that, although there will be damage—that argument was put by my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West—we should think of the people of Cardiff. All my hon. Friends who have spoken in this debate have made it clear that we want Cardiff to be developed and are concerned about its prosperity and that of our constituents. We are not opposed to development of Cardiff that will benefit the people of Cardiff. We argue that the barrage is unnecessary for that development. In any case, the development is highly speculative and we have been asked to accept the destruction of a triple SI. Although new clause 1 attempts to offer a palliative, the effect will be the destruction of a triple SI for a temporary benefit.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): This is not, strictly speaking, an answer to the earlier question put to my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) by my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), but it is a kind of answer with an element of lateral thinking. My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West asked what was unique about the flora and fauna of Cardiff bay. He did not get an answer because my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly had not seen the correspondence from Bristol Friends of the Earth. It is unique to have a triple SI in the middle of a large city of some 300,000 people, or so I believe.

Mr. Davies: I am sure that it is. My hon. Friend is a master of the art of lateral thinking and I must be careful to ensure that he does not distract me from our debate on new clause 1. He knows that I would welcome any alternative proposals for the development of Cardiff, such as a mini barrage that would have the double benefit of providing a waterscape and, at the same time, conserve for future generations the marvellous reserve that is unique within the bay. If we had a development corporation and a Government who were more imaginative and were not stuck in an early 1980s time warp, they would be prepared to accept that. But they will not and we must accept that.

The argument is that, although there will be damage, that does not matter because it will be outweighed by benefits. It is summed up by a letter that I received from the Minister's predecessor in the Welsh Office and the predecessor of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones) when he was a Welsh Office Minister. In reply to my letter putting that point to him, he wrote to me on 16 October 1989, saying:

> "In relation to the Cardiff Bay Barrage, the environmental impact associated with the Barrage has been considered at length. In 1986 the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology undertook a study of the effect of the Barrage on over-wintering shorebirds. Further environmental studies, including the feasibility of providing alternative feeding grounds, have been commissioned by Cardiff Bay Development Corporation and South Glamorgan County Council. The results of all these studies have been brought together in an independent and detailed Environmental Impact Assessment carried out by Liverpool University's Environmental Advisory Unit in line with the recommendations of the Pearce report . . . The environmental costs have therefore been measured in detail, and weighed against the paramount importance of realising the economic, recreational and other benefits that can be expected to arise from the Barrage. The Government has concluded that in this case the economic benefits heavily outweigh the identified environmental and other costs."

So we have an admission and an acceptance that there will be environmental damage, but all the other benefits are highly speculative. Later this evening we shall debate water quality. The Select Committee that examined the matter when it was a private Bill concluded that the economic benefit was dubious, to say the least. We now know that, with the collapse of the property market, there is little prospect of it being of economic benefit to the people of Cardiff, yet we are being asked to accept environmental destruction for dubious and transient economic benefit. I cannot accept that.

Finally, it is argued that alternative environments will be provided. Were that not funny, it would make me cry. In previous debates we were told that alternative feeding grounds would be provided. I wonder whether my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe, who was present for the previous debates, will remember the fact that we were told that a lagoon would provide a panacea. We would then not need new clause 1 because the lagoon would provide the answer to all our problems.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Is my hon. Friend referring to the lagoon that was supposed to have a magic barge on it, which would clear out everything from algae to wooden doors that came down the River Taff?

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend refers to the lagoon behind the barrage, which will destroy the natural environment. I am talking about the lagoon that will be provided some miles to the east of the lagoon at Wentloog. That lagoon was supposed to provide the solution to the environmental damage. When this was a private Bill, we were told with great authority by everyone concerned—my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, the Minister and the development corporation—that that was the answer and that we need not worry about environmental damage because the lagoon would solve the problems.

That lagoon was considered by the Select Committee examining the Bill and its findings have given rise to these amendments. The Chairman of the Select Committee made the following stunning argument:

> "Finally, I come to the question of the proposed lagoon at Wentloog. I do not think it will come as any great surprise to those who have been following the progress of this Committee's inquiries to know that we take a very unfavourable view of that proposal".

That was the earlier version of the all-singing, all-dancing answer to all the problems. He continued:

> "But briefly, it is suggested that the lagoon should be built at a cost which in reality is likely to exceed £7 million capital cost and cost approximately £4-500,000 per annum in running costs, that these funds should be provided from public money and provided, therefore, by the taxpayer. The result of doing so would be to build a small artificial tidal mudflat at Wentloog".

Dr. Kim Howells: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Davies: I know that my hon. Friend is excited, but perhaps he could restrain himself. I am coming to the end of the Chairman's remarks——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will address new clause 1 in which there is no mention of a lagoon. We are discussing the barrage, and I am listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Davies: I am sure that you are, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The new clause is a Government attempt to offset the environmental damage caused by the barrage. I doubt the wisdom and the efficacy of that proposal and I am attempting to compare the Government's previous attitude to show that their case is built on shaky foundations. Until early this year, their case was based on the lagoon and not new clause 1. The Select Committee Chairman said:

> "The result of doing so would be to build a small artificial tidal mudflat at Wentloog. The purpose of this exercise, we have been told, is to provide an alternative home for some of the birds which have been displaced from the mudflats of Cardiff Bay following the building of the barrage."

It is said that new clause 1 is concerned about flora and fauna. The Chairman continues:

> "We heard evidence that the winter count of dunlin is 2,891 in the Bay and of redshank 486."

If new clause 1 is accepted, those two species will have to be considered by the development corporation. The Chairman went on:

> "These are the two main species of birds which are considered to be under threat from the construction of the barrage. We were further told that the most optimistic forecast was that approximately one quarter of these birds might use the habitat at Wentloog. The proposal, therefore, is that some £10,000 per bird in capital terms, put crudely, and £600 per annum in running cost terms should be spent on these birds."

My hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe and I have a great love for birds, but even we would share the scepticism of my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West if we were asked to fork out £10,000 per bird in capital costs and £600 per annum in running costs. It does not cost as much to organise a pheasant shoot, and that gives people the perverted pleasure of killing the birds at the end of the year. The Chairman continued:

> "This would appear to be sufficiently ludicrous by itself, but worse information was to come. Firstly, we were told that the lagoon as proposed was far too small to be of any practical use. Secondly, we were told that there was absolutely no guarantee that any of the threatened birds would use it at all, although the likelihood was that some would. As I say, the most optimistic count was that a quarter of the population of birds currently in Cardiff would use it. Thirdly, we were told that there were potential problems from gulls, leaching from the nearby dumps and health hazards from a combination of dumps and gulls might render the lagoon wholly useless."

That was the Government's solution less than 12 months ago, but now we are being asked to accept new clause 1 as the panacea for environmental damage. That is why I am a little suspicious about the wisdom of the Welsh Office in these matters.

There are widespread objections to what is being done and to the suggestion that somehow the environmental damage is acceptable if new clause 1 is passed. A leader in *The Guardian* referred to the EC wild birds directive which, I believe, gives rise to new clause 1. If the Minister wishes to tell me that I am wrong, I shall give way to him. The leader is a trenchant criticism of the Government and I know that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, read *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* because you use a broad brush and form your own opinion. On 13 October, *The Guardian* said:

> "Not many people are going to defend the crow. Most tears over Britain's refusal to conform with a 1979 EC directive providing protection to crows may be tears of anger, not sorrow. Here surely is a supreme example of Brussels at its most absurd: defending a pest which feeds off the songbirds that provide such delight! Well, not quite. The matter is more complicated than Europhobes would have you believe. There are two separate issues wending their way to the European Court: the first protecting species, the second protecting habitat."

Those issues are relevant to all the amendments. The leader goes on:

> "The first, and the more dubious, is the blanket protection of the 1979 directive which was breached by the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act. Under this Act, British landlords are free to grant permission to sportsmen to shoot crows—and magpies, rooks, jays, woodpigeons, sparrows and starling—all the year round. The absurdity of a blanket ban should not be allowed to obscure the importance of a second issue: Britain's refusal to provide enough special protection areas for birds. This is not just a breach of EC law, but of the International Convention on Wetlands ratified by the UK Government in 1976."

That charge is made time and again against the Government and they have not attempted to answer it.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend) *rose*——

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend is desperately anxious to intervene.

Mr. Griffiths: I want to set the record straight because the Government are not doing so. The problem about the protection of birds such as crows arose from the faulty application of British law in putting the EC directive into operation. In July, before the House rose for the summer recess, the Government undertook in Committee to put that matter right. I do not want the House to think that that defect still exists. That will enable us to rest easily —if we get to sleep tonight.

Mr. Davies: I am sure that we have every chance of getting a good night's sleep. All that the Government have to do is withdraw the Bill.

My hon. Friend's question is slightly outside the terms of reference of the new clause. The decision that he debated in Committee is subject to challenge because in giving a blanket licence the Government contravene the provisions of the birds directive. My hon. Friend nods in agreement. The relevance of the new clause is not to shooting corbins but to protecting habitat. *The Guardian* leader continued:

> "For those people who think environmental issues should be left to national governments, the protection of bird life provides some salutary lessons. Under the E.C. Wild Birds directive, the UK was required to set aside special protection areas by 1981."

That is precisely what we are talking about. The leader goes on:

> "'An irreducible minimum' list of 222 sites was identified by the Nature Conservancy Council. Eleven years on only 62 sites have been designated. So much for last week's claim by Michael Howard that Britain was always at a disadvantage 'because we observe community laws while others flout them'. This is not just a question of protecting British birdlife. Many of the wetland sites are important resting, roosting and feeding places for migrating birds. The lesson could not be clearer: environmental needs do not stop at national boundaries. Just as industrial waste poured into a river poisons all fish and land further downstream, so one nation's refusal to provide sufficient special protection areas for birds can affect birdlife hundreds of miles away. Far from supporting calls for more subsidiarity, the environment reinforces the need for extra territorial policing. But for Brussels, the Dirty Old Man of Europe would have refused to clean up its drinking water or reduce its sewage disposals in the sea. It was Mrs. Thatcher who declared: 'No generation has a freehold on this earth. All we can have is a life tenancy —with a full repairing lease'."

What the Government are now offering us is a substandard provision, in new clause 1, to meet these international obligations. Frankly, that is not good enough and nor are the other amendments.

6 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Davies: I am in a quandary, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to make some progress as the meat of what I have to say is yet to come, but my hon. Friend wishes to intervene. I shall give way to him.

Mr. Griffiths: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I realise that he is anxious to push ahead so that we can get home at a reasonable time.

Given the stress that my hon. Friend has laid on the habitat directive and the special protection areas, which are vital and a critical part of new clause 1, it should be said that the EEC directive was not imposed on us by Brussels. It was something that the British Government undertook to do. They have failed to do it and that has led to the crisis over the Bill.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend makes a telling point on which there is no need to elaborate.

Many other people take this critical view of new clause 1. I am sure that you will be fascinated, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by a recent study produced by the RSPB called "Important Bird Areas in the United Kingdom including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man". I shall quote just two sentences from the introduction:

> "In this country, with its very rich wild bird heritage, the threats to coastal, wetland and migratory bird habitats are particularly severe. Drainage, pollution, disturbance and fishing pressure have already caused serious problems and I hope that the timely publication of this important book will help to ensure that the most valuable bird areas in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man are given the effective and permanent protection that they urgently need."

That clear message comes in the foreword by His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, signed "Philip". If the Minister is not prepared to accept the views of other bodies, perhaps he will give at least some passing consideration to that view.

The final authority that I shall quote on this matter is the Select Committee on the Environment, which looked at the problem of our coastline and our important estuaries and the threat of damage from developments. These are the conclusions of the Select Committee:

> "Coastal zone protection and planning cannot be reviewed in isolation; they are inextricably linked to the administration and management of the many activities and uses of the coastal zone."

This is the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West and I were discussing earlier. We as a Parliament, as a society, as part of the Government of the day must make a judgment about how we use this precious environmental resource.

We cannot go on making piecemeal judgments. We cannot go on saying that this or that development can go ahead, and at some time or other in the future call a halt. We know that we shall have to take a coherent view to protect our environment and discharge our international responsibilities. It is time that we accepted the view of the Environment Select Committee and decided that now is the time for this coherent view.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend is pressing me to give way on this matter, but you will be delighted to hear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I am coming to my conclusion.

Mr. Rogers: Before my hon. Friend does so, I hope that he will deal with the issues that arise from the movement of fish through the barrage and up the rivers. The National Rivers Authority, which can hardly be described as a body dominated by Labour supporters, as Lord Crickhowell, its chairman, was the Secretary of State for Wales who initially supported and developed the Bill when it was a private Bill, is called "The guardian of the water environment". In a pamphlet, it says:

> "The NRA takes the view that the barrage and the impoundment are likely to obstruct or delay salmonid migration and some mortality resulting from algal blooms or increasing predation may also occur."

The promoters said that they would implement a scheme that would partly simulate the fish traps and barriers that would be involved in the barrage. Has this project been carried out? Have these tests been done? If so, what are the results?

Mr. Davies: I would happily discuss that, but I think that the subject will arise in a later debate.

Mr. Rogers: I was talking about fauna.

Mr. Davies: I know that, but I am trying to follow strictly the terms of new clause 1. I have been referring to the Government's international responsibilities and demonstrating how the provisions of new clause 1 will fail to meet those obligations. I am a strong supporter of the case that we must ensure that migratory fish have a free and uninhibited passage. However, if my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) wishes to pursue that matter in this debate, he will have to use his own ingenuity and make his own speech. If he wishes me to refer to the matter in a later debate, I shall do so happily.

There is now a growing consensus among all who are concerned about the conservation of our wildlife habitat and our environment. There is a growing realisation that we have to take a coherent, long-term strategic view. We are dealing with a washed-up relic of an idea from the last decade that has outlived its usefulness. New clause 1 does not mitigate those damages. The Select Committee also said that, in evidence:

> "Government officials stressed repeatedly to us that existing arrangements for coast protection and sea defence were all working 'extremely well'. The vast majority of witnesses in their submissions to this inquiry, however, takes a rather different view."

In other words, everyone who took the trouble to come along told the Select Committee that the policy was not working. The Committee said:

> "From the evidence presented to us, we firmly believe that coastal protection"—

that is not covered by new clause 1, but the next two subjects are—

> "planning and management in the United Kingdom suffer from centuries of unco-ordinated decisions and actions at both the national and local levels. We found that there are inadequacies in legislation, anomalies in the planning system, a lack of central guidance, and overlapping and conflicting policies and responsibilities (and in some cases a lack of action) among a host of bodies, with poor co-ordination between them."

That is the view of the Select Committee.

If there is anything that demonstrates more clearly the absence of any strategy on the part of the Government, it is the Bill. The enactment of the Bill would destroy a priceless part of our national heritage for an economic benefit that can be described only as tenuous. The cost to public funds would be enormous. There would be considerable and continuing uncertainty. All that the Government can offer us in terms of the environment is the commitment that the development corporation must have regard to flora and fauna. The corporation will have to consult the Government's scientific advisers. But we know that those advisers have given the most important piece of evidence that they could ever have produced. They have presented the most important advice that they could ever have brought forward.

The Nature Conservancy Council said, "No, don't do it." The Government then intervened politically and tried to sabotage the NCC's scientific independence and make it subject to political control. They created a quango, the Countryside Commission for Wales. Even then, the scientific evidence was so overwhelming that even the commission could conclude only that the proposals were fundamentally flawed and should be withdrawn. The new clause does nothing to offset my concerns and those of my hon. Friends about the environmental dangers.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I shall be brief, but I feel that I should comment on the new clause and the amendments because the entire area of the development corporation, the inland lake and the communities that live around it lie within my constituency.

We all respect the interest of my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) in these matters and the strength of the views that he holds, which is perhaps reflected in no small way by the length of his contribution this evening. Sadly, I fear that he has the Bill out of proportion. That is my view, but I appreciate that he has his own. There is an assumption of environmental damage underlying his contribution, but there is an assumption underlying the views of many others, especially those of Members who are local in terms of the Bill, of environmental improvement. Those of us who have taken a strong interest over the years in environmental issues and have fought for them, and who believe that there is a need for a coherent strategic view, are to be found among the Bill's supporters as well as among its opponents.

My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly referred rightly to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds as the main organisation campaigning against the barrage. Personally, I am sad that it has taken that stance. I have great respect for the society and I believe that it was misled into entering the campaign. Initially it opposed the barrage because this was the first proposal to come forward which would affect an estuary in this way, and not because it had a good case. It felt obliged to become involved, I believe, because it saw a knock-on effect. It was mistaken both in terms of tactics and principle.

Much has been made of the importance of the bay to wildlife. In my view, its importance has been overstated. For example, the bay was not shown on the RSPB's centenary map as an area of major importance. It seems that it is far from being of the importance suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly.

I hope that the debate will continue in a way that is much more in sympathy with the positive contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), who sought to improve the Bill and not to attack it. As I have said, the whole of the development corporation area is in my constituency. I welcome the efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley, the shadow Secretary of State for Wales, and her colleagues in presenting amendments to improve the Bill. They have sought to set out ways of triggering improvements in what the measure will do. The entire purpose of the Bill is to create a better environment, jobs and homes for my constituents.

6.15 pm

I am sure that my colleagues on the Opposition Front Bench—I have great confidence in my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy), for example—will bear in mind that Cardiff bay is a city centre area. My constituents have experienced the dirt and noise of heavy industry over generations, followed by the dereliction and unemployment that they are now suffering. It is those conditions that the Bill sets out to alleviate.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way. I hope that he will acknowledge that a small part of Cardiff bay falls within my constituency.

Mr. Michael: Indeed, and I welcome the constructive way in which my hon. Friend has approached and regarded the development. There will be a knock-on effect on other areas, but there will be benefits for the wider area of Cardiff and south Wales to be gained by the building of the barrage.

I support the way in which my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley spoke to amendments tabled by the Opposition Front Bench. The amendments have been designed to improve the Bill so that the environment and the future can be improved for my constituents and many others in the region while proper consideration is given to flora and fauna. I hope that the Minister will respond positively to them.

Mr. Morley: I am pleased to take up the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael). I have great respect for the sincerity of his concern for the environment. We have discussed these issues many times and I know that he will agree that there is an honest debate about the way forward while meeting environmental objectives. I am sure that he will accept that there are national implications stemming from the Cardiff bay project, and it is those implications which have caused me to contribute to the debate.

The way in which sites of special scientific interest are being destroyed in terms of the Bill has an implication for the rest of the country. The Bill sets precedents which are of concern to conservation organisations throughout the country. It will have consequences also for the United Kingdom's reputation within the European Community. In that context, I feel that the new clause is a cynical bit of window dressing when it comes to concern for the environment. It is rather like running a motorway through a nature reserve and then offering to put up a bird table at a service station and a nest box on a garage support post. It seems that there is an attempt to claw back an important site after its destruction and to gain some sort of credibility. It is not good enough.

I do not want to rehearse all the arguments put by my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), who went into the issue in great detail. I merely say that I concur with his arguments. I shall make only a couple of brief points to reinforce the argument about the inadequacy of the new clause. It is not true—this has been inferred, but perhaps not deliberately—that Cardiff bay is not important in wildlife terms. I have a recent report by the World Wide Fund for Nature which states that the

[Mr. Morley]

Government's study—it was carried out by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, which is a well respected organisation—confirms that Cardiff bay is important in its own right as a feeding area for birds which are usually distributed throughout the southern estuary and that it holds populations of curlew and redshank exceeding 1 per cent. of the north-west European total. Such figures are recognised as being of national and international importance. They mean that the area qualifies for special protection under the Ramsar agreement and as a special protection area. When these issues arise, there must be trust in the Government and credibility for their position.

I am concerned that the Government are on the verge of being taken to the European Court because of their failure to designate special protection areas on estuaries in line with European directives. We are discussing an area which meets recognised national and international wildlife standards; yet it is to be destroyed. The question is whether that destruction will bring any tangible gains to the people of Cardiff. That is the point which gives rise to honest debate between those who oppose the barrage and those who support it. There will be opportunities later to debate that issue.

It is not good enough that new clause 1 should take into account the importance of wildlife only after the barrage has been built. A cosmetic lagoon, with highly polluted water, will have no importance for wildlife. An important feeding ground will be lost. Cardiff bay is special and important because it is an intertidal zone supporting populations of waders and providing an important wintering ground for wildfowl. If that area is flooded to make a lagoon, the depth of water will prevent it from being a feeding ground. Nor will an alternative range of species be attracted.

The main advantage of such a barrage would probably be to wildfowl, but even they will have nothing to feed on. Some wintering wildfowl might shelter there temporarily, or the odd swan or mallard might be attracted which would respond to people throwing bread, but they would be insignificant and of little value to nature. With the best will in the world, not a great deal can be done with a deep-water, polluted lagoon to make it attractive to wildlife. Therefore, nothing is altered by suggesting that special attention will be given to Cardiff bay following its destruction behind a lagoon.

Hon. Members have pointed out that the present habitat is polluted, dirty, smelly and not altogether pleasant. I would not dispute some of that, although I believe that the intertidal zone is far more attractive than any artificial cosmetic lagoon would be. However, the cost savings that would result from not progressing with a barrage could be directed towards cleaning up the bay, making it more attractive and accessible.

It has been pointed out that the bay is an area of special scientific interest, surrounded by 300,000 people. This is a wonderful opportunity for making that natural feature an important and attractive part of any future development. I have no criticisms or qualms about the progress of the development corporation in attracting new industry, cleaning up the area, creating new jobs and building new homes. However, I would question whether the destruction of this important intertidal zone area is necessary to that investment and development.

I would argue that directing some of those funds towards cleaning up the area and making it more accessible and towards an interpretation centre, towards the kind of schemes that groups such as the RSPB have put forward in compromise proposals, would enhance and protect the area which is of national and international importance.

We have heard the arguments about the wetlands site and whether that will go ahead. I thought that it was an intriguing idea.

Mr. Ron Davies: It is worth putting on the record that the Select Committee deleted the wetlands provisions from the Bill and now it is suggested that an alternative site will be examined.

Mr. Morley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. That was originally regarded as a kingpin in the original proposal and as compensation for the destruction of the estuary. I shall not go over the point made by my hon. Friend. He clearly undermined that argument and showed that the alternative proposals would not have compensated for the destruction of Cardiff bay. They would have been extremely expensive and involved a technology and technique that is virtually untried. As I say, I am interested in such experiments, but this one would be expensive with no guarantee of success and would be no real compensation for the destruction of the bay.

It comes down to whether the destruction of a recognised site of special scientific interest is acceptable and whether the Bill will damage the Government's already severely dented credibility in Europe. The Government are prepared to destroy the site but they would then have to sit in the Council of Ministers and argue within the European Court against the destruction of similar sites by other countries. This country is not alone. Wetlands in Greece and the Cota Donna in Spain are under threat. How can we criticise other member states in the EC when they can turn round and say, "What right have you to criticise us when you are destroying your own designated sites of special scientific interest? You, too, are ignoring EC rules. You are not designating areas which require special protection. You are ignoring the Ramsar convention."? We would have no credibility if we did that and there is no justification for the Bill.

It is a question of balance. It is argued that the barrage is needed in the overall scheme of things and I accept that there is an argument there which has to be met. But the Government should consider carefully the huge expense of the barrage and the implications of destroying one of their own designated sites of special scientific interest. They should listen carefully to their advisers, both statutory and non-statutory bodies, who are unanimous in their opposition to the scheme. Then they should think carefully about whether they are missing an opportunity to utilise a natural feature in a way which will benefit not only wildlife but also the people of Cardiff, both now and in future generations.

I accept that some people do not consider the present intertidal zone to be attractive, but I do and it may well be that in future many more people will share my view. Therefore, why should we destroy it? Let us pursue what is good and beneficial in the Bill and make the intertidal zone an important conservation feature which will not only ensure that the Government honour their international obligations but also enhance an area in Wales for the good of all concerned.

Mr. Morgan: As one of the Members most affected by the Bill, I want to make some additional points. My constituency has a long link with the proposed inland bay, with some 2·5 miles of the River Ely in my constituency fronting the top end of the inland bay to its western extremity and, along with my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones), the other finger pointing northwards out of the main part of the lake towards Blackweir, dividing his constituency from mine in the centre of Cardiff. Therefore, this part of the Bill and the management of the inland bay are of enormous concern to my constituents.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak today. I thought that I had missed the opportunity earlier when I slipped out briefly to have a cup of tea. When my name went up on the annunciator I thought that I had missed my own speech. However, it was a mistake and it should have been my hon. Friend the Member fo Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley). I was able to boast to others in the Tea Room that I was performing the remarkable feat of having a cup of tea there and making a speech in the Chamber at the same time. Eventually, I realised that I would not miss my speech and that I would have the opportunity of putting it on the record in *Hansard* and having a cup of tea at the same time, for which I am grateful as I have something of a frog in my throat tonight.

There are 34 new clauses or amendments in the group under consideration. That is reminiscent of a Third Reading, except that several aspects have not been touched upon—including how the bay is to be managed other than in respect of flora and fauna, which have received all the attention so far.

I refer specifically to pleasure craft and water sports, and to the obligations that the Bill places on the developers as to the lake's future use. If it does not provide an amenity for the local population, it is not worth having.

6.30 pm

The Government argue that the lake will provide facilities for pleasure craft, water sports, and other open air activities. Amendments Nos. 61 and 62 are aimed at strengthening the guarantee given to the population of Cardiff and the eastern end of the Vale of Glamorgan that they will be able to enjoy the use of dinghies, yachts, and other craft to no lesser extent than they do now.

If the bay is locked off from the Bristol channel to create more of a marina environment, rather than one that can be used for weekend fun canoeing and rowing—as it is now, on a substantial scale, by members of local clubs—there will be a loss of amenity. We want the Government to tie down the development corporation to ensure that people of modest means continue to enjoy the same access to water sport facilities that they do now—and allegedly they are to be the beneficiaries of the cost of the barrage and of establishing the development corporation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) will agree that sailing is not primarily a rich person's pastime in our constituencies. Many members of local clubs are of modest means. Some club officers have made forceful representations to me about the importance of maintaining the present level of charges.

Mr. Michael: My hon. Friend rightly said that I share his concern for protecting the interests of boat users. I agree with him entirely that the memberships of local sailing clubs represent a good cross-section, and that they are not just rich men's associations. I understand that those clubs have pursued positive discussions and have reached an agreement that will offer protection in respect of fees and access. Perhaps the Minister will confirm that that is the case, and that the final agreement with the two clubs in question will be signed, sealed and delivered in the near future.

Mr. Morgan: We are not always advised to offer Ministers an opportunity to intervene, but perhaps the Minister will confirm later my hon. Friend's observations.

Although the clubs, as corporate bodies, have conducted lengthy negotiations with the developers over the past four or five years in respect of alternative facilities, there remains concern about access and the cost of using water craft when the barrage has been built.

Sailing small boats will be difficult. Unless a person wins the football pools, a dinghy is very often the first water craft that he owns. I understand that the sailing of small dinghies will not be permitted, on the ground that there will be an excessive risk of such craft capsizing. Dinghy sailing is defined by Cardiff city council and Vale of Glamorgan borough council environmental health officers as a water contact sport.

The size of the lock and the strength of the whirlpool effect that it will create also present a problem. Small dinghies may therefore be liable to capsize within the lock, but I will return to that aspect when speaking to clauses 31 and 55. Sailing small dinghies alongside larger craft will also be dangerous because of the water pressures that will be created within the lock.

Avoiding the yuppification of Cardiff bay concerns right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House. One does not want to alienate the local population by suggesting that they will be forced or priced out by Cardiff bay being transformed into a marina-like environment, suitable only for use by those having the income levels which existed in south-east England when it was a byword for regional prosperity. That is no longer the case, but it was true when the barrage was first conceived.

The suspicion that marina time will shortly arrive must be dispelled if the loyalty and interest of the local population is to be maintained. That is particularly true when one considers the extent to which the development corporation has used jolly pictures of boats, motor boats and yachts bobbing up and down on Cardiff bay in its advertising and publicity campaigns. It would indeed turn out to have been a cruel deception were some of the people who had been depicted—in photographs or artists' impressions—in publicity for Cardiff bay to find that they could not afford its amenities in the event of the barrage being built.

We would fail in our duty if we did not attempt to strengthen the existing provision by our amendments. I feel that that should be placed on record, because when 34 amendments and new clauses are grouped together it is easy to read some to the exclusion of others.

[Mr. Morgan]

The question of charges, and how they will affect people of modest means, is dealt with in this group, and I consider it very important. I do not think that enough attention has been given to the issue of pleasure craft; although some of the Government amendments deal with it, they do not reinforce people's rights in the way that Opposition Members consider necessary because of their natural interest in what is, in the broadest sense, their constituency. I am talking about the kind of people who tend to vote Labour: it is not necessary to have a PhD in sociology to work that out.

Let me turn to some of the details of a subject that has, admittedly, been given a fair old going over already. Do the Government know whether their proposals are proof against challenge in terms of the Leybucht bay judgment, and has that anything to do with the way in which they have framed new clause 1 and other proposals for change? New clause 1 is clearly part of a deal made by the Government with the Countryside Council for Wales to demonstrate that they were not environmental philistines —that they were "green", and that they had not ignored the importance of

"developing and conserving flora and fauna"

in the management of the inland bay. There may be some weasel words in that—or rat words perhaps: I am not sure which fauna the Government mean.

The handshake agreement reached with the Countryside Council for Wales has aroused considerable suspicion about the way in which the deal was done simply because the council is not a body of long standing. Any deal done with it will require us to exercise our duty of scrutiny, given that one of its two predecessor bodies—the Nature Conservancy Council of Great Britain—took a different view of the barrage proposal. We must ask what pressures were brought to bear on the Countryside Council for Wales, and why it agreed to what amounts to a very mild understanding with the Secretary of State for Wales to the effect that the council has a right to be consulted, as provided in new clause 1(2), and that the development corporation is obliged to

"have regard to the desirability of developing and conserving flora and fauna."

We have heard of two possibilities. One is that the Countryside Council for Wales is no longer legally able to oppose a Bill in the name of the Secretary of State, because of its structure as a quango responsible to him—even if, professionally and scientifically, it takes the same view as that previously taken by the Nature Conservancy Council, namely that the barrage should be opposed. Welsh Office lawyers may have pressurised the council, advising it that it simply has not the right to express outright public opposition by petitioning Parliament.

There is another, slightly less cynical view. The Countryside Council for Wales is a new body whose chairman was directly appointed by the Secretary of State: he is pretty pleased about his appointment, because it is nice to be in a quango. Such a person will tend to visit the Welsh Office fairly frequently to arrange his budget, and his inclination will be not to oppose schemes to which the Secretary of State may have given high priority, even if they have considerable egg-on-face potential in the event of anything going wrong. It is suggested that considerable pressure may have been imposed on the incoming chairman not to petition against the barrage proposal, as the Nature Conservancy Council petitioned against the private Bill.

6.45 pm

We do not know the truth—it is impossible to repeat laboratory experiments in real life—but the new clause does look like some sort of admission that, in return for not petitioning against the Bill, the Countryside Council for Wales insisted on a right to be consulted. It is rather sad that a cosy club of quango chairmen should exist in Wales—and almost all of them are men, given the structure of society under the present Government. Let us suppose that the chairman of the Cardiff Bay development corporation rings up the chairman of the Countryside Council for Wales, and says, "You will not be opposing the Cardiff bay barrage proposal, will you? You will not do the same as your blasted nuisance of a predecessor, the Nature Conservancy Council." A good deal of persuasion will be possible, because such people will keep bumping into each other at dinners, Welsh Office budget-setting sessions and similar functions and get-togethers.

It is rather unfortunate that the rejigging of the arrangements for scientific advice on nature conservation matters has dissipated the spirit of scientific independence for which the NCC was famous. The body has been broken up into English, Scottish and Welsh sections, and the merger between the Scottish and Welsh parts and the Countryside Commission has enabled the Secretary of State to appoint people who will naturally feel a debt of gratitude and loyalty to him. We are distinctly worried about that. We cannot rely on the NCC; we may or may not be able to rely on forces further afield.

Let me use non-subsidiarity language for a moment. It certainly looks as though there is a prima facie case for suggesting that the barrage proposal at least contradicts the spirit of the Leybucht bay judgment in the European Court of Justice. The Government never give a direct answer about that, but we know that they were terribly worked up about that judgment. They sent a flock of lawyers winging their way to Luxembourg—rather like a flock of overwintering wading birds—to listen to the three different stages of the judgment, and they do not take such action for nothing. They took it then because they were keen to find out exactly what the judgment would be.

The judgment stated a principle: if there is a conflict between economic development and nature conservation, the Government must give priority to nature conservation. Clearly, that principle is extremely damaging to the barrage proposal. We do not believe that new clause 1 meets the objections which might be made if the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds found it necessary some time next year—subject to the way in which the remaining parliamentary proceedings go—to challenge the validity of the proposal in the light of the area's previous designation as a site of special scientific interest. That designation has now been abrogated by the Government.

We do not think that new clause 1 goes far enough by merely offering a weak duty of consultation, and of developing and conserving flora and fauna. It attempts to meet the obligation to mitigate loss, but does it mitigate loss in a way that comes within a million miles of meeting the clear provisions of the Leybucht bay judgment? The judgment states that if a choice has to be made between the economic objectives that the Government or a local authority may have and their nature conservation obligations, the nature conservation objectives, not the economic development objectives, must be given priority. The Government will therefore be faced with great difficulties next year, and their new clause 1 and their other amendments will not save them.

Our amendment No. 93 and a few of the other amendments point the way towards much stronger provisions. They would provide for an improved and independent version of the environmental impact assessment. We have attempted to do that, though perhaps not very effectively, in amendments Nos. 22 and 23 which have not so far played a major role in our deliberations. Environmental impact assessments are, we believe, very important. However, the existing ones are sloppy and do not abide by the spirit of the environmental impact assessment directive. It is all too easy for the promoters to control the content of environmental impact assessments. This proposal has not benefited from an independent environmental impact assessment.

I intend to refer to what was wrong with the previous environmental impact assessment. Liverpool university carried out its environmental impact assessment without consulting the statutory bodies at any point. It did not consult the National Rivers Authority. It did not consult Cardiff city council's environmental health department, or that of the Vale of Glamorgan borough council. It merely read other consultants' reports which had been produced for the Cardiff bay development corporation. The omissions from that assessment were bizarre. It had no truck with the two statutory bodies which would have responsibility for the environment if the proposal were to go through. The two statutory bodies were not asked what they thought of the proposal.

The National Rivers Authority's assessment, which was available to us in Committee, is a damning document in that it states clearly what the NRA thinks of the proposal. Had the environmental impact assessment team from Liverpool university been allowed to do its job properly by the Cardiff bay development corporation, it would have produced a very interesting report. However, the team was not allowed to speak to the NRA. Another assessment ought to be made. We should then have greater respect for the report and the development corporation and feel that the corporation had allowed the consultants to speak freely to those with expert opinions on whether or not the barrage should be constructed. Instead of that, we feel that there was a cosy club arrangement. The Government and the development corporation tend to rely on that arrangement, for fear of the truth coming out if people were allowed to get at it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) made some excellent points. We are dealing in this group of amendments with the flora and fauna arguments and with how management could be tightened up. We are also dealing with whether the Cardiff bay development corporation can meet the objectives that all of us have the right to expect in 1992. After the Rio summit, we feel that the human race should try to live in harmony with the biosphere. Therefore, we have to ask ourselves whether it can be claimed that the barrage would result in the human race living in harmony with the biosphere.

The Government love going to summit meetings. They love to lecture the lesser breeds without the law who are doing terrible damage to the environment. However, they cannot do that with much conviction if they do not abide by a coherent set of principles in their own back yard. The Government's attitude to the barrage provides a test case. It shows whether they are really interested in achieving a balance between the economic development objectives that we all share and the environmental objectives that we also share. However, the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

This proposal affects the environment, a point to which I referred in an intervention during the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly. Cardiff bay is a unique environment. The rise and fall of the tide provide what are known as the kidneys of the eco-system. Cardiff bay has the third highest or, as some people say, the second highest tidal rise and fall in the world. It reaches a site of special scientific interest. It penetrates almost into the centre of a city with a population of 300,000. Areas in the Canadian arctic, with huge areas of mudflats and salt marshes, as in Cardiff, also experience this huge tidal range, but they do not have a big city environment as well.

New clause 1 provides that the development corporation should consult the Countryside Council for Wales and seek its views on ways in which the bay can be managed to develop and conserve its flora and fauna. The present flora and fauna constitute a unique eco-system, so how can the development corporation carry out that obligation after the barrage has been built without immediately breaching the terms of new clause 1? New clause 1 is almost a nonsense. The development corporation would destroy a unique eco-system, put some pretty ducks on the lake afterwards and then claim that it has conservation very much in mind.

The development corporation intends to buy off environmental opposition to the barrage proposal by imposing the obligations that are to be found in new clause 1, but that will fool nobody. It will fool neither the Opposition, nor the people outside, nor the environmental lobby. They will not be fooled by the weak-kneed imprint of the Countryside Council for Wales in subsection (2) of new clause 1. New clause 1 does nothing, apart from providing a sop to the Countryside Council for Wales so that it can feel that its conscience has been salved as a result of withdrawing its opposition to the barrage proposal, even though its predecessor body, the Nature Conservancy Council, opposed it. The NCC enjoyed much greater scientific independence. Its chief executive was not chosen by the Secretary of State for Wales. Its funding came from another source. It had a long tradition of complete independence from the Government. That is why the NCC was shot down in flames.

What does new clause 1 mean? The point about the development and conservation of the flora and fauna poses serious problems. If the Cardiff bay barrage were to lock off the estuary from the open sea and produce a freshwater lake, which would be highly eutrophic, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central said earlier, there would be an exceptionally rich although not necessarily desirable set of flora and fauna.

One can put flora and fauna into three separate categories. One can say, "Would not it be awful if there were no flora and fauna in Cardiff bay post-barrage?" My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly referred to a desert, although I do not think that he meant literally a desert, with no flora or fauna. One can speak of "undesirable" flora and fauna. The area might become a breeding ground for huge quantities of midges. The estimate is that 11 billion midges will breed in the rich muds of the estuary which will cause something of a plague in the summer months, as happens in amenity lakes in Scandinavia and in America. It is difficult to control midge populations in shallow, muddy amenity lakes.

The preservation of such flora and fauna would comply with the new clause. Is that what we want? Almost certainly not. Many of the property developers, especially residential property developers, who may be thinking of building around Cardiff bay will want many guarantees that there will not be too many of such flora and fauna. However, the preservation of such flora and fauna would comply with the new clause, which is why we have doubts about whether it makes any sense.

7 pm

Other hon. Members have referred to the question of algal blooms. They are a life form of a very low order. They are flora, but they are hardly desirable. As part of the area is in my constituency, I pay a lot of attention to the flora and fauna of the present flow of the rivers, which will be converted to an inland bay or lake if the barrage is ever built. One notices how critical the balance is between the desirable and the undesirable flora and fauna at the moment.

Let us consider the algae that form already. There are substantial flows of sewage, both treated and untreated. There is already a nutrient-rich flow, especially in the summer months and especially during summers of low flow, of which 1991 was a good example.

Dr. Kim Howells: I agree with my hon. Friend that the flow is nutrient-rich in the summer. Does he also acknowledge that it is nutrient-rich in the winter, especially during periods of high rainfall when the Welsh water authority still has a derogated right to put raw sewage into the Taff and the Ely? Those rivers will be impounded by the barrage.

Mr. Morgan: That is a problem that still has not been dealt with by Welsh Water or by the Cardiff bay development corporation. There is the phenomenon of storm sewer overflows in the valleys which is an almost ineradicable problem of water quality management. However, that was not the primary issue which I was addressing. I was talking about the treated sewage in the summer which tends to create the algal life forms which are material to the new clause. We are talking about flora and fauna in the bay. No doubt the winter sewage flows emerging through the storm sewer overflows tend to impregnate the mud during the winter.

As there is sunlight and warmth on the mud during the summer, the algae come to life and there can be huge quantities. Standing on Canton bridge in the summer of 1991, I noticed huge algal blooms of the strip variety known as cladophora which are then grazed by mullet which come in from the harbour. They are like cows eating grass. There are huge quantities of mullet in my constituency opposite the national rugby ground which I am sure that you have visited, Mr. Deputy Speaker, despite your affection for the thirteen-a-side handling code. Whether you were allowed in if people knew that is another matter. However, I believe that you have been to the national rugby stadium. Right behind there is the phenomenon in dry summers of large quantities of green algal weed being eaten by the mullet—the cows of the river—which come in from the harbour.

If there is a barrage, the mullet cannot come in. Who will graze the cladophora if the mullet cannot come in from the harbour? They will be outside the barrage and the cladophora will be on the inside. That is a serious problem. There was not a problem in 1992 because it was not a dry summer, as you are probably aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker. With the high rainfall after early July, by and large it has been a problem that is easy to control. Once every five or six years when there is a dry summer it is an almost insoluble problem.

Under the new clause, algal infestation of the barrage would be considered a means by which the development corporation would have complied with the Bill. We have a nutrient-rich green pea soup environment in the river which is full of life. It is not the sort that we want because the river is full of rats over which there is no biological control. The air above the lake will be full of 11 billion midges so everyone around the lake will be scratching. Yet the corporation will say, "That is what it says in new clause 1."

We need a system for defining what are desirable flora and fauna and what are not. The only way in which we can categorise flora and fauna as desirable or otherwise is to define whether they are natural or not. We might pick and choose, and say, "Ducks are nice. We can install a coarse fishery and that will be nice. We can charge people to catch coarse fish. The coarse fish will eat the midges. The coarse fish will be put back after having been caught." The corporation has such plans in mind.

It is difficult to compare such a development with the natural environment today. The problem comes back to the fact that the new clause is a complete wash-out, either because the Countryside Council for Wales did not have the guts to oppose the Bill or was legally instructed by the Secretary of State for Wales not to do so. Instead, it will get the absolutely milksop compensation of the right of consultation, and the duty to develop and to conserve flora and fauna.

The new clause does not satisfy us that the Secretary of State could honestly go to a future Rio summit. If Welsh nationalist Members ever have their way, the Prime Minister of Wales will have his own nameplate and glass of water at the United Nations. If he was signing a Rio summit agreement on biodiversity, but was the same person who had introduced the Bill, nobody from the third world would listen to his lectures with any respect. Nobody would say, "To be fair, that is how they do it in Wales." That is not how people do it in Wales.

Despite the rather pathetic attempts to show green credentials in the new clause, we feel that the Secretary of State is abandoning his environmental obligations and is not in a fit position, as a member of the United Kingdom Government, to deliver lectures to anyone about how the human race would live in harmony with the biosphere.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): A number of bird lovers in Neath who are members of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds have asked me to raise a number of issues. I hope that the House will give me leave to do so.

It is obvious that there is great concern about the future of wildlife, especially bird life, as a result of the development. The Government have not yet addressed a number of the key points that have been raised by the RSPB which I want to draw to the House's attention.

We need to note that the bay can hold up to 5,000 wading birds in the winter months. The birds come to Wales in the winter from summer breeding grounds in a range of northern European countries. Wales has a special responsibility to take care of those birds which are part of the European heritage of wildlife. Cardiff bay is a critical area in that it is a component of the Greater Severn estuary ecosystem.

The bay provides sheltered, high-level mudflats supporting an abundance of invertebrate organisms on which the birds feed. It is an important part of the chain of sheltered sites around the Severn estuary. The Government do not seem to recognise that or to be dealing adequately with it. The Severn estuary, of which Cardiff bay is part, qualifies as a wetland of international wildlife importance under criteria established in the Ramsar convention to which the United Kingdom is a signatory.

The Severn estuary qualifies as a special protection area under article 4 of EC directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds. That resulted in a citation being deposited in 1990 with the Welsh Office and with the Department of the Environment by the Nature Conservancy Council.

The Secretary of State has declared that it is not the Government's intention to include Cardiff bay in a future special protection area. I find that very worrying. The Government do not seem to me to have answered any of the major criticisms made by the RSPB, among others. There is a strong case for saying that, in pursuing their plans for the development of Cardiff bay, the Government are reneging on their responsibility to conserve the wildlife heritage of Europe. There are three key factors pertinent to this matter. First, the alternative solutions suggested by the RSPB and others have not been given much credence by the Government. Secondly, the Government have not paid serious attention to the need to satisfy the requirements of European Community law to declare special protection areas, including the Severn estuary and thus Cardiff bay. Thirdly, there is a strong case for suggesting that, in attempting to exclude Cardiff bay from the ecological unit of which it is a key part—the Severn estuary—Ministers have made a conscious attempt to circumvent both the spirit and the letter of European law.

Bird lovers in my constituency and throughout the country, represented nationally by the RSPB, have argued their case on these serious issues with great force but have not received serious or convincing answers from the Government. Whilst that remains the case, we must fear the consequences of the barrage proposals for the future of wildlife, and of bird life in particular.

I ask the Minister to address himself to those issues. If he is not willing to accept at least some of the constructive amendments tabled by the Opposition, he will have to answer the charges made by bird lovers and others who say that the barrage development will destroy the natural habitat of a very important section of European wildlife and bird life—a habitat of which Cardiff bay is an important part. The Government have not taken that on board, nor have they seriously addressed the concerns expressed by those most actively involved.

7.15 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths: One can only be amazed at the confidence trick that the Government appear to think that they can pull with hon. Members by introducing new clause 1. The remedial or ameliorative measures—I do not know precisely into which category they fall—in the new clause are clearly an afterthought on the Government's part. They have been introduced to try to placate those who are concerned about our natural environment—in particular the Taff-Ely estuary and the tidal mudflats that stretch out beyond the city of Cardiff.

The barrage will destroy for ever mudflats which the Government have declared to be important—even if they are setting aside their earlier judgments in proposing to build the barrage. The Government seek to convince us that the development corporation should be required merely to

"have regard to the desirability of developing and conserving flora and fauna."

It could be argued that that is merely the legal language in which Governments must express themselves. If we take the words literally, however, it would appear that the development corporation can choose—it may regard the development and conservation of flora and fauna as desirable; it may not.

In any case, it is suggested that the development corporation should conserve flora and fauna. The truth is that, once the barrage has been built, the flora and fauna of the Cardiff mudflats will be destroyed. There will be no opportunity to conserve them because they will have disappeared under goodness knows how many metres of water.

It is suggested that the Countryside Council for Wales should be consulted about ways in which the flora and fauna might be developed. The Government's audacity takes my breath away. They are trying to present themselves as being concerned about the environment of an inland bay created by a barrage that will already have destroyed an important intertidal mudflat enjoying a degree of protection. In a series of questions that I tabled last Session, I tried to get the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office to agree that any area designated as a site of special scientific interest ought to be totally protected—that nothing should allow its destruction. Unfortunately, the Government took the view that, even if they had designated a site as being of special scientific interest, they could destroy such a site if it suited them.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is vital to ask what constitutes desirability in terms of the development and conservation of flora and fauna? Given that the mudflats are to disappear, which species of flora and fauna will the development corporation consider it desirable to develop and conserve? Does my hon. Friend agree that, before we can accept the new clause, we need to know how the development corporation will establish which flora and fauna it is desirable to develop to replace the existing forms?

Mr. Griffiths: My hon. Friend makes an interesting and telling point. I suppose that the Government may say that the purpose of new clause 1(2) is to deal with that very point: it will be up to the Countryside Council for Wales to advise the development corporation on the best way to manage, develop and conserve flora and fauna. It would be most informative and helpful if the Minister gave us the information that my hon. Friend seeks. The issue has been dealt with in the context of the rather ugly, uninteresting mudflats bordering the edge of Cardiff. We are told that it would be much prettier if they were submerged and we had an expanse of water behind the barrage. The people of Cardiff would no longer have to look at the mudflats, which look rather ugly and dirty when the tide is out.

[Mr. Griffiths]

The truth is that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. To the dunlin and many other migratory and wading birds the mudflats are heaven. The birds certainly do not want the mudflats to be removed. If they had a voice, they would be here this evening putting the case. Unfortunately, they are not able to do so. We can make a small contribution on their behalf. We must try to broaden our horizons. The story developed by the Government is that these ugly mudflats can be transformed and made to look much nicer and that they can play a part in the further development of Cardiff. After all, it is a relatively small area.

At one time the Government thought that the mudflats were worth designating as a site of special scientific interest, but they certainly will not give them the special protected status which they should have. The Government will destroy them. Of course, that argument is being used for half the estuaries in the United Kingdom.

Reference was made earlier to the impending efforts to build an Usk barrage. Again part of the argument is that the dirty mudflats are exposed at low tide and it would be much nicer if there was a barrage and the mudflats were permanently under water. More than half of the estuaries around the coast of the United Kingdom are threatened with such developments. Only when we see the whole picture do we realise that the Cardiff piece of the jigsaw is absolutely vital. It is vital to retain the mudflats so that the migratory and wading birds can have the benefit of those feeding grounds.

The United Kingdom has a long coastline. Our coastline and its mudflats are important to the ecosystem of north-west Europe and the world. New clause 1 seems to mislead us into believing that it will do something effective about preserving and conserving the flora and fauna which will be destroyed by the barrage. That will not happen. This important intertidal zone should be properly conserved. No one should be misled by new clause 1. A visitor from Mars or, say, Uruguay who happened to come through London this evening and read new clause 1 might consider that it was an effective way of protecting the mudflats, but the new clause is cosmetic because the mudflats will be destroyed.

The mudflats in Cardiff bay are of immense international importance to wildlife. The intertidal zone between the land and the sea at low tide is important as a feeding ground for many migratory birds. It forms part of a biological chain which spans half of the globe. We must consider the global context of what the Government seek to do in new clause 1. The new clause does absolutely nothing to protect the flora and fauna of intertidal zones in the global context. We must ask ourselves why the Government even tried to provide such a smokescreen. Did they believe that Opposition Members would not notice what was going on?

Mr. Gareth Wardell: My hon. Friend has made himself an acknowledged expert on beach pollution and the quality of bathing beaches throughout Wales. Could he confirm that one of our difficulties is that wildlife feed on the raw sewage discharged along the Welsh coast, which often finds its way into the mudflats? If we remove that biosphere and ecology of the mudflats it will cause a major problem. For example, I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that Liverpool bay is a classic example of a reserve of international importance——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. This is a long intervention.

Mr. Wardell: I am coming to my question. Is it not the case that in areas such as Liverpool bay, which are similar in international importance to Cardiff bay, to clean up the coast for the human population can have a devastating effect by changing the habitat of the flora and fauna?

Mr. Griffiths: My hon. Friend makes an important point which forms part of the case for keeping the intertidal mudflats intact. He rightly pointed out that over the years we have been lax in implementing European Community directives to which we have agreed. The 1976 directive to which my hon. Friend referred should have been complied with by 1986, It seems that the directive will not be fully complied with even by 1996. When the directive is fully complied with, less raw sewage will go on to the tidal mudflats.

As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if one does not put manure on one's garden one does not grow good crops. It is the same with the intertidal mudflats. If raw sewage is not put on them the teeming wildlife which the migratory birds find so attractive will no longer exist. The harvest of food on which the migratory birds rely will be reduced. The yield of the mudflats will fall because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) rightly says, there will not be so much sewage about to encourage growth.

The Government should be much more concerned about preserving the existing mudflats so that the loss of the lower forms of animal life on which the birds feed is minimal. Those forms of life will not exist in such profusion when we comply fully with the EC directive. There are a number of schemes around the Cardiff area. Some have been completed and others will be completed in the fairly near future. That issue is relevant to considering the conservation of flora and fauna, which is what new clause 1 seeks to do.

The intertidal mudflats are a vital lifeline between the Arctic breeding grounds of millions of birds and their distant winter quarters to the south. The Severn estuary —to which Cardiff bay is of vital import—is where so many of those birds find a staging post. It would not be putting it too strongly to describe it as a lifeline for them as they migrate.

7.30 pm

Mr. Morgan: The real controversy, to which none of us knows the answer as we cannot carry out the experiment, is about what would happen if one were to remove all sewage from the flow of the Taff and Ely rivers. Would the bay still be important, or does its importance derive from its enclosed nature because it is a shelter? Most experts think that 90 per cent. of the benefit to migrating wading birds, which overwinter there or use it as a stopping-off place on the way to Africa, derives because it is a shelter rather from the sewage—star fuel for the remainder of the journey. I am not a scientific expert and I intend to leave the matter there, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Griffiths: I thank my hon. Friend for an interesting suggestion for a research topic which the Government might like to fund before they carry on with the barrage. It is certainly well worth thinking about.

If Cardiff bay were the only area under threat, we might be able to shrug our shoulders and say, "Okay, this time we'll accept it." The truth is that more than half of the United Kingdom's estuaries are faced with a similar threat. The Government should not have produced a cosmetic new clause in which they seem to want to give an aura of respect to the barrage that will so damage the environment of the Cardiff mudflats. They give the impression that the development corporation will have hearts of green when managing the inland bay, and that by some miracle the flora and fauna will be conserved and developed. We are almost left with the impression that the result will be much better for the flora and fauna. The truth is that the natural state of things is best for the birds.

I cannot accept that the new clause is a serious effort to meet the concerns of conservationists, of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and of the many people in the Cardiff area who are worried. Even at this late stage I should like to think that the Government could remodel the Bill so that there would not be a permanent barrage which would destroy the mudflats. I hope that, even at the 11th hour, they will give us a reprieve rather than the stay of execution that these measures seem to imply.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This has been a long debate. Hon. Members present, and some who could not still be here, might appreciate that there is a sense of déjà vu.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) mentioned several important matters that we have had to consider: the involvement of local councils, environmental health, dinghy sailing, ground water, adequate compensation and alternative feeding grounds. She also asked me for reassurance about legal scrutiny. I can give her the fullest assurance that we are confident that the Bill, as it stands and without further amendment, complies with the EC wild birds directive, in the light of the Leybucht judgment. I noted her complaints about the issuing of documents of economic appraisal. Only the economic appraisal was new, and it was issued last week because it was only completed then. I asked for the documents to be sent to her home—and to the other hon. Members involved—to try to ensure that it got to them with the least possible delay. The other documents had been available before and were only reissued to remind hon. Members of what was available and to aid this evening's debate. I am especially concerned to hear that the documents never reached the hon. Lady. I offer her my most sincere apologies for that omission, and I shall try to investigate what went wrong.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) spoke at great length. I was touched by his reference to my powers in 1986. He should read what I said then, and perhaps he would better understand my contributions, then and since, to this important debate.

Mr. Ron Davies: I was referring to the occasion when, from the anonymity of the Back Benches, the hon. Gentleman objected to the Bill at 2.30 pm on a Wednesday afternoon. There was no debate. He stopped the Bill and prevented it from having an unopposed Second Reading.

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman is right. Clearly I was not very anonymous, since he and everyone else knows that I shouted "Object". But that did not stop the Bill. It was debated further and the hon. Gentleman is welcome to read what I said in that debate.

After listening to the speech of the hon. Member for Caerphilly for one hour and 19 minutes, I felt that his case was to maintain the present flora and fauna and the existing environment. There was a lack of any wish to consider the alternative, the new environment or the future flora and fauna that would be brought about by a barrage and the creation of an inland bay. Of course it will be different. Such a creation would mean that much of the present flora and fauna could not continue, but that there would be new flora and fauna afterwards. There would be a new environment. The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) produced a most appropriate response to his hon. Friend's comments. He said that there has been substantial debate on the subject already, not least on the quality of environment that we want in south Cardiff. As the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said, we are about an environmental improvement for the many. The absence of any consideration of that improvement has been most marked, apart from in his contribution.

I listened closely, as I have done before, to the passion and concern of the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), a noted expert on matters ornithological. He echoed the concerns of the hon. Member for Caerphilly, as did the hon. Members for Neath (Mr. Hain) and for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths).

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) told us that he had achieved quite a remarkable feat. He had been in the Tea Room when the annunciator showed that he was speaking in the Chamber and he had been able to boast about it. We would have equally understood if he had told us that he had dreamt that he was speaking about the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill only to wake up to find that he was doing so. Perhaps his desire to be absent from the Chamber was because of his sense of déjà vu and his feeling—subconscious or otherwise—that it is about time that we started to make progress with this measure.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West referred to the amendments relating to the important matter of pleasure craft. I remind him that extensive discussions have taken place between the development corporation and the Royal Yachting Association on the access facilities to be provided. It has been agreed, to the satisfaction of that association, that three locks, 40 m long and 10·5 m wide, will be constructed. I am not aware of any pleasure craft currently in the bay that would not fit in such a lock. I therefore feel that amendment No. 62 is unnecessary.

Clause 9(2) requires the development corporation to have regard to

> "the requirements of vessels in, or passing to or from, the inland bay"

when operating the barrage. Clause 13(1) requires the development corporation to

> "manage the inland bay and the outer harbour so as to facilitate their use by pleasure craft and . . . water sports".

The construction of the barrage is bound to change the accessibility of the bay to boats because their access will be gained through the locks rather than being unrestricted. However, those boats will be able to get in and out at times when the tide would now prevent them from doing so.

I understand that slipway provision is being contemplated for dinghy sailors who would prefer not to use the locks. I anticipate that those sailors would prefer to use that facility instead, although the locks are intended to have features to reduce turbulence—there will be less turbulence in the new locks than there is in the lock to the Portway marina.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth asked about agreements reached with the sailing clubs. I

[Mr. Jones]

understand that agreement has been reached on rebates, lock charges and the cost of moorings, but the issue of their premises is the subject of continued discussion.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West referred to amendments Nos. 22 and 23 which ask the House to place a requirement on the development corporation to publish a report of its consultations with the Countryside Council for Wales and the RSPB about the measures to be taken to

"develop and conserve flora and fauna".

The difficulty with the amendments is that they appear to regard consultation as a one-off affair, but consultations on measures to develop and conserve flora and fauna will be on-going. I believe that a formal report, as envisaged in the amendments, is not appropriate.

It has also been suggested that detailed estimates of the general environmental impact should be published. I remind the House that the impact of the barrage scheme is already more than adequately covered by the environmental statement deposited with the Bill. That statement and the assessment of the environmental effects, which the House is now carrying out, render the amendments unnecessary.

Mr. Morgan: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is unsatisfactory that the environmental impact assessment did not include any reference to the views of or discussions with the two main statutory bodies that will determine the water sports to be undertaken in the bay and the quality of the water in that inland bay, namely, the National Rivers Authority and the environmental health officers of the two riparian local authorities? Does he not regard that as an appalling state of affairs when one is trying to provide a proper, independent, environmental impact assessment?

Mr. Jones: No. We have an appropriate environmental statement. None of the issues has been ignored in the full consideration that the House has given and is giving to this matter.

Hon. Members will recall that provisions relating to alternative feeding grounds were removed from the Bill by the Standing Committee. The Government remain committed to seeking some form of alternative mitigation. The feasibility study into the suitability of the site on the Gwent levels as a bird reserve, which I announced in Committee, is expected to be ready by the end of the year. That is an appropriate response to the hon. Member for Neath, who suggested that we had not taken the RSPB's concerns seriously.

The RSPB suggested that an alternative habitat could be erected on the Gwent levels. The Welsh Office, the development corporation, the Countryside Council for Wales and the RSPB are all co-operating on a study of that, funded by the development corporation. I hope that that will lead to the creation of an extremely valuable nature reserve. The RSPB has argued that that would provide much better value than the Wentloog lagoon. We will publish the results of the study as soon as they are available. We shall do so well in advance of carrying out the works authorised by the Bill and while the Bill is still before Parliament.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West and other hon. Members are wrong to suggest that new clause 1 is a response to Europe—certainly not. It is a response to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West. Amendment No. 3 covers exactly the amendment that the hon. Member for Cardiff, West sought to introduce in Committee. Our other amendments, together with new clause 1, go further than he wanted in improving the management of the inland bay once the barrage is completed. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman has not welcomed the fact that we have not only accepted what he wanted but gone further.

I do not accept the other amendments in the group and I hope that they will not be pursued.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 215, Noes 156.

Division No. 74] **[7.46 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Faulds, Andrew
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*

Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacKay, Andrew
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes
Mr. Robert Hughes and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

NOES

Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Bennett, Andrew F.
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Blunkett, David
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Llwyd, Elfyn
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ray Powell and
Mr. John Spellar.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

Clause 1

CONSTRUCTION OF BARRAGE ETC. AND OTHER WORKS

Mrs. Clwyd: I beg to move amendment No. 82, in page 1, line 7, at beginning insert

'Subject to subsection (8) below'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I suggest that it would be convenient for the House to discuss at the same time the following amendments: No. 80, in page 1, line 18, at end insert—

'( ) No such works shall be constructed until the Development Corporation shall have published proposals showing the maximum cost of constructing the barrage and associated and consequential works and an assessment of any adverse impact on the costs of industry and employment business in adjoining areas.'.

No. 88, in page 2, line 35, at end add—

'(8) Expenditure by the Development Corporation on the works referred to in this section and specified in Schedule I to this Act shall not exceed a total sum arrived at by adding to the sum of £85 million a further sum reflecting inflation in the

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

cost of civil engineering works since November 1989, calculated on the basis of official figures published by the Department of the Environment.'.

No. 91, in page 2, line 35, at end add—

'(12) The Development Corporation shall not commence the works until after completion and publication of a cost-benefit analysis of the works as a whole, and of each work itemised in Schedule 1 separately based on the most recent cost data and market forces available.'.

Mrs. Clwyd: I hope that the Government will be more reasonable with this set of amendments than they were with the previous 27 amendments that my hon. Friends and I tabled. It is important that amendments that the Opposition consider to be vital to the success of the Cardiff bay barrage are considered carefully by the Government.

At every stage, our criticism of the Bill has not been about the need for economic regeneration, for we accept the necessity for the economic regeneration of the Cardiff bay area. There can be no doubt about the need for urban regeneration in the Cardiff docklands. It should be remembered—people sometimes forget—that unemployment in parts of the inner-city areas of Cardiff and on council estates such as Ely and Llanrumney is as high as in the valley communities.

Today's debate is linked to the key political issues of the moment—the state of our economy and particularly the future of our coal industry. The Cardiff docks were at the centre of the coal economy of south Wales. Coal from the valleys made Cardiff the world's leading coal exporting area. There would not be a Cardiff without the valleys.

8 pm

Now the Government threaten to kill our coal industry and our coal communities. They threaten to plunge thousands more families in Wales into unemployment and poverty. They threaten to gamble our children's future on the spot markets of Rotterdam and in the gas fields of the former Soviet Union. Where was the Secretary of State when that economic absurdity was dreamt up? The self-styled voice of Wales in the Cabinet had to admit yesterday that he was not even consulted. So much for a Tory from the Wirral speaking up for Wales in Whitehall and Westminster. What more graphic an illustration of the absurdity of the Government's policy is there than the picture in *The Guardian* today of a ship unloading 500 tonnes of foreign coal, imported from Vietnam, at Swansea docks?

We support the regeneration of Cardiff docklands but, despite all the time spent debating the Bill and its predecessors, the Secretary of State for Wales has still not answered many fundamental points. Where does the barrage fit into his overall strategy for Wales? The Government are in real danger of putting all their eggs in one basket. The case for economic regeneration in south Cardiff is clear, but what do the Government propose to do to help the south Wales valleys, blighted by some of the highest rates of long-term unemployment and deprivation in Britain? What about rural Wales, suffering from low pay, under-employment and unemployment? What about north Wales? Bearing in mind the iron grip which the Government have put on local authorities in Wales—county councils and district councils—regarding revenue and capital spending, I suspect that no public authority would have got away with the enormous and still escalating costs in capital which the Cardiff Bay development corporation seems to be getting away with.

The Government's plan to scrap the Barnet plan for public expenditure makes this even more critical. Make no mistake about the fact that public spending cuts may be hard in England but they will be even more brutal and savage in Wales. The Secretary of State for Wales must shoulder the blame because he has not fought his corner in the Cabinet to save the Barnet formula. The Welsh Office's budget will be slashed. The Secretary of State for Wales refused to deal with that issue at Welsh questions yesterday, but it still leaves a big question mark: what does it mean for the planned spending on the barrage, now estimated at £167·4 million based on construction starting in 1993? How does the Secretary of State for Wales hope to balance spending on that one project, important as it will be for south Cardiff, against all the other pressing needs in Wales? For example, what will happen to expenditure on roads, hospitals and schools if the barrage proceeds?

It is amazing that the Wallace Evans technical report on the proposed wells and pumping facilities to deal with the ground water problem, which has been published and arrived in my office this afternoon, has not progressed beyond the desk study stage. The Government will not have details of its findings for another six months but they have still brought the Bill back to the House today. That is an insult to the House of Commons. It is yet another example of those involved with the project trying to steamroller the process of consultation and public discussion in the House and outside.

I should have thought that the Government would learn a lesson from the outrage that has been expressed about the way in which they have dealt with the future of the coal industry in the past few days. However, as has happened in the past, they seem to have learnt nothing. Although the Minister has apologised for not making the documents available earlier, and I accept his apologies, apologies are not sufficient when we are expected to deal with two major reports and they arrive on our desks today —they have not arrived on some people's desks at all.

That is why we are particularly concerned about cost and why we expect the Government to give us many explanations this evening as to what they intend to do about developing the cost of the development of Cardiff bay with public expenditure and the demands that undoubtedly exist for the rest of Wales.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): In view of the hon. Lady's belief in the regeneration of docklands, does she not accept that this scheme will contribute towards jobs in Cardiff, estimated at some 23,000 jobs and involving 4,400 houses? How can she say that she believes in the economic regeneration of Cardiff while at the same time opposing the Bill that will bring it about?

Mrs. Clwyd: I am pleased to respond to the Minister's question, particularly as he places such heavy emphasis on jobs in Cardiff. Ministers have told us that there will be jobs for the valleys in addition to jobs for Cardiff. I wonder why the right hon. Gentleman did not emphasise that, or does he see those as jobs for Cardiff alone? I have made it clear that jobs for Cardiff are important, but so are jobs for other parts of Wales that are suffering from high long-term unemployment. Does the Minister remember that the main aim of the valleys initiative was to create between 25,000 and 30,000 jobs for the valleys? Unemployment in the valleys is as high as it was in 1988 when the valleys initiative started. Will it be different in Cardiff?

Sir Wyn Roberts: Will not the hon. Lady accept that many of the people who work in Cardiff come from the valleys, as has been shown in successive surveys?

Mrs. Clwyd: I am glad that the Minister now stresses that there will be jobs for people from the valleys as well. But should we have more faith in that promise than in previous promises made by Ministers, given that the main economic aim of the valleys initiative has failed? I hope that the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill will be more successful in providing those jobs.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: I tried to catch my hon. Friend's attention before the Minister stood up. I should like to make her aware that, when authorities in Cardiff and south Glamorgan carried out a survey to ensure that we kept our area status—which the Government are reviewing at present—we found that between half and two thirds of the new jobs coming to Cardiff were taken up by people who lived outside Cardiff. When I recently visited Panasonic, which is the largest television producer in Europe on the outskirts of my constituency, I found that more than 50 per cent. of the people who worked there came from the valleys of south Wales.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I have just taken the Chair and I am having the greatest difficulty in relating the exchanges to the amendment.

Mrs. Clwyd: Perhaps I may respond to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones). We are not opposed to the creation of jobs in Cardiff. On the contrary, we would like many more jobs to be created in Wales. However, we are worried about the implications for the rest of Wales of the current public expenditure round. It is reasonable to ask the Minister for assurances that any spending on Cardiff bay will not affect the demands by the rest of Wales which, I am sure he agrees, are equally important.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) has rightly presented the dilemma and the issues at stake. Legitimate arguments must be aired about public expenditure priorities and the spending implications of the Bill. During his winding-up speech when we last debated the Bill the Minister used the phrase "déjà vu" several times. I make no apology for returning to the issues that I have constantly sought to develop during debates on the Bill. An elderly parishioner in one of our Baptist chapels said to the minister at the door after listening to the sermon, "Every time I hear it, I enjoy it more and more." I hope that the Minister will once again enjoy my attempt to discover how much the scheme will cost.

Our amendments seek to limit costs. We have every reason to seek to do that because we have watched the costs alter. One of the running issues in our debates has been the problem of discovering what the scheme will cost. There are two sets of costs—the barrage costs and the costs related to it. When the Bill left Committee the barrage-related costs were set out in a letter. Much of the information has been by correspondence, especially that between me and two Parliamentary Under-Secretaries. In a letter of 30 June this year it was stated that the total barrage-related costs had risen from £547 million to £662 million and that the public expenditure component had risen from £335 million to £405 million.

Mr. Ron Davies: My hon. Friend has followed the matter with special care. He speaks about barrage-related costs. What does "related" mean in terms of costs directly associated with the barrage rather than those which are indirectly associated?

8.15 pm

Mr. Rowlands: Table 2 in appendix A1 in the January 1990 assessment shows that the figure of £547 million had risen to £662 million. It consists of the barrage at £125 million; the cost of a variety of improved accesses, the chief of which is the primary distributor route link at a cost of £95 million; other road schemes costing £33·94 million; car parking at £12·96 million; a light rapid transit system costing £10 million; and other environmental improvements totalling £25 million. Those are what we call the barrage-related costs. On 30 June the £547 million rose to £662 million using the GDP deflated market prices at 10 March 1992. The public expenditure element of that increased amount was £405 million. Those were the costs in June this year.

Mr. Michael: It is always easier to follow figures on one's own piece of paper than to follow those quoted by a colleague. Has my hon. Friend included in the barrage-related costs the cost of the primary distributor route? May I say to him, not for the first time, that the PDR was to be constructed before the barrage and is not directly barrage-related. It is directed at the transport of the city and is for the benefit of constituents who have lorries using their roads. It is contained in the figures for technical, legal reasons, and I hope that my hon. Friend will make that distinction.

Mr. Rowlands: I am happy to do that. We must compare like with like. Those were called related costs by Ministers and were so described in correspondence. I accept that the PDR link has other functions, but in every ministerial letter and reply and in every table and document issued to us the PDR link and other items have been described as barrage-related costs.

Mr. Michael: I appreciate that in seeking to make his point my hon. Friend has to compare like with like. I am sure he will accept that a facility that has been long needed to open up the docks and remove traffic from domestic roads which have suffered devastation over the years is not related to the barrage. I argued with Ministers that it should not be included as a barrage-related cost. To argue that it is is to exaggerate the sum of money involved in the barrage. I ask my hon. Friend to accept that.

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend has obviously failed to persuade Ministers that it should be excluded because it has been perpetuated by being included in the latest document.

Mr. Michael: As I have said several times, for the purposes of the legislation technically it has to be included in the figures. I ask my hon. Friend to accept that a road which was to be built anyway and which was desperately

[Mr. Michael]

needed in that part of Cardiff is not truly barrage-related although it may technically be brought into barrage-related figures.

Mr. Ron Davies: I do not wish to become involved in what is developing into an intimate and interesting discussion.

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): Force yourself.

Mr. Davies: It will not be the first time that I have had to force myself. If my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) completely accepts at face value the comment by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) that the cost of the distributor road should be excluded from the barrage calculations, presumably it must be included somewhere else. Given the considerable distortion of expenditure on transportation in South Glamorgan, does not my hon. Friend agree that Mid Glamorgan, the county that he and I represent, would be even worse done by in terms of the proportion of expenditure on transport? That is the downside of the case presented by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth.

Mr. Rowlands: Yes, it is, because whether we include it in barrage-related costs or not, it is just about one of the most expensive roads built since the Conway tunnel. In fact, the costs per mile are about the same. That expense comes out of the roads pool expenditure into which we all have to dip, whether we are in Brecon and Radnor, in Caerphilly, in my constituency or in Gwynedd. The cost is not modest—it is about £15 million per mile.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: Will my hon. Friends who represent Mid Glamorgan concede that it is more expensive to build roads through the middle or on the edge of large conurbations? There does not happen to be a large conurbation in Mid Glamorgan. The costs of building the M25 or roads in London is far higher than the cost of building roads through the countryside. The logic of my hon. Friend's argument is that the latter should not be built.

Mr. Rowlands: No, I am simply pointing out that the cost of building a road at £15 million per mile comes out of the same roads pool and roads expenditure programme of the same Government Department from which the rest of us are seeking approval for road schemes. Therefore, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) said, the issue is one of priorities, and these must be discussed openly and fairly.

Let me return to my case. I had not started to develop my argument. I wanted only to ensure that we were comparing like with like in costs. On 30 June 1992 when we came out of Committee, the barrage-related costs stood at £662 million, of which £405 million were public expenditure. We were then issued with a blue book that told us that barrage-related cost have become £497 million. I hope that the Minister will clarify this point and let us know where we stand. Are we talking about the same figure? What has changed? I have read that that is a 21 per cent. reduction. I am not good at arithmetic—I was literate but not numerate, like my daughter who got an A in English but failed her maths GCSE.

I hope that, as I speak, the Minister will be able to get some advice from nearby quarters and tell us whether the £497 million is the equivalent of the £662 million. The document explains that there is a 21 per cent. reduction in barrage-related costs. The chief cost is the PDR Bute Town link, which was to cost over £90 million but now is to cost £53 million. Is that because it has become cheaper to build? I should like a more detailed explanation than is contained in the allusions in the blue book.

If the £497 million is related to the same costs as the £662 million, what proportion of it is public expenditure? On 30 June we were told that of the £662 million of barrage-related costs, £405 million was the public sector component. How has that dramatic difference of £162 million been arrived at? We have worked on these figures from the start, so we might as well see them through to the end.

A second cost, and one that has changed for good reasons, year by year and month by month, is the construction cost for the barrage. That figure started off at around the £45 million mark. When this Bill came before us, the financial memorandum mentioned a figure of £82 million plus land acquisition costs of £2·5 million. It rose over the next 18 months to £125 million and now stands at £152 million using the mid-1992 prices. We are told, fortunately, that the real capital cost of the barrage has increased by only £9 million at mid-1992 prices or about 6 per cent. since the January 1990 appraisal, of which £4·63 million represents the increased cost of remedial work for ground water protection.

Given the variety of figures that we have had and the changing costs that we have tried to follow, there must be a strong case for a form of expenditure that limits the continuing increase in expenditure that we have witnessed over the past 18 months or two years of debating the Bill and the scheme. The late Mr. Ian Grist—late in parliamentary terms—called me a one-man Public Accounts Committee on this Bill. I think that he meant it as an insult, but I took it as a compliment. Therefore, I shall return to the argument and ask the Minister, before we start discussing the comparative merits and priorities involved, whether we can have a definitive set of figures before we finish the debate.

I shall now deal with the case being made for this expenditure. My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley is absolutely right. Whether we like it or not—I wish that there was room to accommodate every view—we all know that, as Aneurin Bevan said, politics is the language of priorities. We know that crucial decisions on public expenditure priorities will be made in the coming weeks. Therefore, a valley Member like me is right to ask whether we can justify the public expenditure costs involved both in the barrage itself and in the barrage-related projects, which are very large and must be balanced against the needs of the Principality and of communities such as those that I represent.

The case made for such high levels of expenditure is repeated in the review of the January 1990 appraisal. As soon as I got my hands on it I read it avidly to see what case it made. It is what will come to be known in the language of politics as a Heseltine review. It is a review that comes to the conclusion that it intended to come to from the beginning—that a marvellous and fantastic benefit would accrue from building the barrage and impounding water. We must analyse the report in a reasonably critical fashion because it contains the latest, hot-off-the-press levels of expenditure being advocated.

Mr. Morgan: I merely wanted to draw to my hon. Friend's attention, in case he had not noticed it, the fact that there are two models of review. He has referred to one as the Heseltine review—that which comes to the conclusion that it intended to come to at the beginning. The other kind is the Wakeham scheme, which was revealed to the other place today. This one puts forward the idea that all 31 pits should remain open and that the review on that should be carried out independently. Is that the kind of review that my hon. Friend has in mind for this project as well?

8.30 pm

Mr. Rowlands: There should certainly be an independent review of expenditure of this sort. To borrow a phrase from the Minister, the document before us produces a sense of déjà vu when it comes to assessments. The argument is that the proposed additional expenditure will create about 23,000 permanent jobs in addition to the many jobs that will genuinely be created by the marvellous organic development of the dockland area. I have been to the area, as have many of my colleagues, to see it for myself. What is happening now without the barrage is impressive.

Mr. Michael *rose*——

Mr. Rowlands: I shall make my case and then give way to my hon. Friend.

The *Western Mail* headline told us that 23,000 new jobs will come to the area. When we read the KPMG document, however, we are told that that figure is not a forecast. It is based on the assumption that if so many tens of thousands of square feet of office space are built and all that accommodation is filled there will be that number of jobs. What will happen if the offices lie empty for 12 months, 18 months or two years?

I shall show my age now. If a number of Centre Points are constructed——

Mr. Morgan: Or Canary wharves.

Mr. Rowlands: Yes. If they are dotted around the area and they lie empty, presumably it will be claimed that 23,000 jobs have been created. The KPMG document states that if so many thousand square feet of office accommodation is built and we assume that there is one typist in X square feet, there will be an additional 23,000 jobs. That is merely an assumption based on new build and occupation.

There is a mighty lesson to be learnt from the past 18 months. It has been demonstrated by the Canary wharf development and elsewhere that assumptions or forecasts of the sort that I have outlined must not be made.

Mr. Michael: I hope that we can treat south Cardiff rather differently from places like Canary wharf. One of my reasons for saying that is that there is co-operation between elected representatives and central Government.

My hon. Friend has been careful enough to visit my constituency to see what is happening. I am grateful for the revelation of his interest in what is happening in south Cardiff. Presumably he noticed the close relationship between the places where jobs have been developed and located as a result of work that has not been confined to organisations such as the development corporation. Account must be taken also of what has been done by South Glamorgan county council and Cardiff city council, the economic development committee of which was chaired so recently by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones). I am sure that my hon. Friend noticed the relationship between water in the docks and full accommodation. I appreciate the need for him to question closely the assumption of Ministers and those that are related to the figures which stem from the Bill, but there are realities to be seen and considered in the constituency. We can learn from them as well as from theories or developments in London.

Mr. Rowlands: Yes, of course we can learn from them. What is going on in the docks without the barrage is extremely impressive.

Mr. Michael: With the water.

Mr. Rowlands: Much of what I saw had nothing to do with water. There has been development on land that has been cleared.

We are expected to assume and believe—this was taken up by the *Western Mail*—that 23,000 permanent jobs will be created. When we read the document we find that that estimate is not based on an assessment of demand. It is merely an assumption that is based on what would happen if every new office block were occupied. I have a right to query whether that is a reasonable assessment or judgment. A recent Public Accounts Committee report on the Welsh Development Association's job assessments showed that it is possible to get things hopelessly wrong. I am not convinced that the intellectual rigour that went into producing the document before us would stand up to investigation of the sort conducted by the PAC.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will favour me with his face rather than his back.

Mr. Rowlands: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was interrupted by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), who sits behind me, and I was determined to respond. I should say that he intervened in an extremely civilised fashion. I shall, of course, Madam Deputy Speaker, take note of what you have said. I shall not be sexist and say what a pleasure it would be to press a comparison.

I question seriously the justification that is being used for such large sums of public expenditure, which is that many permanent jobs will be created by the scheme. I have every right to query it. There is no detailed assessment of demand. Indeed, the very reverse is the case. It is interesting to read the 1990 appraisal. Even the county and the district did not believe that the proposed extra office space was justified. On page 4 of the 1990 assessment there is the following passage:

> "The demand for office space . . . in Cardiff bay will probably average"—

this is what the supposed job creation figure is based upon—

> "about 23,000 square feet per annum, which is around 70 per cent. of Cardiff's total."

A beautiful understatement follows:

> "This is a considerable increase on the city's own target. This is most unlikely, however, to occur."

It is then argued in a woolly fashion that the extra expenditure can be justified.

[Mr. Rowlands]

It is claimed that one of the great benefits to emerge from the proposed expenditure will be about 23,000 new jobs, which will become available in office space in particular. Again, I have a feeling of déjà vu. I had the privilege of serving Cardiff in the 1960s, when a similar grandiose scheme came forward. It was claimed that if the development took place a huge number of jobs would be created. The scheme was rightly and democratically rejected at local level. We now have a successful organically developed city centre. Cardiff is one of the finest retail centres in the Principality as well as in the country. It is a privilege and pleasure to walk through Cardiff. The development of the city centre was the result of skilful planning by the city council and South Glamorgan county council. The authorities rejected the grandiose development that was proposed, which is related and somewhat built into the proposed developments in and around the proposed barrage scheme.

Mr. Ron Davies: I wish to follow carefully my hon. Friend's argument, and I have before me page 22 of the economic appraisal. He has talked about 23,000 additional jobs. That assumption must be set against the 13,000 jobs that will be created without the barrage. I share with my hon. Friend a degree of suspicion about the assumptions, but it seems that the barrage would be responsible for only 10,000 additional jobs and not the 23,000 suggested in the economic appraisal.

Mr. Rowlands: Yes. In fact, these are theoretical assessments. They are not based on a rigorous analysis of demand. It is assumed that if construction takes place the office space will be filled.

We have every reason to doubt that development of the sort that is proposed will be achieved in anything like the timescale that is being talked about. There is much genuine questioning taking place. The only hope of achieving such development lies in the Government relocating Government Departments. Has the Minister any announcements of such dispersal? It is rumoured that the Lord Chancellor's Department will be shifted and I should like to know whether the move will take place. If there is dispersal, will Government Departments move only to Cardiff? We are talking of the need to diversify the economies of neighbouring communities such as my own. As a part of a diversification programme it should surely be considered as part of a Government Department dispersal programme.

I read in one of the Sunday newspapers this weekend that, as a result of the collapse in the property market, London rents have fallen dramatically and Government Departments and others who had talked about dispersal now plan to stay in London at much cheaper rents. The property balloon has finally burst, but one would not think so from this document.

Chestertons has come to the conclusion that the changes in property prices and property development have in no way affected the long-term forecasts for the scheme and that has been used to justify the additional expenditure involved which our amendments seek to limit. I doubt whether any independent economist would argue that there has not been a sea change in attitude towards property and land and rental values as a result of the drama of the past 18 months or two years. Yet Chestertons blithely continues to assert, with no firm foundation, that all its valuations in the original document, published before the property crisis, are still valid.

Modest adjustments have been made. Chestertons now expects an annual increase in rentals and land values of 6·5 per cent. No one seems to have told Chestertons that we are supposed to be heading for zero inflation. Property inflation in the Cardiff docklands area is supposed to rise by at least 6·4 per cent. each year for the next 15 or 20 years. We have every right to doubt that.

The people who make such assessments are estate agents and surveyors. About 12 months ago, my mother wanted to sell her house. It was something of an emergency and the local estate agent quoted me a price. I said I wanted to sell the property, not stand there. There was a look of horror on the estate agent's face when I suggested that his figure was not right. Twelve months later, not one interested party had looked at the house, so the price had to be dropped by a phenomenal amount. Chestertons has the same mentality. It cannot believe that the property world is changing around it. The same outfit gives the advice in this document that property values will rise by 6·5 per cent. a year, year after year .

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: My hon. Friend mentioned that rising property values as a result of inflation are no longer tenable. My hon. Friend may have noticed that south Cardiff has changed dramatically and is still changing. It is in a state of flux. Anyone renting property next door to a scrapyard would expect to pay less for it than if it were next to a major development. Therefore, property prices will go up regardless of inflation because land values have gone up.

Mr. Rowlands: The proposition is that such values will rise for the next 20 years at the rate of 6·5 per cent. per annum. Such assumptions are less valid than they used to be. They are made by people who do not realise that a sea change is taking place in attitudes.

The best test would be for the Minister to tell us the rental agreement with the Welsh Common Health Services Authority but he has refused to do so. What assumptions were made about rentals in the docklands area and what did the Government negotiate?

I was talking to a firm which intended relocating in the Cardiff area. I was appalled that it should because I thought that, given the nature of its business, it should be in my community. It told me that it had been offered something in the Cardiff area at £4 or £5 less per sq ft than it had originally been quoted.

Rents are going down. The property balloon has burst but one would not think so from this document. It carries on blithely making the same assumptions. Therefore, we have a right to question the boom that the barrage is expected to result in.

8.45 pm

Mr. Michael: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Rowlands: In a minute. I do not wish to be discourteous to Madam Deputy Speaker. I am not sure whether to incur the wrath of my hon. Friend or you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Michael: I assure my hon. Friend that he does not have to look at me to listen to my words. We can both look in the direction of Madam Deputy Speaker.

I suggest that my hon. Friend takes to heart the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones) that we need to look not simply at inflation-related figures but at the change of environment that is taking place. Obviously there will be fluctuations. At present, property is going at lower prices than it was 12 months or two years ago. That is manifest. But there are changes in the whole area which is benefiting from the experience of the two local authorities which, over the years, have shown how to bring economic benefit to the area, despite the fact that there has been a bleeding of jobs from the area. Again, as has been said, we desperately need the continuation of assisted area status. It is not just on the report but on the experience of the two local authorities that we must base a proper assessment of the benefits to the area in terms of employment and the value of the barrage.

Mr. Rowlands: It is proposed to build 23,000 sq ft of new office space every year for the next X years. I am simply questioning whether Cardiff will remain immune to what has happened not only this year and next year but for the next 15 or 20 years. There has not been just a little blip in the market. Most independent experts that I can find believe that there has been a sea change in attitudes. As these guides have been hopelessly wrong in the past two or three years, we have a right to put a question mark over the whole scenario that has been described to us to justify the levels of expenditure.

That is not a particularly grandiose point although it seems to have made my hon. Friends jump up and down. It seems a rather modest point to make that, given the changes, we have every reason to doubt the rosy scenario for jobs that has been portrayed in the latest document. The jobs scenario on page 26 shows that the one area in which jobs would be lost if a barrage were built is the industrial and manufacturing sector. That is why I query the scheme. It is fascinating that without a barrage the number of manufacturing and industrial jobs would be much higher than with a barrage. In other words, the barrage would produce yuppy service jobs at the expense of industrial manufacturing.

I question whether, in Cardiff or in communities such as mine, the age of growth in service employment is coming to an end. Technological change in the Hoover factory in my constituency has led to a drop in jobs from 5,400 to 1,100 and that will eventually penetrate the whole service sector. All the assumptions for job creation based on office accommodation will be knocked askew as a result of technology. The new diversified service economy is the déjà vu economy of the 1980s, and I hope that it will not be the economy of the 1990s. It is astonishing that there should be no increase in the one area where I should have thought that we needed new jobs, whether in Cardiff or in our communities—the industrial manufacturing side.

Table 11 of the KPMG report shows that 550 industrial jobs will be created by the barrage, but 1,782 without it. The thinking is that manufacturing and industrial employment is somehow dirty—that dirty jobs are not wanted in the vicinity of a yuppie marina and that they must be moved elsewhere to make way for the potted plants and atriums. That is a fascinating insight into the 1990s.

Mr. Michael: Does my hon. Friend not accept that some of those living near to the East Moors steel works who regretted the loss of jobs when it closed have noted an improvement in the cleanliness of their environment?

Mr. Rowlands: I dare say that the people of Merthyr noticed an improvement in their environment when the pit there was closed. The same is true of deep navigation. However, that is not a case for closure and for turning one's back on industrial manufacturing jobs. They will be needed in the 1990s, but we are being asked to support a Bill which will produce fewer jobs in the barrage area.

Mr. Rogers: I do not think that my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) is being fair to those of our hon. Friends who represent Cardiff constituencies, who obviously want to attract jobs to their areas. Is my hon Friend saying that if a barrage is built with mooring places for yachts, more jobs will be created? My understanding is that the barrage will not add one square inch of land to the amount available for industrial, commercial, or housing development. If it did, I would support it. I cannot follow my hon. Friend's logic.

Mr. Rowlands: The assumption is that 10,000 new jobs will be created if water is impounded to make it possible to look out across a nice lagoon. I spent the last quarter of an hour doubting that assumption, and if my hon. Friend has not understood that point by now, I will repeat it.

Mr. Rogers: I still cannot understand the logic. My Conservative opponent in the elections to the European Parliament, Dr. Ann Robinson, who is now a policy adviser to the Institute of Directors, said that one way forward in south Wales would be to flood the coal-mining valleys. Is it suggested that areas of impounded water must be created to create industrial development? If so, I must tell my hon. Friend that he is not going to flood the Rhondda. We do not have the boats to cope with that.

Mr. Rowlands: In March 1959 a report was published that suggested closing down Merthyr completely and moving that community of 60,000 people to the River Usk. If that had happened, we would all be middle-class yuppies now. I am glad to say that the people of Merthyr rejected that proposal, and they no more desire their community to be flooded than the Rhondda. If my hon. Friend is asking whether manufacturing jobs are created by flooding lagoons, the answer is no. Even the KPMG report reaches that conclusion.

Public expenditure is about priorities. We are fishing in the same pool and making claims on the same finite amounts of money. To borrow a phrase from the President of the Board of Trade, we know that we are confronting a pretty bloody review of public expenditure. Crucial decisions must be taken about the ways in which public money is to be spent.

The census returns of the communities that I represent reveal that 25 per cent. of the men of workable age there are economically inactive. I am supposed to accept that the trickle-up or trickle-down effect of the building of the barrage will be to create employment for those men. Male unemployment in my constituency exceeds 20 per cent., and our last pit is to be closed within the next 90 days. Every penny of public expenditure is needed to create jobs

[Mr. Rowlands]

in a community such as mine, where there is rising unemployment of a kind and character that I never expected to see during my political lifetime.

I wish that it were not necessary to make a choice, and that enough money were available to build a barrage as well. Some of my hon. Friends have other good reasons for opposing its construction, but I do so because in the language of public expenditure priorities there should be a positive discrimination in favour of constituencies such as mine which, by any indices or census returns, are shown to be infinitely worse off even than Cardiff, relatively speaking.

The building of a barrage comes lower on my list of priorities than the creation of a new manufacturing base that will provide jobs for the 25 per cent. of the potential work force in my constituency. While Dowys Toft and Merthyr Tydfil produced the coal and the wealth that created Cardiff in the first place, we do not want a return to the trickle-up or ripple effect. I do not want to spend the rest of my political career allowing my valley to become a dormitory town for a Cardiff dockland development. In supporting the amendments, I seek to control and to limit the public funds to be devoted to constructing a barrage, knowing the tremendous needs which exist in the communities that I represent.

Mr. Morley: My hon. Friend argued the case for his own community and for the money being spent in other ways. I spoke earlier of the environmental issues, and there is a link between them and the financial amendments before us. If we are to pay the price for the environmental destruction of Cardiff bay, will the financial input be worth the damage that will be done?

One must question a number of the assumptions made in the figures that have been provided. The latest outturn cost of the barrage scheme is £167·4 million. This autumn, we face a very difficult public spending round. Given the huge amount of money involved, surely it is reasonable to ask whether it will secure a good return in the form of benefits to the Cardiff area and the national economy, or whether the money could better be put into capital projects in other parts of the country. My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) has suggested that it should be invested in the Welsh valleys. It might be possible to obtain a better return—more job creation, for instance.

I am worried by the assumption that inflation will remain at a constant 2·5 per cent. after 1995-96. I do not know who produced the figures, but they may be based on the Treasury model, and we all know the record of the Government and the Treasury in predicting inflation and outturns. Any major scheme of this kind is bound to overrun. The Channel tunnel project, for instance, has overrun its budget many times—although, of course, no public money is involved. The Humber bridge scheme, which was publicly funded, did the same, and has caused considerable problems ever since.

What chiefly worries me about the barrage scheme is the calculation of the leverage—the argument that the leverage in terms of jobs and investment is 3·6 times higher than the leverage that would exist without the barrage.

9 pm

Mr. Michael: Is my hon. Friend saying that he would have argued against the building of the Humber bridge?

Mr. Morley: Absolutely not. I think that the bridge was worth building, and that it has brought advantage to the community. The problem is that, because of its massive overrun, its debts cannot be serviced by income, and that is a major difficulty for the local people. I merely used the bridge as an example of major public works programmes that dramatically overrun their budgets and cause problems. The Cardiff bay barrage scheme has the advantage of receiving not a loan but a grant. I wish that the Humber bridge could be treated as generously.

Mr. Rogers: My hon. Friend has made a valid point. Evidence provided by the consultants to the Cardiff Bay development corporation reinforces his view. As soon as the water is impounded, water levels will rise. Initially, it was said that there would be no ground water impact in Cardiff, but Hydrotechnica now proposes to set up a pilot scheme to dewater the ground water, before building some 64 bore holes that will need to pump water continually to carry out that task. I do not know where it will go; water tends to come back in. [HON. MEMBERS: "The river."] From the river it will go back into the wells. It will be a wonderfully circular process. I think that I have practised as an engineering geologist for a good deal longer than my hon. Friends have practised as politicians, and I can tell them that the scheme is likely to cost a huge amount.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to stop the flow, but this is supposed to be an intervention rather than a speech.

Mr. Rogers: That is true, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was merely referring to the imponderables of calculating the total engineering cost.

Mr. Morley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who speaks with some authority and whose comments should be noted.

I would like the Minister to give us some positive examples of the way in which the leverage has been calculated and the way in which it will work. Some of the assumptions are very optimistic. According to the report, there will be a 78 per cent. increase in the number of jobs if the barrage is built, and there will be a total leverage of 7·5 on the investment—as against 3.9 without the barrage. The report says that the informal leverage target for the Welsh Office is 4. Without the barrage, the scheme certainly meets the target. The report makes massive assumptions about extra leverage and extra jobs. That point has been made all too clearly by my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers).

I should like the Minister to give examples of companies, investors and retailers who have said, "Without the barrage and the lake, we will not invest in Cardiff." I do not recall any great emphasis being placed on the fact that Canary wharf was surrounded by water and docklands. The main criteria for schemes such as Canary wharf were its cost and convenience and whether it could attract investors. The fact that Canary wharf is not attracting investors demonstrates that the environmental impact of the development does not matter as much as the economic strength of the country, the convenience of the development, rents and other factors. I suspect that the key to investment in Cardiff or anywhere else will be not the barrage scheme or any other scheme but the prevailing economic circumstances. They will encourage private investors to move to Cardiff and elsewhere and invest in development schemes.

I query whether the case put in the report has been proved. I strongly query the concept of leverage and the very optimistic figures that have been produced. I should like the Minister to tell us just how that leverage has been calculated and to give us examples of companies that have made it clear that the barrage is vital to the scheme, if they are to invest in Cardiff. I know that a number of investors have made it clear that the barrage is vital to the scheme, if they are to invest in Cardiff. I know that a number of investors have made it clear that the barrage is not important to them. Tarmac Homes is a case in point. That major private sector developer said publicly that it would be willing to invest in the Cardiff bay area without the barrage—that the barrage was not important to it.

I ask again whether this is good use of public money, whether the figures are reliable and how the leverage has been calculated. A natural phenomenon such as an intertidal zone—a site of special scientific interest with a community of 300,000 people—has its own benefits. Those benefits are just as great as the ones that would be provided by means of an impounded bay of polluted water; they may even be stronger. If I had to live and work in the Cardiff area, I know which one I should prefer. I should prefer a living estuary rather than a dead and polluted bay.

Mr. Hain: When I became a Member on 16 April 1991, I was escorted by my hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) and for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells). The significance of those two supporters is that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth was my boss in the by-election campaign—a very successful one, for which he was largely responsible. His primary duty was to keep me in order. My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd's primary responsibility was to be my minder—to keep me swimming vertically through the rain which drenched that by-election. The same day as they escorted me into the Chamber they fell out in the debate on the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill, then a private Bill. The House sat all night debating it. My hon. Friends kindly advised me immediately prior to the debate to go home and spend the evening with my wife. They believed that my political virginity ought not to be lost during the debate on the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill. I gratefully took their advice. Therefore, I intervene now with some trepidation.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth for the diligence with which he has defended his case and for the way in which he has sought to attract an important development to his constituency. It is understandable that he should have done so and I would not deny his right to do so, or the persistence and energy with which he has pursued his case. There are many issues, however, that I as a valley Member of Parliament in south Wales and as someone who is concerned with the general impact of policy throughout Wales—in particular on the south Wales valleys—need to raise on this Bill.

There are important environmental questions, some of which we shall debate later, some of which we debated earlier. I refer to the effect of the barrage on the flora and fauna. The real issue, which I want to address and which is addressed in our amendments, is the cost. In terms of the economy of Wales, and even more in terms of the economy of south Wales, huge costs will be absorbed by the development—perhaps as much as £500 million in direct costs. The figure is movable, as my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) has demonstrated eloquently. Nevertheless, the figure is of that order and, on one estimate, it may increase to as much as £1 billion over the years.

The issue that we are entitled to put to the House and on which we are entitled to have an answer is the question of priorities. I can think of communities at the top of the valleys in my constituency which are becoming increasingly deprived as jobs are stripped out of them almost weekly—no, certainly weekly. I think of communities such as Cwmllinfell, Gwauncaegurwen, Banwen and many others.

Those communities ask me, "Where are we being looked after? Where are our interests being protected in the overall strategy being developed by the Welsh Office or by the Government this parliamentary Session?" Those communities look at the substantial costs being borne by the public sector—a point to which I shall return. They ask what the Government's priorities are and whether they are to have more investment so that, as one resident rather cynically said to me at my surgery on a Saturday morning in the little village of Tairgwaith, which feels itself to be forgotten and isolated, the people in those communities can sail their yachts and moor them in the new marina which will be set up around the Cardiff bay barrage. Anyone who knows those communities knows that that is a fanciful notion, to say the least.

Those residents raise the question of priorities and ask whether the priority is for development in the Cardiff bay area or for those huge sums, or their equivalent, to be directed towards valley communities which have suffered more than any others from the impact of Government policies, especially over the past 10 years.

When we consider the valleys and the costs that will be incurred under the Bill, if it is enacted, we should bear in mind that regional preferential assistance to Wales has been cut by almost 60 per cent. at constant prices between 1979 and 1991. The valleys initiative programme, which was launched in 1988, has brought little new funding to the valleys; it has been a question more of recycling existing programmes.

I will quote from the important study commissioned by the Neath conference which was recently held on the future of the valleys. The study was carried out by the Cardiff univerity lecturers Kevin Morgan and his assistant Adam Price, and is entitled, "A New Agenda for the Valleys". It is pertinent to our debate that they discuss the resources being channelled into the valleys compared with the resources being channelled into the area around the M4 corridor and into the relatively large conurbation of Cardiff, which we are discussing this evening, and Swansea.

The study says:

> "While the aims and values of the Valleys Programme were laudable enough, the initiative was essentially a marketing exercise in the sense that it packaged together a host of policies and projects that were for the most part already in existence. Indeed, little or no extra funding was contained in the programme, even when the initiative was extended for a further two years".

Those of us who represent valley communities would heartily endorse that statement.

[Mr. Hain]

The study points out that, as things stand, the valleys programme expires next March. The Government have not said that they will introduce a new programme which has anything like the scale of the resources that are being channelled into the Cardiff bay barrage development. There is talk of a new policy being unveiled and we shall have to wait and see what it is.

9.15 pm

The valleys initiative—which, as I said, expires in March next year—was intended to bring 25,000 to 30,000 new jobs to the valleys. In practice, its impact on employment levels in the valleys has been virtually nil. In 1988, when the programme was launched, the male unemployment rate for the valley areas was 18·9 per cent. In 1992, it is 18·7 per cent. Incidentally, those figures are much greater than those for Wales as a whole—in 1988, 13·5 per cent. and now 13·1 per cent.—and for the United Kingdom as a whole—in 1988, 10·8 per cent. and now 13 per cent. We are talking about a major failure of Government policy.

While we sail blithely on, channelling sums which, in Welsh economic terms, are huge, into the Cardiff bay development, we are ignoring the plight of the valleys. The central valley areas—Aberdare, Rhymney, Merthyr, Pontypridd and the Rhondda—have male unemployment rates of 19 to 22 per cent. As my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney said, the figures are increasing all the time and, with the closure of the pits, they will rise even more steeply. We are talking about an important principle. My major reservation about the Bill—a reservation that the amendment seeks to address—arises from the huge sums that are being channelled into the Cardiff bay development at the expense of other more deserving and urgent priorities elsewhere in south Wales, in particular, in the much-deprived valley communities.

There is another linked issue. Supporters of the Bill—particularly those who represent the constituencies affected, whose view I can well understand—argue that the development will involve a huge injection of capital and of public sector investment which ought to be welcomed. But there is an opportunity cost in all this—an economic factor which it is important to take into account. If one channels investment, whether public or private sector investment—and we are told that, over the years, the bulk of the investment will come from the private sector—into a given area, it will be at the expense of investment elsewhere.

We are advancing that central argument in the context of another argument which I find very worrying indeed: the conventional wisdom surrounding policy making in Wales at present is that we must always talk of a greater Cardiff or a greater Swansea. Although it is understandable that people in Cardiff should seek to defend their interests and attract new investment and capital if they can, I challenge the whole notion of south Wales depending on a greater Cardiff or a greater Swansea. The valleys are forgotten backwaters in all this—at best, dormitories or commuter belts for the greater Cardiff and Swansea areas—and all investment is channelled to the M4 corridor. We have deprived working-class communities hidden at the top of the valleys, with very poor infrastructure and pathetic transport facilities.

Let us address the question of unemployment in the valley communities. My hon. Friends have said that many people who work in Cardiff come from outside it. The logic is that if one channels more jobs and investment into the Cardiff area, there will be more opportunities for workers to commute to it. But many unemployed people cannot afford to commute. Many of the people living in remote villages such as Seven Sisters and Banwen cannot afford to commute because the bus fares are prohibitive—where buses run at all—and they certainly cannot afford to purchase cars. They are locked into a vicious circle of unemployment and trapped in communities from which it is impossible to escape. To my mind, the logical solution to that is not to introduce massive new job and investment opportunities around the M4, greater Cardiff or greater Swansea areas but to invest in valley communities and provide the manufacturing opportunities for those communities that they have traditionally enjoyed.

In support of my argument, I quote again the important study by Morgan and Price. It says:

> "With the long and painful decline of the coal industry the Valley communities have been forced to seek an alternative economic vocation, principally in manufacturing and service industries. This economic transition, which is still far from complete, has triggered enormous changes within these communities. In labour market terms perhaps the two most dramatic changes in the post-war era are the decline of a male-dominated workforce on the one hand and, on the other hand, the growing 'dormitory' status of the Valleys, reflecting the fact that new job opportunities tend to be biased towards the south, in Cardiff and along the so-called M4 corridor."

That issue is not being addressed by the Welsh Office, and is certainly being ignored in the context of the enormous investment that is contemplated for the Cardiff bay barrage development. The whole issue is thrown into sharp relief by the threat and the reality of pit closures piling one on top of the other. Taff Merthyr in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney and Betws in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) have gone. What future is there for those valley communities? None, as far as the Welsh Office is concerned.

Against the background of the position in the valleys, I now turn my attention specifically to the costs of the Cardiff bay development, about which there is some dubiety. In a debate in the House, the then Under-Secretary of State for Wales, in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, said:

> "we will ensure that sufficient funding will be made available to enable the corporation"—

that is, the Cardiff bay development corporation—

> "to carry through its task."—[*Official Report*, 19 December 1989; Vol. 164, c. 308.]

That is an interesting statement. I wish that sufficient funding was being made available to valley communities to carry out the necessary regeneration and provide the investment that those areas so desperately need. It is almost as if the Government were willing to write a blank cheque for investment in the prime development by which they have set so much store in Cardiff bay.

The figures have changed and there is a certain mystification around them.

Mr. Rogers: The Government's support for the scheme seems rather surprising. I do not wish to argue the merits of the scheme vis-a-vis the needs of the valley communities. Does my hon. Friend agree that one reason why the Government are investing so much money in the Cardiff bay development may be their close, almost incestuous relationship with Associated British Ports, which owns substantial areas of land which will be developed under the scheme? The company will make enormous profits. Leaving aside the merits of the scheme in housing and social benefits for Cardiff, which I am sure will come, one of the greatest profiteers will be Associated British Ports. It is fairly significant that Lord Crickhowell, a former Secretary of State for Wales, is a director—not the chairman, as I once mistakenly said—of that company.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. May I remind the hon. Gentleman again of my previous strictures, which seem to have been forgotten.

Mr. Hain: I found my hon. Friend's intervention most helpful. I would add only that I think that the ports authority to which my hon. Friend referred has been a large donator to Conservative party funds over the years. Perhaps the two factors of its role in the development and the encouragement that the Welsh Office is giving are not unlinked.

I wish to delve more deeply into the costs of the project; they appear rather uncertain. We are told that the latest direct cost of the barrage, at 1991-92 prices, is £152·76 million. As the background documentation provided by the Welsh Office shows, that makes a number of assumptions. For example, it assumes that inflation is based on the gross domestic product deflator at market prices dated March 1992—right the way through to 1995-96. We all know that since March 1992 a great deal has happened to the British economy. Even more has happened in the past month which renders all sorts of forecasts, assessments and calculations dubious to say the least, and it makes those who have been making the forecasts look extremely silly, not least the Chancellor. I am doubtful that that will turn out to be the final cost if the project proceeds. It also assumes inflation at a constant 2·5 per cent. after 1995-96. How can anyone project what inflation will be after 1995-96, especially with the pound bobbing up and down as it is? For the life of me, I cannot understand.

I question whether even the basic ball-park figures given by the Welsh Office stand up. Nevertheless, the figure of £152·76 million is extremely large, although it appears that the total public sector contribution will be nearly double that amount, at about £300 million. Perhaps the Minister can clarify that for me at an appropriate moment. We are talking about a great deal of money for something that offers the Welsh economy—as opposed to Cardiff—very little return.

Let us consider the details of the figures given by the KPMG Management Consulting report, which analyses the costs. My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney has considered that report in some detail. It contains a series of questions that we need to ask. Page 12 of the report gives a figure of £34 million for public utilities with the barrage, and £25·5 million without it. Nowhere in the background documentation made available for the debate does it explain what those public utilities are, although it may be tucked away in files from some years ago. Do they include privatised utilities which are simply described under the generic heading of public utilities, in which case there is presumably no ultimate cost to the Exchequer? Do they include what few genuinely publicly owned utilities we have left, such as the Post Office or British Rail, in which case there would be an impact on the public sector borrowing requirement if nothing else?

There is a great deal to be asked about the detail of the report, which seems flimsy and skimpy to me. If the Minister responds to the debate, as I am sure that he will, will he answer those questions with greater precision than has been provided in the background documentation? We are entitled to question and challenge not merely the total cost involved but how it is made up. We are even more entitled to do so when we consider some of the assumptions in the KPMG report, which has been put before us as a bible on the background information to the discussion.

On page 16, in paragraph 4.15, the report states that in making the assumptions about the return on the investment that the Government are contemplating and that the private sector will be invited to contemplate,

> "Whilst the key projected rental (and land value) growth rates have been adjusted downwards"—

over the previous assessment—

> "the scale of this adjustment reflects the fact that Chesterton"—

the consultants—

> "do not consider that the current recession in the property market has substantially undermined the growth rates incorporated within the January 1990 economic appraisal."

What an extraordinary statement to make. The property market has almost collapsed and property values are spiralling downwards, but KPMG suggests that the Cardiff bay development will somehow pass by that phenomenon. On page 17 of the KPMG report, in paragraph 4.17, the consultants, Chesterton, are cited as saying:

> "The current recession and any decline in property values represents a shortterm downturn in the market and will have only a limited impact on longterm growth rates."

I find that assertion absolutely staggering. As my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney has said, that is an ostrich-like approach. The consultants are burying their heads in the sand or the wastelands of the British economy.

Judged by current economic trends in the United Kingdom economy, and certainly in the Welsh economy, the property market has collapsed and there is no prospect of it reviving and returning to the growth levels and the return on investment levels that were predicated in the report. The report is fatally flawed and, therefore, the economic case behind the Cardiff bay development is also fatally flawed.

9.30 pm

In the past few years we have witnessed the end of the grand property development era. Then, one could have a plan based on visionary, large-scale developments that centred on return on property rather than real economic indicators and forces. In this context one need look no further than the example of Canary wharf, which is relevant to the Cardiff bay development in terms of property values—I am not seeking to make wider comparisons about specific characteristics or objectives. Canary wharf carried a total investment of £3 billion. The original prospectuses for Canary wharf that drew in such investors as Olympia and York—at huge cost and its ultimate bankruptcy—contained all sorts of optimistic predictions of the kind now made in the KPMG report and by the Welsh Office on behalf of the Cardiff bay development project.

The banks, predominantly British but some foreign, are now owed £1·2 billion by the Canary wharf developers and they have no prospect of getting it back. How many loan financiers, capital venture sources and banks will be required to put in the significant sums of money, although not of the scale required by Canary wharf, needed to realise the dreams that the architects of the Cardiff bay development have advanced?

It is also significant that 4·5 million sq ft of space is empty on Canary wharf and just 11 per cent. of the site has been filled. That has relevance for the Cardiff bay development when one considers the plans for its wider site. What is the likelihood of the Cardiff bay development filling all the office space that it is providing? That question has even greater importance when one considers the United Kingdom economy. In Cardiff, as much as 30 per cent. of office space is empty now.

The London docklands project is similar in many respects to the Cardiff bay development. An independent corporation was set up which is not directly accountable to local authorities or to the local people. It was pushed through by the Government and displayed much of the same thinking as that for the Cardiff bay development because all the eggs were put in the property basket rather than being devoted to industrial and manufacturing development. The local economy in London's docklands has all but collapsed, with house prices having plummeted. Although the local people need housing, many of the houses provided as part of the docklands development —built at prices far greater than local folk could afford —are standing empty because they cannot be sold. About 40 per cent. of office space in London's docklands is also empty. All in all, we have much to question about the economic and industrial assumptions behind the Cardiff bay development project.

It is also interesting to note that average unemployment in London's docklands now stands at 21·6 per cent., the level of unemployment to be found in the valley communities of south Wales. Yet London's docklands was intended to be a leading pace setter for the new Britain and was going to show the way for developments elsewhere in the country. Newham has an unemployment rate of 21·9 per cent.; Tower Hamlets, 24·4 per cent.; Southwark, 20·3 per cent. That is the position after all that money has been ploughed in through the London Docklands development corporation. When we consider the prospects facing Cardiff bay and the economic investment involved and then weigh up the pros and cons, we see the fundamentally flawed thinking behind it.

I draw attention to an aspect of the KPMG report to which my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney referred. Table 11, on page 26, gives a calculation of direct employment effects. Not only does it show that with the barrage there will be 1,232 fewer industrial or manufacturing jobs, but it suggests that there will be 1,619 more retail jobs and 2,184 more leisure jobs than if the development proceeded without the barrage.

Such prospects are greatly welcomed by local people, but I question the whole economic thinking behind the figures. I refer to the assumption that dominated the Thatcherite years, that is being continued in the Major years and is apparently being followed in the Hunt years in Wales. There is a belief that we can have retail, leisure and service industries without a manufacturing base. That thinking is flawed. It has led us into a situation in which we have a chronic balance of payments crisis throughout the United Kingdom economy and a chronic balance of trade crisis in the Welsh economy.

I do not believe, if the development goes ahead, that we shall achieve the creation of that level of jobs. The figures do not add up. Laid out for us in this initiative by the Government, along with all their other policies, is an attempt to turn south Wales into a low-skill, low-wage, low-quality assembly line service economy, diversified here and there but without any serious attention being given to the desperate need for investment in manufacturing industry which is capable of reviving our economy and providing the essential base and foundation from which all other developments could then derive.

If the Cardiff bay development had been put forward against the background and within the context of a serious industrial strategy for Wales which was geared at reviving the manufacturing base of the valley communities— recognising that they are industrial villages with traditions and skills to offer which, if harnessed by Government support, could build a prosperous new future—I might be taking a more sanguine attitude towards the Bill. I still might have questions to ask about the essential fallacies of the property basis of the economics behind it, but I might be prepared to put such questions on one side because the Government were recognising the needs of the valleys, the need for manufacturing investment and the need to build a real economy as opposed to the flotsam and jetsam economy that is offered to us now.

To find the essential flaws in the economic strategy underpinning the Bill, one need look no further than south-east England. Its economy was said to epitomise the success of Thatcherism, consisting entirely of services and retail and leisure developments—many marinas and peripheral, nice-looking developments but no serious economic development. In the past few years, south-east England has suffered even greater unemployment increases than the valley communities have experienced until now. That has happened because it is an economy built on shifting sand, with no real basis. I fear that the Cardiff bay development project will end up going down the same route.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: First, I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) for his thoughtful contribution in which he tried to set the Bill in the context of the whole Welsh economy. He largely moved away from the beggar-thy-neighbour approach which, unfortunately, I had been hearing. I also congratulate my hon. Friend on holding the Neath declaration in his constituency. I have already apologised for being unable to attend.

I make one criticism of my hon. Friend's approach in Neath and in his speech. I do not believe that it is possible to divorce the economies of Cardiff and Swansea from that of the valley hinterland from which they originally sprung and in which the work force is totally immersed. There must be a south Wales strategy for the economy and, unfortunately, the Government do not have one. It must involve Cardiff and Swansea as well as the valleys. As long as we allow the Government to set communities against one another in the sort of debate that we have been having until now, we are doing our home communities and our party no good. A few comments have been made about deprivation in the valleys compared with that in Cardiff, which, it has been implied, is a wealthy yuppy area— *[Interruption.]* That has been implied in a number of speeches.

The latest statistics published by the Library on 16 October this year show that, for the past two years, the highest unemployment rate in Wales has been in Cardiff—in Cardiff, West—the second highest has been in my constituency of Cardiff, Central and the fifth highest has been in Cardiff, South and Penarth.

Mr. Ron Davies: My hon. Friend will understand that those figures are based on the Government's present calculation of unemployment. That description of unemployment may show a high rate of unemployment in the Cardiff constituencies, but many unemployed people in the valley communities are excluded from the count by virtue of their previous occupations and because the figures have been massaged. I hope that my hon. Friend will take that point to heart and recognise that it can be misleading to use comparisons based on those figures.

Mr. Jones: I thank my hon. Friend for drawing that to my attention. I was aware of it. My home village of Maerdy is a mining community with 33 per cent. male unemployment, two years after the pit closed. I know very well how depressed the mining communities are and I do not try to show disparities or make comparisons between them. I am trying to develop the argument that the south-west and central parts of Cardiff are in themselves depressed regions. In the Adamsdown ward, in my constituency, male unemployment is more than 30 per cent. In Butetown, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), it is 56 per cent. I do not think that any area in south Wales approaches that level of unemployment. We must not pretend or be fooled into thinking that the valleys are the only depressed areas in south Wales. Hon. Members have spoken about development along the M4 corridor, but the geography of south Wales is such that that corridor lies between Cardiff and the valleys. It is not to the south of Cardiff where it is planned to build the barrage.

9.45 pm

It is projected that the barrage will create 10,000 jobs, not 23,000. I like to think that that number of jobs would be created, but I am sceptical, just as I am sceptical about the number of jobs to be created by any project. However, my scepticism has not in the past prevented me from supporting development in other areas even though I did not think that jobs would be created. If 10,000 jobs were created at the inflated costs mentioned by some of my hon. Friends, it would work out at £200 or £300 a job, which is enormously cheap. Even if 10,000 jobs are not created and costs are much higher, the jobs would still be value for money compared with the £800 million spent on the valleys initiative which has not delivered jobs. Even if the project did not deliver the number of jobs that we would like to see, it would not stop me from supporting any project in the valleys.

Mr. Win Griffiths: I have been listening carefully to my hon. Friend and examining the report's assumptions about direct job creation. I cannot discover whether the jobs are already in the Cardiff bay area. Are they additional to the number of jobs in, for example, south Glamorgan, or will the jobs created in the barrage area be transferred from other parts of south Glamorgan or even south Wales?

Mr. Jones: In so far as I understand the question, when a company locates in an area and creates jobs it tends to attract people who are already in work. But there is a knock-on effect because people who move from one job to take up another leave vacancies.

Mr. Rowlands: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Jones: I shall give way later.

It has been said that the barrage will create jobs based only on property development. Before I was elected as the Member of Parliament representing Cardiff, Central, I was chairman of economic development in Cardiff. In that post, I met many business men and women who were either based in Cardiff or were looking to be based there. For them, as for me, the main argument in favour of the barrage in our negotiations with various companies that we were trying to attract into the city was that, it would give Cardiff the edge that would enable it to attract to the capital of Wales companies that would not otherwise come because other areas would be equally attractive. By that, I do not mean the valley areas to the north. Without the edge given by the barrage, those companies would not locate in Neath, much as I would like them to, or in Merthyr. They would go to Bath, Bristol or Swindon.

Mr. Rogers: It would be incredibly stupid to argue about the valleys versus Cardiff, and I may have something to say about that later. The Cardiff Bay development corporation, the city of Cardiff and the county of South Glamorgan have done an admirable job in redeveloping the derelict area of the Cardiff docklands. My only objection to this project is that we would spend almost £500 million of public money on an exercise that will not accelerate that process, or make available a single square inch more of land. I will leave it at that because my interventions have been rather long.

Mr. Jones: If you had been present earlier, Madam Speaker, you would have heard my hon. Friend make that point twice. I am not arguing for Cardiff against the valleys—quite the reverse. I am trying to counter the argument, put by several speakers already, for the valleys against Cardiff. The two economies are interlinked and cannot be divorced from each other. What would benefit one would benefit the other.

Mr. Rowlands: I was modestly surprised that my hon. Friend gullibly quoted £800 million as the amount that came into the valleys as a result of the valleys initiative. I beg him not to use that figure because it has no basis in reality, truth or fact. It is Walker's figure.

Mr. Jones: The £800 million was not new money coming into the area but money that was spent in the valleys.

Mr. Rowlands: Do not say that. It is not true.

Mr. Rogers: My hon. Friend is right. It is not true. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones) was born in the valleys. If he analysed that figure and counted the expenditure in the valleys as a result of that initiative, he would see that this talk of £800 million is absolute nonsense. The figure is peddled by Lord Walker to build up his reputation so that he gets jobs such as that which he got yesterday.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Did the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) make an intervention? If so, I shall call the Minister.

Mr. Morgan *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Is the hon. Member for Rhondda seeking the floor?

Mr. Rogers: I am, Madam Speaker. Thank you. I did not realise that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central had finished.

I start with an apology. During our debate on these matters on 25 November 1991, I made some remarks about Associated British Ports. I am sure that hon. Members will know that I am not a great fan of ABP. However, I made some statements which were incorrect. Sir Keith Stuart, the chairman of ABP, wrote to me and I telephoned to him and apologised. It is appropriate, even a year later, to apologise to him in the Chamber and so put it on the record. I said that Lord Crickhowell was the chairman of ABP when, of course, he was not. Sir Keith Stuart is the chairman. The former Secretary of State for Wales, who is now Lord Crickhowell, was a non-executive director. My hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) committed the same sin.

Sir Keith has told me that Associated British Ports has never made any contribution to the Conservative party. Many of us thought at one time that the parties which took place in connection with the development of ports on the east coast and to which Conservative Members were invited were funded by ABP. They probably were, but the company has made no direct contribution to the Conservative party.

Mr. Hain: I take the opportunity to withdraw my earlier remark. I made it because I read the remarks of my hon. Friend in *Hansard*. As I take everything he says to be the veritable truth and cast in stone, I repeated what he said earlier this evening.

Mr. Rogers: That is why I wanted to put my apology on the record in fairness to Sir Keith Stuart and Associated British Ports. ABP is obviously a company that looks after its own interests. That, of course, is what it is about. That is why it is in business. At least it has the sense not to make contributions to the Conservative party, which is very much to its credit.

I said also—perhaps it was a loose phrase—that the company had its hand in many tills. Sir Keith Stuart felt that that was an allegation that ABP was involved in dishonest dealings. I did not believe that it was involved in any such dealings. I simply wanted to draw the attention of the House to the fact that it was involved in many schemes where it was making a lot of money, one of which was the Cardiff bay scheme.

The scheme was initiated during the reign of Lord Crickhowell, who is a non-executive director of ABP. Oddly enough, he was the new chairman—he is now the old chairman—of the National Rivers Authority, and the job of the NRA chairman is to keep rivers clean. Over the years, during which the Cardiff bay scheme has been developing, many of us have felt that there has been a conflict of interest. So has Lord Crickhowell—he said that his position, on his instruction, was that anyone at the NRA giving advice on Cardiff bay must not refer to him. On the other hand, the dead weight of his authority and his position is there.

One body which will make an enormous killing out of the development will be Associated British Ports. I have always thought that to build the barrage before the houses would drive up house prices. With due respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), I have always wondered how he would explain that to his constituents. Recently, as a result of the Government's policies, house prices have been driven down, so that argument is no longer valid. I think that the original proposal was for 6,000 houses, about 1,500 of which were social houses——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Pitchford Hall

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

10 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I shall be succinct, Madam Speaker, because I hope that the chairman of the all-party heritage group, the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), will have an opportunity to catch your eye.

On Friday 25 September, just before the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) rose to make a personal statement, *Hansard* records that I rose to intervene on Pitchford hall. Had I persisted further, Madam Speaker, you would undoubtedly have ejected me from the House. It was, in fact, a last desperate attempt to focus attention, before it was too late, on the dispersal and auction of the contents of Pitchford hall. That leads me to my first point—that in such situations there must be some kind of holding solution, a breathing space.

The market place is not always the wrong solution. I am not saying that. I am saying that one cannot act sensibly under the shadow of Sotheby's or Christie's hammer. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, suggests that there should be an early warning system, possibly reporting to the House through the new Select Committee on National Heritage. The sale of Pitchford hall could not have happened at a worse moment in 600 years as the mind of the right hon. and learned Member for Putney, then the decision-making Secretary of State, was elsewhere.

Secondly, I quote, to put it as succinctly as possible, from Angus Stirling of the National Trust. He said:

> "The historic entity has been broken up. Most if not all of the contents will disappear from the house and even though there were relatively few pieces that were very fine and valuable, it was the totality of the collection brought together over 300 or 400 years that made this thing so unique. It is a very rare thing to find in a house of that stature and age."

That is the considered view of the National Trust.

From personal experience of 48 years of cordial and harmonious relations with the Scottish National Trust I know that visitors who come to such a place like to see a lived-in, organic, growing entity of a house rather than a shell. In my view, Oliver and Caroline Colthurst could not have tried harder to prevent separation of house and contents.

My third point is to ask why the advice of English Heritage was ignored. It is a pleasure to see the Secretary of State for National Heritage in the Chamber and I appreciate his courtesy. We were fellow members of the all-party heritage group and I know that he cares deeply for these issues.

The chairman and senior officials of English Heritage have confirmed to me that Pitchford phase 5 could have been financed out of own resources and that no extra money was required. How much has already been spent from public funds? What is the situation in respect of the Getty money? Did the Department know of the possibility that there would be additional money from Getty funds? Does the Minister accept that version of events, and, if so, on whose advice did his predecessor act? Is it true that Pitchford was turned down because it was too far from a motorway?

The Committee, of which I was a member, which considered the National Heritage Bill understood that extra money would be available in special cases. Georgina Naylor of the National Heritage Memorial Fund knows that I want to ask whether it is still policy to provide extra money as the Committee was promised—which pledge, to be fair, the Government have honoured in respect of Kedleston, Nostell priory, and Belton.

The Historic Houses Association is concerned about more fiscally attractive maintenance funds, which could be more effective in respect of day to day work and would avoid catastrophes such as Pitchford because the money would be tied up and invulnerable to a Lloyd's-type situation.

The protection of the heritage is not a rich man's hobby but a cultural reaction. When I was with the all-party heritage group in the Netherlands last week, we were struck by remarks by Doctor Vliegenhart of Het Loo and Doctor Van Staaten of the Kröller-Muller museum, that one of the glories of coming to Britain is visiting lived-in houses which have been entities for a long time.

I have spoken for only six minutes because others have the right to put their point of view.

10.6 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) for his courtesy in informing me that he had secured this Adjournment debate and for suggesting that I might contribute to it. I am glad to do so. I am grateful also to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage for being present on the Front Bench. It is unusual for a Secretary of State to attend an Adjournment debate, and for my right hon. Friend to do so is indicative of his commitment and interest.

I wish to emulate the constructive nature of the remarks of the hon. Member for Linlithgow, who in no sense is critical of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or my hon. Friend the Minister. However, anyone who visited Pitchford and met the Colthursts must be saddened that that entity has been lost. It was the quintessential English house—not a great stately home, but a manor house with contents accumulated by generations of families and set in lovely parkland. It was architecturally distinguished and the largest black and white house of its type in the country.

It is a great pity, to put it mildly, that that entity was not kept together and a particular shame because there are not many houses like Pitchford in the country. In fact, it is a property that one could properly describe as unique. The owners had fallen on difficult times through no fault of their own, but were anxious that the house should be kept together with its contents and its parkland. It is sad that that could not be done, as the sums involved were small.

The contents, alas, have been dispersed and the house sold. That must be a good thing because for a house of that kind to be left standing empty and uncared for throughout the winter would create considerable problems. We must hope that the purchaser will choose to furnish it in a seemly manner, look after the parkland, and care for that bit of England. It also has a glorious church nearby, with one of the finest wood effigies in the country. I would love my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who has never

[Mr. Patrick Cormack]

been there, to spend a night or two with me as I live only 20 miles away and I would very much like to show him that place.

We can learn lessons from Pitchford. Recrimination will achieve nothing. I well remember, in 1976, in the House, asking the then Secretary of State for the Environment—the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore)—if he would receive a deputation to discuss a last-minute rescue attempt for Mentmore. He did receive it, with great courtesy, but although Lord Goodman and I and a number of others pleaded with him, he was unable to help. Mentmore went under the hammer, and its contents were dispersed.

Mentmore, however, focused attention on a problem. It was because of Mentmore that the National Land Fund was reconstituted as the National Heritage Memorial Fund, following an amendment tabled in Committee by the hon. Member for Linlithgow. We worked together on that. Out of a disaster came something very good, which has benefited the heritage ever since.

I hope that we have learnt some lessons from the Pitchford disaster. Pitchford could have been saved. The various schemes that were suggested were not perfect, but they contained the seeds of something that could have worked: I am convinced of that. We need a fail-safe mechanism, and I hope that at an early stage my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will call together those of us who have an interest in these matters—they will obviously include the chairman of the memorial fund and the chairman of English Heritage; perhaps they will also include the chairman of the all-party heritage committee and one or two leading Opposition Members—so that they can sit down and discuss how the solution to a future Pitchford can best be found. For future Pitchfords there will be: Pitchford itself has gone, but there are other lovely houses with fine contents, set in parklands, which are at risk. Already this year, Pitchford and Groombridge have gone.

I thank the hon. Member for Linlithgow for initiating the debate, and for giving me the opportunity to participate. I hope that my right hon. Friend will come up with a positive reply.

10.11 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Robert Key): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) for raising the subject of Pitchford hall. The hon. Gentleman has always had a particular interest in preserving the national heritage on both sides of the border, and I know and admire his family's record and their long relationship with the National Trust for Scotland. I look forward to his continuing contribution to the work of my Department. I also welcome the opportunity to explain to the House in more depth the decision made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), the previous Secretary of State, that English Heritage should not take over Pitchford hall.

I am grateful for the efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), right up to the last minute. We spoke on the telephone, on the motorway, and at my home at the weekend. I recognise the contribution that he has made to the debate.

Let me begin by making it clear that Pitchford has not gone; it is not lost. Its case has gained a great deal of public attention, especially in the west midlands. My hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) has been in the House tonight, and has talked to me at length. He has explained that he is now detained elsewhere. He has made clear to me the feelings of his constituents, and he was quick to come to the Department to explain how strongly he felt on the issue.

Let me begin by answering the questions that the hon. Member for Linlithgow put to me before I refer to the background to the argument. The hon. Gentleman says that there should be a holding solution—an early warning system. It is important to remember that, although the sale of Pitchford hall took place in September, my noble Friend Lady Blatch first started to monitor the position last February. That was done by the heritage department within the Department of the Environment. Articles first appeared in the press then. It was from that moment on that heritage officials began to monitor the position.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow referred to Mr. Getty. Let me make it clear that there was never any approach to us to contact him and that he did not contact us about the issue. I understand that that was an entirely private matter between Mr. and Mrs. Colthurst and Mr. Getty which in the end, I believe, came to nothing. We were never involved in that issue, though following a telephone call from the hon. Member for Linlithgow I asked whether we had received any information about it. We had not.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow asked about the amount of public money that had been spent on Pitchford hall. English Heritage contributed about £230,000 over a period of about eight years for the fabric of the house. There was never any substance in the rumour that the reason that the Department of National Heritage was not interested was that Pitchford hall was too far from the motorway to be a tourist attraction. I do not know where that fairy tale came from, but it is most certainly not true.

As to the conditions for a grant from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the important point to remember is that at no stage did the fund seek any extra grant from the Government. We were not asked by the fund to consider that proposal.

As for the Historic Houses Association, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney and I have met representatives of the association on a number of occasions and discussed with them many of the problems that affect owners of historic houses. There are about 700 houses of Pitchford hall's quality in this country and about 1,40[illegible] members of the Historic Houses Association. Therefore, we were anxious to ensure that any action that was taken by the Government and English Heritage should not put in jeopardy the ability to look after that large number of houses that rely upon shared resources, which are pretty meagre at the best of times.

However, I take on board the point made by the hon. Gentleman about the significance of maintenance funds. The Department of National Heritage is addressing that issue. We have had positive discussions with the Historic Houses Association along those lines. Therefore, we are absolutely clear about what the association regards as potentially a new way forward that would help both the association and its members.

I can understand why Pitchford has appealed to so many people. Hon Members will have seen the photographs of that fine black and white timber-framed house nestling in a wooded valley, with a stream flowing past. As my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South said, it is quintessential Olde England—a reminder of less turbulent times. Pitchford hall is not, however, some idyllic fantasy. It is a house of real quality, comparable with Little Moreton hall and Speke hall, which are already cared for by the National Trust. It is that quality which has been recognised by according to it the highest statutory protection—a grade I listing. I emphasise the point that I made earlier: Pitchford hall itself is not at risk. The house appears, happily, to have found a new owner. The grade I listing applies to the new owner just as much as it did to the previous owners, Mr. and Mrs. Colthurst.

Mr. Dalyell: The Minister referred to Little Moreton hall, which is absolutely beautiful—my wife and I made a lovely visit there—but it is denuded of most of its original furniture. It is the contents, often bric-a-brac, which are so vital to a place like Pitchford.

Mr. Key: As they say, I am coming to that, but it happens to be true. I accept the importance of the accumulation, the accretion of family belongings, even if they are not of the first quality. The term bric-a-brac may indeed apply. As the hon. Gentleman says, one of the important qualities of the English country house is that it is lived in. That is why people appreciate the English country house so much.

If any alterations to Pitchford were ever proposed, either internal or external, which would affect Pitchford's character as a grade I building, the consent of the local planning authority would need to be sought. It would have to consult English Heritage and the Department of the Environment. My Department would be consulted if there were any disagreement between those bodies. Similarly, planning permission would need to be sought for any development or change of use, though our understanding is that the new owners wish to live in Pitchford as a family home.

Pitchford seems to be particularly suited to family ownership. It has been a private family home for over 500 years. Country houses were built to be lived in and are generally better cared for and retain more of their special atmosphere and quality if they continue to be lived in rather than treated as museum pieces. The preservation of Pitchford's unique character remains entirely compatible with residential use. This is in part a tribute to Mr. and Mrs. Colthurst, who did so much to secure the condition of the hall with the assistance of the grants from English Heritage. They have also in recent years opened Pitchford to the public during August to share their pleasure in the property. I have had many letters from members of the public who have enjoyed Mrs. Colthurst's tours of the house so much that they have written to me praising her hospitality. It is indeed sad that the Colthursts' losses in the insurance market have prevented them from completing their work at Pitchford and from remaining in the house.

Country houses are one of the great cultural achievements of our nation and we owe a debt of gratitude to all those who put their own resources into maintaining them, especially those who allow us to share them inside as well as out. It is neither possible nor desirable for Government to take over all such properties. One cannot simply buy for the nation the atmosphere of a house such as Pitchford—something would be lost, whatever. Taking over country houses should always be a last resort. I believe that properties that have remained in private ownership should, as far as possible, remain a living part of our heritage. But if the private sector fails in its responsibilities in caring for our common inheritance, we shall not hesitate to take action.

Only the other week I visited the Crescent in Buxton, one of the country's foremost Georgian buildings, also listed grade I, and now in a sorry state of disrepair. I have made it clear to the owners that if they fail to implement a satisfactory repair programme, the Secretary of State will, for the first time, use powers available to him for over 20 years to serve a repairs notice on them and, although I hope that that would not be necessary, ultimately to take compulsory purchase action.

Pitchford hall is not like Buxton. The Colthursts, with English Heritage's help, made great efforts to maintain the fabric of the house and it is thankfully not at risk in that way. So the case for intervention would have to be very strong.

The case was made first by the National Trust. It took the view earlier this year that, although the hall itself was not at risk, it would be desirable if the contents of the property, were to remain in situ. If the house were sold privately, the contents would be dispersed at auction and the family association lost.

The value of keeping a house and its contents together is always a more difficult issue. My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South has referred to the case of Mentmore and to the outcry which followed that decision. After Mentmore, hon. Members of all parties —not least the hon. Member for Linlithgow—determined that new arrangements should be established and they were, as my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South outlined.

It was, therefore, to the National Heritage Memorial Fund that the National Trust quite properly looked for publicly funded support when considering taking Pitchford as the trust itself did not have the resources. The National Trust has a responsibility to its members and, indeed, to the nation to ensure that it does not acquire property which it could not afford properly to maintain and run. It therefore requires the establishment of an endowment fund, to which it might contribute from its own resources, which will produce a stream of income sufficient to fund any foreseeable expenditure. In the case of Pitchford, it would also need to fund works which could accommodate greatly increased numbers of visitors passing through its fragile structure, as public access would be greatly increased.

The National Trust bill would have been significantly more than £13 million, well beyond even the National Heritage Memorial Fund's increased resources without pre-empting virtually all other heritage expenditure.

However, the chairman of English Heritage, given the public interest in Pitchford, suggested to Ministers that if they gave the highest priority to keeping Pitchford and its contents together he might be able to secure that end by harnessing NHMF money with English Heritage money and private sector resources. That was a very different proposal from the one that the National Trust had put to the NHMF. It would be cheaper not only in the short term but, with luck—I repeat, with luck—in the long term, given that the level of public access would have remained at about one month a year.

[Mr. Key]

This, then, was the decision for Ministers. Pitchford hall itself was not at risk. Its contents, while not comparable with Mentmore's, had clearly had a strong appeal for visitors in their appropriateness to the house and in representing a single family's changing taste over the centuries, especially the 19th and 20th.

Against that was the pressure on English Heritage's own resources and the concern about the implications, even if everything went smoothly, for the priorities already established. Taking on Pitchford would have had a significant impact on major parts of the body's programme. Even if the house could have been successfully leased, English Heritage would have accepted responsibility for the full cost of the essential repairs to the historic fabric and other costs, which would have been a continuing drain on its resources.

Pitchford would have reduced English Heritage's ability to save important buildings actually at risk of destruction and to bring to a proper standard of repair properties already in its care. There is a backlog about which the National Audit Office has already commented. Pitchford would also have reduced the body's ability to help other private owners, as it had the Colthursts, to maintain important houses.

Mr. Dalyell: What puzzles those such as Lord Montagu of Beaulieu—who authorised me to say that, had he still been the chairman of English Heritage, he would have regarded Pitchford as a resigning matter—is where on earth the figure of £13 million comes from. The costs of running a house such as Pitchford should not be anything like £13 million. Where does the figure come from? How is it made up?

Mr. Key: That figure represents the cost of putting together the endowment fund. The National Heritage Memorial Fund would have been able to find something in excess of £3 million, but we estimate that it would have probably turned to the Government for in excess of £10 million to make up the balance. Those are not just my figures—they are the sums which would have been needed to form a fund sufficient to cover the running costs of the house and the repairs that would have been necessary.

Other houses on which work is done, and which would have been deprived of resources, may not have the same high and photogenic profile as Pitchford hall, but that work forms the core of the effort to preserve the best of the built heritage in England. We have increased the grant in aid to English Heritage by 35 per cent. in real terms between its establishment in 1983 and 1991-92 so that it can achieve its objectives in these areas. Even so, to divert resources from its priority tasks to Pitchford would have jeopardised its ability to carry out its statutory duties for years ahead.

In its recent report, the National Audit Office focused on this very issue, spelling out the consequences for English Heritage's work of taking over Brodsworth hall in south Yorkshire, for which it had not planned.

In weighing up these issues, my right hon. and learned Friend and I had before us the views of our statutory advisers, English Heritage and others, including the National Heritage Memorial Fund, which did not apply for any extra Government grant and, of course, the views of informed and interested members of the public. In the circumstances, we had to conclude that retaining Pitchford's contents in situ could not take precedence over all else.

It is, of course, very sad for the Colthursts that they have been unable to continue to live in the house, but I trust that Pitchford hall will continue to flourish in private hands for centuries to come.

Lessons have been learnt on all sides. I welcome the suggestion by my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South that we should get together—indeed, I have an open door. I look forward to visiting Pitchford so that I can see for myself the glories of that particularly English country house.

Mr. Dalyell: I beg the Minister to be a bit careful about the Mentmore example. It so happens that the Roseberys are my friends and constituents, and there was a strong argument for bringing much of the beautiful furniture from Mentmore to Dalmeny, which is open to the public. I strongly agree with what the Minister said about the fragile structure of some houses, and that we should not have too many feet tramping through places such as Pitchford—otherwise one gets into the sort of difficulties that Craigievar has had, and people damage what they have come to see.

Finally, I beg the Government to reflect on the £13 million and consider whether they are not in danger of going for complete, end-of-century solutions, rather than for interim solutions. In dealing with fragile houses such as Pitchford, interim solutions may be the best policy.

Mr. Key: It is my clear intention and determination to ensure that our common heritage is looked after in a proper manner. It is clear to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and me that we have a responsibility to ensure not only that the heritage is looked after properly but that it is passed on to future generations in an appropriate state. We also bear in mind the fact that we have a responsibility to create the heritage of the future. That is part of the purpose of the new Department of National Heritage.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 21 October 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Scottish Enterprise

1. **Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chief executive of Scottish Enterprise to discuss the Scottish economy.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): My ministerial colleagues and I frequently meet both the chairman and the chief executive of Scottish Enterprise to discuss a range of economic development and training issues. I last met the chairman last week.

Mr. Donohoe: When the right hon. Gentleman met the chairman, did he discuss the Government's intention to cut the training budget of Scottish Enterprise by up to 10 per cent? That cut will mean the loss of £2 million to £3 million from the Ayrshire economy, although it is a part of the country which has already been devastated by high unemployment, not least in south Ayrshire where the mines have already been shut down by policies introduced by the Government. There have been further redundancies this week in my constituency at Amkor Anam—a factory which the Secretary of State visited about two years ago——

Madam Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman is coming to his question, is that right?

Mr. Donohoe: Yes, Madam Speaker. Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the intended training cuts do not go ahead?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is premature in his speculation as to the budget next year of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. He might like to reflect on the fact that the combined budgets of those two bodies have been far in excess of £500 million this year, and that that is a remarkable increase on the paltry resources put in the hands of the old Scottish Development Agency by the last Labour Government.

As for the hon. Gentleman's constituency, of course I regret the loss of jobs at Amkor Anam, which reflects world trading conditions. The hon. Gentleman might like to recognise the good news in his constituency—the arrival of another 125 jobs at SCI and another 50 jobs at Volvo in Irvine. So it is not all bad news.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will my right hon. Friend reflect on the analysis in *The Times* on 15 October, showing that pay in Scotland is 2 per cent. above the national average and that Scotland is so successful that costs are 2·5 per cent. less, and the average standard of living and quality of life is 4·5 per cent. above, the rates in any other area of Britain, apart from Greater London?

Mr. Lang: My hon. and learned Friend is right to draw attention to the quality of life in Scotland and also to its advantages as an industrial location. I would not wish to disguise the fact that Scotland is suffering in the world recession, just as every other modern industrialised economy is suffering, but gross domestic product is at an all-time high, output and exports are close to an all-time high, and we should not lose sight of those facts.

Ms. Rachel Squire: Is the Secretary of State for Scotland aware of the high unemployment throughout Scotland and of the desperate need to create jobs and to fill them rapidly? Is he aware that there are parts of Fife where the official unemployment figures are 23·4 per cent? If the right hon. Gentleman is aware of that and is concerned about creating jobs, why does he not tell British Coal to reopen the Frances colliery, to create 1,100 direct jobs and to create and maintain many hundreds more jobs throughout Scotland in manufacturing and engineering?

Mr. Lang: I am as keen to see unemployment fall in Scotland as elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Unemployment in Scotland has been rising at half the rate of that elsewhere in the United Kingdom, which reflects the greater strength of the Scottish economy in the past few years. The headline total fell in Scotland by 8,000 last month. I hope that the return of confidence that will follow the recent falls in inflation and interest rates will lead to further employment in Fife and elsewhere in Scotland.

Mr. Tom Clarke: When the Secretary of State breathtakingly talks about good news, does that not show the complacency that has all too often been this Government's hallmark, particularly in relation to Scotland? Does he not think that he should be explaining that unemployment has risen every month since the election, that even with the fiddled figures, a quarter of a million Scots are unemployed and that, because of the Government's failed economic policies, there are bankruptcies, job losses and repossessions on an unprecedented and unacceptable scale? The party that promised recovery has delivered a major slump.

The Scottish people expect the Secretary of State to display at least a fraction of the commitment to the Scottish economy shown by the Scottish miners lobbying the House today who are committed to jobs and a future for Scotland. The Scottish people expect more from a Secretary of State than they receive from one who merely wrings and washes his hands.

Mr. Lang: If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that the Government are doing nothing to help the Scottish economy recover, he should consider the establishment of Scottish Enterprise and local enterprise companies all over Scotland. He should recognise the extra resources that are going into the urban programme and the specific area initiatives that we are taking, including the Monklands initiative in his constituency. He should also recognise that, under the Government, inflation has fallen by two thirds in the past two years and interest rates have very nearly halved. Those are the conditions for recovery. That will come with returning confidence and would be helped if the hon. Gentleman did not seek to talk Scotland down.

Hospital Trusts

2. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairmen of health boards to discuss hospital trusts.

Mr. Lang: My noble and learned Friend the Minister with responsibility for health in Scotland held one of his regular meetings with health board chairmen on 10 July 1992. In the course of that meeting, NHS trusts were discussed.

Mr. Ross: Given that the majority of those who drafted the applications for the opting out of the hospitals are presently employed by the chairmen as managers in the hospitals in the national health service, will the Secretary of State ask those chairmen why, if they were making all the exaggerated claims for service contained in the applications, those claims have not been implemented? Does he think that it is reasonable for the people in Dundee and Tayside to believe that services will be improved simply on the basis of the trust application made by Tim Brett and others? Does he not think that that is a leap in the dark for those people in Dundee and Tayside to make on the basis of hope?

Mr. Lang: I think that it is desirable that those involved in making trust applications should be familiar with the health service. If they were not, and did not have the necessary experience, the hon. Gentleman would be the first to criticise. He talks about exaggerated claims for the future of trust status. He may like to consider the progress of those hospitals that already enjoy trust status. The chairman of the South Ayrshire NHS Trust hospitals summarised the main achievements the other day, saying:

> "The Trust is treating more patients than expected.
> Waiting lists and waiting times have been reduced.
> The Trust is obtaining better value for public money.
> Support from the local community is tremendous.
> The Trust's financial status is healthy."

Trust status is good news for patients throughout the health service and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kynoch: Would my right hon. Friend like to tell the Opposition of the great success story of the Aberdeen royal hospital's NHS trust, which now has a one-stop breast clinic, evening gynaecology clinics and two new consultants and where a record number of patients are being treated who no longer have to wait for an hour when they are given an appointment? Will my right hon. Friend join me in saying that trusts are working successfully in Scotland and improving health care for the nation?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. In addition to the achievements of the Foresterhill trust which he mentioned, he could have listed the introduction of bone marrow transplantation, increased levels of cardiac surgery, direct access for GPs to ultrasound and radiology, and the creation of additional neurology and paediatric consultant posts. Trust status hospitals in Scotland are working well.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: In the event of hospitals receiving trust status, is there any intention to cut the number of beds? Is there not a danger that the trust hospitals will be closed by the health board before hospitals directly controlled by the health board are closed?

Mr. Lang: I see little danger of the kind of circumstance that the hon. Gentleman describes. The fact is that trust status has enabled hospitals to treat more patients more effectively, to use better equipment and to increase the number of medical posts. That is all to the advantage of patient care; it is the positive aspects of trust status that are clearly shown up by experience.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that in Tayside, where we have a superb health service, one of the great benefits of trust status would be that places such as Stracathro and Forfar would find it immensely to their advantage? We do not want trust status only in Dundee and not in the rural areas. Rural people and those who work in our rural hospitals want to have a say in their future—which is what trust status will give them.

Mr. Lang: I am interested in my hon. Friend's comments. He will know why we were unable to consider trust status for Forfar when it was first considered. If Forfar or Stracathro want to submit further applications, those will be looked at.

My hon. Friend might like to reflect on the fact that if the 14 applications that we have received in the second wave and the 20 expressions of interest for the third wave are translated in due course into trust status, 90 per cent. of hospital and community health budgets throughout Scotland will enjoy trust status. I feel sure that that will represent a positive advantage for Scottish health care.

Mrs. Fyfe: Will the Secretary of State tell us whether, if he has such trust in trusts, there will be genuine dialogue with the local community, unlike the trusts in England? Will local health councils have a statutory right to consultation; if not, why not? Will trust board meetings be open to the public; if not, why not?

Of the nine chairmen-designate of the trusts announced three weeks ago, three happen to be well-known Tories and others may be less well-known Tories. It is true that all of them have good works in common, but do so many of them have to have faith in the Tory cause as well? Does not such bias create some doubts about the way in which those hospitals will be run?

Mr. Lang: I certainly hope and expect to see the full involvement of the community with trust status hospitals. Indeed, I enjoyed the company of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) when he and I welcomed my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister when opening the South Ayrshire Trust hospital. That is the sort of community involvement which I welcome.

The hon. Lady asked me about the membership of trust boards. If members of the Labour party show an interest in becoming involved in trust boards, I will be interested to learn their names. I wrote to the leaders of all the Scottish political parties after the general election asking them to submit to me names of members who might be suitable for health board membership. I have not had a single reply.

Unemployment

3. **Dr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his Department's priorities for reducing unemployment in Scotland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): We shall continue to give priority to measures that create an environment in which companies will create new jobs. We are doing this by cutting back on Government intervention in business, by creating the conditions to stimulate entrepreneurial activity and by reducing inflation.

Mr. Strang: Will the Minister now address the future of Scotland's deep-mined coal industry? Is he aware that to let British Coal flood the Frances colliery would be to sanction an act of colossal industrial vandalism? Will he give the House an undertaking this afternoon that the Government will not allow that to happen?

Mr. Stewart: In relation to the two Scottish pits: I agree with the statements of the vice-president of the National Union of Mineworkers about Longannet. There have been unfortunate scare stories about it to which I give no credence.

I fully appreciate the importance of the hon. Gentleman's point about Frances colliery. We are in touch to seek assurances from British Coal on that point and, as the hon. Gentleman and some of his colleagues may know, the general secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress, Mr. Campbell Christie, has been in touch with the Government on this point and will receive a response shortly.

Mr. Gallie: Is my hon. Friend aware that, I am pleased to say, last month unemployment fell in my constituency? I congratulate my hon. Friend and the Secretary of State for Scotland on their work in bringing to Prestwick 500 jobs in British Aerospace. I greatly appreciate that. Prestwick currently enjoys intermediate development status. Will my hon. Friend and the Secretary of State ensure that that continues?

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments on unemployment in his constituency. Last month, seasonally adjusted unemployment fell not only in my hon. Friend's constituency but in almost all of Scotland's 72 constituencies. Naturally, hon. Members welcome that. Of course, we were delighted by British Aerospace's decision on Prestwick and were pleased to offer assistance with that crucial investment, which will provide a substantial number of new jobs in Ayrshire. On my hon. Friend's third point, we are currently consulting on the future of the assisted areas. I note with great care what he said.

Mr. Wray: What plans does the Minister have to eradicate the poverty and misery being caused in my constituency which has the highest unemployment in Britain? Every person who is unemployed in my constituency costs the Government and the taxpayer £9,000. Unemployment totals 5,274 and costs the taxpayer £47 million. Fifty youngsters are chasing every vacancy. What do the Government propose to do about it?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman is a vocal constituency Member of Parliament, although he lives in my constituency and not in his own. No one underestimates the problem of unemployment in his constituency or more generally throughout the west of Scotland. But during a recession that has affected the whole of the industrialised world, Scotland, together with the north and Wales, has recorded the smallest increase in unemployment over the past 12 months of all areas in the United Kingdom. That shows that the economy has diversified and restructured. Therefore, the Scottish economy is well placed to take advantage of the opportunities when the world economy turns up. That will help the hon. Gentleman's constituents and, as he knows, the Glasgow Development Agency's specific programmes will help in a number of additional ways.

Governance

4. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received since 9 April relating to the government of Scotland.

8. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to improve the governance of Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Since the general election, I and my right hon. Friends have undertaken a range of consultations relating to the government of Scotland. We are considering ways of making government more responsive to Scotland's needs within the Union.

Mr. McAllion: Does the Secretary of State accept that the magnificent campaign currently being waged by the National Union of Mineworkers demonstrates that this Tory Government will react to only one kind of pressure —extra-parliamentary pressure? Therefore, does he agree that if the people of Scotland want self-government, they will have to exert extra-parliamentary pressure by turning out in their thousands to support the mass lobby of this undemocratic Parliament on 26 November and the mass demonstration at the Euro summit on 12 December? Where will he be on that date—skulking in his constituency, frightened to show his face to the Scottish people because he has so blatantly let them down in this place?

Mr. Lang: I thought that the hon. Gentleman was taking part in extra-parliamentary activities when he set up Scottish United, along with his hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway). They claimed that thousands were rallying to their cause, but at every meeting the numbers fell by 1,000 or 2,000. I do not think that they are campaigning at all now, are they?

Mr. Wallace: The Secretary of State referred to bringing forward proposals responsive to Scotland's needs. Does he accept that another feature of democracy is having proposals that are responsive to the democratically expressed wishes of the people of Scotland? What wish has he identified for privatisation of our water supplies? Does he believe that taking away local control of the water industry in the teeth of overwhelming opposition is a good exercise of proper democratic government?

Mr. Lang: I think that the hon. Gentleman is a month or two premature with his question. The Government do not have a policy that commits them to water privatisation. We are considering a consultation document that will set out a range of options for the future of the water industry in restructured local government. I look forward to the hon. Gentleman's representations when he has had a chance to read the consultation paper and consider the answers to the questions that must be addressed.

Mr. Rowe: My understanding is that most of the proposals for changing the governance of Scotland would result in Scottish Members spending more time in Scotland than here in Westminster. Does my right hon. Friend accept that, although losing some Scottish Members would be of benefit to Opposition parties in the House, we on the Conservative Benches would be sorry to see them spending less time here?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is right to recognise that this is the Parliament of the United Kingdom, in which Scottish Members, English Members, Welsh Members and Northern Ireland Members all have equal rights.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the United Kingdom's unwritten constitution and Parliament are the finest safeguards that the Scots can have to ensure that their interests are looked after? We have only to consider the occupancy of the Government and Opposition Front Benches to realise that Scots, with less than 9 per cent. of the United Kingdom population, always enjoy much more representation—probably more than 25 per cent.—on those Benches.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Scotland enjoys advantages from its membership of this United Kingdom Parliament. Scotland's economy enjoys advantages from its membership of the United Kingdom. Nothing in our consideration will undermine Scotland's place as a full partner in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Galloway: Listening to the smirking arrogance of the Secretary of State for Scotland, we would scarcely believe that just under 25 per cent. of Scottish electors voted for him at the general election six months ago. Having listened to the humbug that he uttered a few moments ago, no one would believe that probably about half those electors would vote in that way again if they could have the general election again.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) asked the Secretary of State a question. What will he be doing when thousands of Scots are down here lobbying Parliament? Will he undertake now to meet the lobbyists who come to press Scotland's case for self-determination? Will he name two of the hirelings sitting next to him to meet my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East and myself in a public debate in any constituency in Scotland? We shall then see what the Scottish people think of his case and ours.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman's figure was incorrect. He talks of humbug and calls for meetings in this Parliament. Yet on 8 July—this appeared in the *Daily Record*—the hon. Gentleman called on his Scottish colleagues to boycott Scottish questions which

"would leave Scottish Secretary Ian Lang to address an empty Chamber."

It seems that the hon. Gentleman's ruse does not work.

Mr. Salmond: Will the Secretary of State now admit that in the disastrous months since the election, it is his stock, his party's stock and London government stock that has nose-dived in Scotland? Can he name any group of Scottish workers—fishermen, miners, nurses or teachers—who have any remaining confidence in his government of Scotland?

Mr. Lang: As the leader of a party who promised to win 37 seats and ended up winning three, the hon. Gentleman knows all about nose-diving. I believe that the vast majority of people in Scotland recognise the success that the Government have achieved there in the past few years in helping our economy to diversify and strengthen and in preparing it now for emergence from recession, when we shall continue the process of sustained growth and the development of new prosperity.

Mr. McLeish: Does the Secretary of State accept that the Opposition are used to broken promises on the part of the Conservatives, but that we are not used to the Secretary of State betraying the true interests of Scotland? Will he tell the House and the Scottish people when the constitutional farce, popularly called "Taking stock of the governance of Scotland", will end? Does he agree that Scots are treated with contempt when they are lectured about getting closer to the people from the cosy confines of the Monday Club in Brighton when every decision taken by the right hon. Gentleman rides roughshod over public opinion on every conceivable issue?

Is he also aware that while our European colleagues are taking the issue of subsidiarity seriously we have the spectacle of the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister using it to cover cracks in the Conservative party? Why is he not using subsidiarity to better the government of Scotland? Does he accept that 75 per cent. of Scots want costitutional change? There is a compelling case to be made for a voice for Scotland so that our aspirations and our priorities can be met much more effectively. When will he stop treating the people of Scotland with contempt and, more importantly, when can we expect to see some leadership?

Mr. Lang: I would never treat the people of Scotland with contempt. I put my case to the people in the general election just as my party did and we won re-election as the Government of the United Kingdom. The hon. Gentleman asked me about subsidiarity, but he does not seem to be aware that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and Chancellor Kohl of Germany have been the two leading figures within the European Community who have driven the principle of subsidiarity forward.

Development Corporations

5. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of the Scottish New Town Development Corporation to discuss the future of the development corporations.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. and learned Friend and I met the chairmen and deputy chairmen on 5 October.

Mr. Ingram: Is the Minister aware of the deep unease and mistrust in the new towns of Scotland about the Government's policy to sell off the assets of those new towns under the demands of the Treasury? Does he accept that the Government have failed to give assurances that the district councils will be given proper resources if the new town tenants elect to choose those district councils as alternative landlords in the wind-up of new towns? Now that the new towns are to be faced with the uncertainty of local government reform, do the Government accept that it would be better to delay the wind-up until the whole question of local authority reform has been settled and shown to be effective?

Mr. Stewart: In relation to the hon. Gentleman's first point, he may know that I have discussed this issue with SLANT—Scottish Local Authorities with New Towns—recently and I have made clear the Government's commitment to the diversification of tenure after the wind-up. I have also made clear the choice that will be available in respect of local authority tenants.

The reorganisation of local government has been addressed in the consultation paper. I note that the hon. Gentleman has a copy of it and I am sure that he has pored over it; I look forward to his response.

I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman's criticisms can be upheld. I had a meeting with the board of the East Kilbride development corporation on 13 October followed by a meeting with the East Kilbride business forum. Both of those meetings were constructive and useful.

Industry and Commerce

6. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the prospects for industry and commerce in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Scottish industry and commerce are striving hard to improve their competitiveness, to take full advantage of the opportunities presented by the completion of the single European market and the creation of the European economic area. The recent cut in interest rates will certainly help in that regard.

Mr. Burns: Does my hon. Friend agree that the prospects for Scottish exports have become greatly enhanced in recent weeks?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is—*[Interruption.]* I do not know why the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) is laughing. My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Scottish economy is highly export-oriented. We export a higher percentage of industrial production than does the United Kingdom generally, particularly to the European Community. There is no doubt that the depreciation of sterling against European currencies improves the competitiveness of Scottish exports. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has set up Scottish Trade International, which brings together the expertise of the Scottish Office and Scottish Enterprise. The Scottish exports forum, which brings together a large number of people from the public and private sectors to improve exports, will meet under my chairmanship on Friday. The task of ensuring that Scottish business takes full advantage of new export opportunities, particularly in Europe, will be an important item on its agenda.

Mr. Canavan: Has the Secretary of State yet received the Quayle Monroe report on the possible privatisation of Scottish Water and its effects on Scottish industry and commerce? Will he, in the interests of open democracy, place a copy of it in the Library, so that the House may have a frank discussion on the full facts? For example, domestic users in the Central region of Scotland pay water charges of only £20 per annum, compared with more than £200 per annum in many parts of England and Wales that are supposed to be served by privatised water companies.

Mr. Stewart: The report to which the hon. Gentleman refers is confidential—

Mr. Canavan: Why? We have secret government instead of open democracy. That is a disgrace.

Mr. Stewart: For reasons of commercial confidentiality. I may tell the hon. Gentleman and other Opposition Members who appear to be expressing an interest that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will issue a consultation paper in the next few weeks, and we look forward to receiving from the hon. Gentleman what will no doubt be considered and constructive comments.

Local Government

7. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's review of local government.

10. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of his plans to change the structure of local government.

12. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce the Government's preferred option for Scottish local government reform.

Mr. Lang: I published a consultation paper on 12 October that seeks views on the most appropriate single-tier structure for local government in Scotland. I have asked for responses by the end of January next year.

Mr. Clarke: Given that a major document was published but not presented to the House, does not the Secretary of State owe right hon. and hon. Members an apology? The report was published at an extensive press conference in Glasgow a few days before the House returned, when—if there is to be any element of democracy in these matters—a statement should have been made to the House itself. What is the justification for embarking on local government reform in the midst of the longest recession for half a century, and who asked the Secretary of State to do so? If this is an exercise in democracy, why is the Secretary of State allowing a mere three months for the kind of response that he claims to welcome—particularly when there was a commission for England but not for Scotland?

Does it not strike the Secretary of State as ironic that in answering an earlier question, he said that the Government do not have a policy for water? How can there be a genuine review of local government when we do not know the Government's thinking on the structure of the Scottish water industry? If the Secretary of State wants a policy, he should take our advice and make a U-turn over his determination to privatise water, which is overwhelmingly opposed by the people of Scotland. Unless the right hon. Gentleman wants to impose on Scotland the chaos——

Madam Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman has a substantive question to ask the Secretary of State, he should ask it.

Mr. Lang: Oh dear. Let me try to help the hon. Gentleman. On the one hand, he asked why we had produced the consultation paper before the resumption of the parliamentary Session; on the other hand, he asked for a long consultation period. We produced the consultation paper last week so that we could have as long a consultation period as possible, lasting until the end of January and still leaving us time to present the House with a considered policy decision, to prepare legislation and to bring it before Parliament. I should have thought that that was fairly evident.

The hon. Gentleman also asked me about the degree of interest in local government. I note that, in an otherwise dull article in today's Glasgow *Herald*, he describes local government reform as an irrelevance. He may like to know that we have received 68,000 requests for our leaflet on local government reform, a further 10,000 for the full consultation paper and more than 400 for the video. That, I think, demonstrates the dramatic interest in local government reform that exists throughout Scotland.

Mr. Home Robertson: There is indeed a consensus that government in Scotland needs to be reviewed, starting with the Secretary of State's own office. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that there is an equally strong consensus in Scotland that the troglodytes of the Scottish Office who gave us the poll tax cannot be trusted with the task of redrawing the maps of Scottish local government?

The consultation document refers to the Wheatley commission. Does the Secretary of State recall that the commission included not only Labour party supporters and local government specialists, but Miss Betty Harvie-Anderson, the former Member for Parliament for Eastwood, and the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston)? On this day of independent reviews, will the Secretary of State accept the case for a fair, independent review of the future of Scottish local government?

Mr. Lang: One of the reasons why the consultation paper has been so widely welcomed is that it lays out alternatives, options and illustrative choices in an entirely neutral and fair-minded way. That is our purpose: to consult the people of Scotland and to obtain their views so that we can make a decision.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the Wheatley commission. He forgets that the decisions on boundaries made in the last local government reform were made by Parliament—and it is Parliament which will make the decision this time.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Secretary of State accept that one of the reasons why such interest has been expressed in his consultation document is the fact that many jobs may be at risk? The Government's irrelevant project has led to a hiatus in the morale of local government professional staff.

Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us something about the cost-benefit analysis that accompanies the document? I know that the Touche Ross consultants have produced their own figures, but those figures are directly contradicted by figures produced by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, which says that although the costs are certainly quantifiable, the savings are not. COSLA believes that the cost will be £200 million.

The assumptions made by Touche Ross are not the Government's assumptions. When will we see the Government's own assessment of what the reform will cost?

Mr. Lang: Touche Ross produced a paper containing cost figures based on various assumptions, and COSLA contributed to the work done by Touche Ross in drawing up the figures. We shall, however, be keen to hear any further output from either COSLA or local authorities on those cost assumptions.

The hon. Gentleman asked me what the assumptions were. The broad expectation from the Touche Ross report is that the reconstruction of local authorities, putting them on a single-tier basis, will result in some job losses and some reductions in bureaucracy, involving fewer than 3 per cent. of the total number of people employed in local government. Those reductions, however, will lead to savings of up to £200 million a year. That is a dramatic contrast with the figures given by the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), who, on successive days, offered us cost estimates of £400 million, £500 million and even £600 million.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: In the consultation document, the city of Aberdeen is given single-tier status in three of the four possible options. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the weight of evidence is unquestionably in favour of Aberdeen's once again having a single-tier authority and that, with the support of the ruling Labour group on Aberdeen city council, we shall have that?

Mr. Lang: I entirely understand my hon. Friend's enthusiasm for such an outcome, and I have no doubt that his view will be widely held in Aberdeen. I look forward to receiving contributions to the consultation process from the people of Aberdeen; I myself see a strong case for an all-purpose, single-tier authority based on Aberdeen.

Mr. Welsh: As the Government admit the failure of the previous root and branch reform of local government structure only 18 years ago and produced the poll tax, which led to the greatest shambles ever seen in local government finance, how can anybody be confident that the Government will get it right this time? Will the Secretary of State listen to members of his own party and to the vast majority of Scottish people who want water services to remain under the control of local authorities? Will he ensure that the same £700 million green dowry as he supported for England is made available to Scottish local authorities to allow them to improve water services in Scotland?

Mr. Lang: I have already dealt with the water question. The changes that resulted from Lord Wheatley's commission substantially improved the structure of local government in Scotland. That is beyond doubt. However, Lord Wheatley said that we cannot afford to allow the structure of local government to remain static. That is my view also. Changed circumstances and changed needs require a changed structure. The structure that we are putting before the people of Scotland in our consultation paper will improve service delivery and accountability, reduce costs and strengthen local democracy.

Mr. Maxton: How can the Secretary of State describe this as a genuine consultation process when his junior Minister in charge of local government, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), is publicly campaigning for the retention of Eastwood? In other words, he is campaigning for the 51-unit structure. He has also made it clear that Eastwood will go into Glasgow only over his dead body, which means that he rejects the 15-unit structure. Is it not time that the Secretary of State told his junior Minister either to shut up or to get out of the Government?

Mr. Lang: I do not believe that Members of Parliament should be exempt from taking part in the consultation process. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will let me have his views on how he believes the interests of his constituents would be best served. I hope that all hon. Members will give me their views on how their constituents' interests would be best served. If we are able to achieve such a consultation response, plus all the input that we shall get in response to the tens of thousands of leaflets and booklets that have already been sent out, we shall have a worthwhile consultation process and end up with a better structure of local government.

Higher Education

9. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Scottish students are entering higher education in the current year.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): In 1990-91, the latest year for which final figures are available, 26,690 full-time and 23,183 part-time Scottish students entered undergraduate higher education courses in the United Kingdom. The figures show a rise of 30 per cent. in full-time entrants since 1980-81. Estimates for 1991-92 indicate continued growth.

Mr. Marshall: That is a very welcome answer. Does my hon. Friend remember the forecast made when the student loan scheme was introduced—that it would discourage students from going to university? Does his statement not suggest that those who made that forecast were bad forecasters as well as being misguided educationists?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. Friend is correct. About 260,000 loans have been made, and 37 per cent. of eligible students took out loans in 1991-92. The take-up rate is expected to rise, which we believe is welcome and will help to increase access to higher education.

Mr. Connarty: Does the Secretary of State not realise from his correspondence with me that many students who have obtained places on postgraduate courses have been denied grants because the Government have not allocated an adequate amount of money for that purpose? Will he do something about it?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Our present package of maintenance grants, loans and free tuition remains one of the most generous in the western world. If we were greatly to increase the resources allocated to grants, we should reduce access to higher education. I believe that to increase and widen access to higher education is generally welcomed throughout Britain. In Scotland, one in four school leavers achieves the qualifications to go on to higher education. Ten years ago it was one in six. Before many years have passed it will be one in three. We want to encourage that process and make certain that it becomes a reality.

Mr. McFall: Does not the educational prosperity of these 50,000 students depend on quality staff, and is not it time to think again when a moderate person such as Sir William Kerr Fraser, principal of Glasgow university and a distinguished former Permanent Secretary at the Scottish Office, says that the Government's cynical action in stopping the university pay deal will do severe damage to academic motivation and morale? Does the Minister agree with Sir William and his fellow Scottish principals that a system that has shown a 30 per cent. decline in university salaries—related to average earnings—in the past 12 years will undoubtedly lead to a third-rate higher education system? Do not the student community and lecturers deserve better, or are the university lecturers and miners being treated equally? Both are being contemptuously trampled on by this disreputable Government.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I congratulate the hon. Member on his elevation to the Front Bench. We believe that pay levels should be sufficient to recruit, retain and motivate staff of the required quality. There is no evidence of general recruitment and retention difficulties.

European Regional Development Fund

11. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total value of grants that Scotland has received from the European regional development fund since its inception.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): Since the inception of the European regional development fund in 1975, Scotland has benefited from awards totalling more than £1 billion.

Mr. Knox: Will my hon. Friend say how Scotland has fared under the European structural fund, and how it compares with other European Community countries?

Sir Hector Monro: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We have an excellent record on not only the European regional development fund but the structural fund. Since 1979, nearly £1·5 billion has been allocated, which compares favourably with our European partners.

Dr. Reid: However much money Scotland receives from Europe, it is as nothing compared with the industrial devastation that has been wrought by the Government. Why should we expect the Europeans constantly to bail out a Government who betrayed Scottish steel workers, Scottish miners, their commitment to stay in the ERM, their promise not to devalue and their promise of economic recovery? The Government should be prepared to fight for Scotland and Britain first rather than depending on others to do it for them.

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Gentleman is quite wrong if he thinks that nobody is fighting to help in Lanarkshire. The Lanarkshire development agency, Industry Scotland and everybody else is working to find the best possible solution to bring work back to Lanarkshire. He is wrong to criticise what we are hoping to achieve.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the Minister accept that if the Government's support for increased expenditure from the regional development fund to the highlands and islands is to prosper the Government will have to support larger budgetary allocations to regional development throughout the Community, in accordance with the views of the newly reappointed Commissioner, Mr. Bruce Millan? Is he prepared to accept increased structural expenditure within the European Community in Scotland's interests?

Sir Hector Monro: It is early days to give a decision. We are fully alive to the needs of the highlands and islands area and its campaign for objective-one status. I cannot predict the outcome of the forthcoming negotiations, but the Government will continue to ensure that the needs of the highlands and islands are kept to the fore.

Local Government Finance

13. **Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss local authority funding.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend and I met the convention on 5 October as part of the normal consultation on local government finance matters. I expect to have further meetings in due course.

Mr. McMaster: Given the appalling state of Scotland's economy, where the only growth industries are crime, unemployment and bad housing, will the Minister tell us what more the Secretary of State has surrendered in his secret talks with the Treasury? Is it true that the Secretary of State had not only meekly surrendered to massive public expenditure cuts without so much as a whimper but has nodded through the abandonment and abolition of the banded formula, which will deal a double body blow to Scotland? The Minister has been asked the question before: will he answer it today? When will the Secretary of State stop being the Cabinet's man in Scotland and start being Scotland's man in the Cabinet?

Mr. Stewart: First, naturally, I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his elevation to the position of Scottish Whip. He had an excellent reputation for keeping order when he was leader of Renfrew district council, although I believe that his new task will be somewhat more challenging. Nevertheless, the whole House will wish him well.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman is talking absolute nonsense, with his allegations about my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. If he is so worried about local government finance and its effects on the people of Scotland, I suggest that he and his party ask some Labour authorities how, if they have all those financial difficulties, they managed to give huge increases in salary to top officials across Scotland?

Labour Statistics

15. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest unemployment rate in Lothian.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The number of claimants in Lothian region in September 1992 was 34,173. The workforce-based unemployment rate was 8·4 per cent.

Mr. Devlin: Given that the unemployment rate in Lothian region is about half that in Teesside, where I come from, and given that both areas have undergone painful restructuring in recent years, I wonder what my hon. Friend can tell us about the employment growth in Lothian region, and what lessons may be drawn for the benefit of other parts of the country.

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend, who defends the interests of his constituents with immense vigour, is absolutely right to emphasise the fact that, relatively, Lothian region, among other parts of Scotland, has survived the recession extremely well. The specific answer that I would give to my hon. Friend is, first, that in recent years Lothian region has had the advantage of the substantial increase in service employment associated with the financial centre in Edinburgh and, secondly, among other things, that Livingston has been successful in attracting inward investment to the region.

Mr. Chisholm: Does the Minister realise that in five wards in my constituency within the Lothian region, male unemployment is officially between 21 and 23 per cent? Female unemployment would be as high, if it were properly calculated. Does he realise that the official unemployment figure is 4,900, and that if it were calculated in the same way as in 1979 the figure would be 6,900?

Finally, when will the Minister realise that his insistence on market forces and reducing public expenditure, and on prioritising inflation, is a way of increasing rather than reducing unemployment?

Mr. Stewart: Of course, I recognise that there are problems in particular parts of the Lothian region, including parts of the hon. Gentleman's constituency, but I must point out to him that Lothian and Edinburgh Enterprise has a current budget of £43 million. That represents a considerable commitment of taxpayers' money by the Government. The number of unemployed people in Lothian fell dramatically—by about 50 per cent. —between January 1987 and June 1990. Total employment has been increasing, so I urge the hon. Gentleman, in the interests of his constituents in Leith, to present publicly a more balanced picture.

Fish Farming

16. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his Department's role in expanding fish farming.

Sir Hector Monro *rose——[Interruption.]*

Sir Hector Monro: That sounds like a pre-run of Ibrox.

The Scottish Office provides financial assistance and a regulatory framework for the development of fish farming in Scotland. I welcome the important contribution that salmon farming in particular makes to the economy of some parts of rural Scotland.

Mr. Bruce: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Can he tell the House what effect removing minimum import prices has had on fish farming in recent times?

Sir Hector Monro: Since May, when I did not review the minimum import price, because the reasons for doing that in relation to Norway no longer existed, the price has firmed very well. The price of small salmon is 50 per cent. up over the price in May and the price for large salmon is up by about 60 per cent. I hope that that trend continues towards Christmas.

Mr. Macdonald: Is the Minister aware that people in the fish farming industry are angry and disappointed at his failure to support their proposal for a producers' organisation? Given the importance of this industry for the Scottish economy and the west coast, will the Minister change his mind and look again at the proposal for a producers' organisation which the industry believes is vital to its long-term future?

Sir Hector Monro: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that fish farming is most important. I was glad to visit a fish farm in the Western Isles only a few weeks ago. The Government will continue to give all the help that we can and we look forward to a steady increase in production, which has been remarkable over the past 10 years.

Sergeant Robert James Irvine

3.30 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the slaughter of Sergeant Robert James Irvine, the first member of the Royal Irish Regiment to be murdered by the IRA in Northern Ireland."

The matter is specific, and the stark facts are as follows. Sergeant Irvine served in the police reserve and served for 15 years in the Ulster Defence Regiment. When that regiment was merged, he joined the Royal Irish Regiment. He had to shift from his present accommodation because it had to be rebuilt and enlarged for his family. He moved to his mother's home where his sister and his uncle still live. His family of two and his wife moved into an outbuilding of his mother's home.

Last night, after he came home and had a bath at his mother's home, he went over to the house where his wife and family were. He was brutally and in a cowardly way shot down by the IRA and was riddled with bullets. When Margaret his wife, his son Gordon and his daughter Allison opened the door, their father's dead body slumped in across the threshold.

I must tell the House today that, with the clampdown on the roads of Ulster by the security forces, which is welcomed and the resulting hindrance for the IRA to shift its bombing material, no doubt the IRA is now turning to soft targets. As members of the Royal Irish Regiment often live in isolated areas—the part of my constituency where the murder took place last night is isolated—they are more prone to such attacks than ever before.

Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that this matter, and the safety of wives and families of members of the Royal Irish Regiment, which we were told when it was formed would gain acceptance in the community, be considered. It is a prime necessity that urgent steps be taken along the lines that I have described.

Madam Speaker: I have listened very carefully to what the hon. Member has said and I must give my decision of course without stating any reasons. I am afraid that I do not consider that the matter which the hon. Gentleman has raised, important though it is, is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20. I therefore cannot submit the application to the House. I am sorry.

Aircraft Noise (Control)

3.33 pm

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make provision for the control of noise pollution by aircraft; to establish a method of compensation for local residents affected thereby; and for connected purposes.

I recognise that the House is awaiting a much more explosive and noisier debate than that from aircraft noise. However, I am going to take full advantage, proceding the pyrotechnics that are about to follow, to present my Bill while the House warms up for the main event.

My Bill is about privacy and the right to a quiet life. It may not sound very important, but my Bill is about the right of people and their families to sit in their living rooms and, if the weather is good, to sit in their gardens in peace and quiet. My Bill recognises that, since the introduction of the jet aircraft about 25 years ago, communities and families living near airports have had to suffer high and unacceptable noise nuisance. Speaking as an aeronautical engineer, I know the efforts that have been made over the years by manufacturers and operators to reduce the impact of noise on the local community. Their efforts and endeavours—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. There is far too much noise pollution in this Chamber. I cannot hear the hon. Member. Mr. Deva—speak up.

Mr. Deva: Their efforts and endeavours must be commended. They have achieved much, and I look forward to their achieving more.

In the past 15 years, aircraft noise impact has been reduced by introducing minimum noise routes, which are minimum population routes, with quieter noise-certified aircraft, noise insulation grant schemes, noise monitoring and night flight restrictions. Aircraft noise creates disturbance and annoyance. In addition, night flights, even one night flight, can cause people to be woken and can then prevent sleep.

In the summer months in particular, windows need to be open, which nullifies the efficacy of noise insulation for the lucky few who have it. In summer, of course, people want to spend more time out of doors and in their gardens, and aircraft noise can become extremely annoying and intrusive. In 1989, the date for which the latest figures are available, half a million people in west London, where my constituents in Brentford and Isleworth reside, were obliged to suffer disturbing levels of aircraft noise, about 35 noise number index or 57 LEQ.

There is now the prospect that aircraft movements at Heathrow will grow from more than 360,000 a year to more than 390,000 by the year 2005. However, it is sadly an indubitable fact that airport noise will not simply go away. The modern turbo fan is now fully noise optimised and there is no clever technology around the corner to reduce noise further.

More alarmingly, the next generation of engines, the ultra-high bypass jets and unducted prop fans will be fundamentally noisier than the current generation of noise optimised turbo fans. The British Government and the EEC, acting in concert with the International Civil Aviation Organisation, have begun to take action to reduce and eliminate the use of noisier aircraft. Under the

ICAO annexe 16, a framework agreement was made in November 1991 for the phasing out of the noisier chapter 2 aircraft from April 1995 to March 2002. But the year 2002 is a long time indeed to wait for noise-exposed residents. If no encouragement is now given for their early and more rapid phasing out, particularly at heavily populated airports such as Heathrow, local communities around airports will continue to suffer unacceptable noise nuisance well into the next century.

But that is not all. As aircraft noise certification is weight-related, the heavier an aircraft the louder it is. That means that even the so-called quieter aircraft defined in chapter 3 and not required to be phased out can be very noisy indeed.

My Bill seeks to establish that chapter 2 aircraft need an added inducement to be phased out at highly populated airports such as Heathrow more rapidly than hitherto envisaged, and that chapter 3 aircraft need to be compelled to be flown at all times in such a manner as to create the minimum noise on every occasion and every flight. Modern technology now enables us to put that into effect for the first time. The very recent introduction of the new noise tracking and monitoring equipment has enabled the British Airports Authority to have precise information on each aircraft and the noise that it generates on the ground on a real-time basis.

My Bill will seek to establish that, unless those aircraft are flown in such a manner as to create the minimum permissible noise defined and specified in an annex to my Bill, they will suffer a financial penalty related to their weight, which naturally approximates to the number of passengers carried by each aircraft type. I have always believed that the polluter must pay. On that basis, I suggest that if the limit is infringed, the aircraft responsible should pay a noise charge. The charge would be collected by the airport authority and given as compensation to the local noise-exposed community on a pro-rata basis, depending on the extent of the noise exposure.

For far too long, international air passengers have continued to accrue the benefits of using airports near heavily populated centres because it is convenient to them to do so. They have paid scant regard to the inconvenience, disturbance and noise caused to local residents, who have not benefited from their individual activities. My Bill seeks to redress the balance on the occasions when noisy aircraft are used and when quieter aircraft are flown in a manner which disregards the environmental needs and rights of the local community.

I know that all airline operators and organisations involved, from the BAA to local organisations in my area such as the Heathrow Association for Control of Aircraft Noise, are committed to reducing the level of noise nuisance. My Bill will create a more harmonious relationship between the air transport users and the local airport community.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva, Mr. David Shaw, Mr. Toby Jessel, Ms. Diane Abbott, Mr. Iain Sproat, Mr. Gordon McMaster, Mr. Andrew Rowe and Mr. Michael Fabricant.

AIRCRAFT NOISE (CONTROL)

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva accordingly presented a Bill to make provision for the control of noise pollution by aircraft; to establish a method of compensation for local residents affected thereby; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December. [Bill 68.]

Pit Closures

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister. I should also tell the House that more than 70 Members wish to participate in the debate. Therefore, it will be no surprise to the House to know that I have limited speeches between the hours of 6 and 8 pm to 10 minutes and I shall expect those Members who speak outside that time to exercise a great deal of voluntary restraint.

3.43 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to move,

That this House regrets the failure of the President of the Board of Trade in his statement on Monday 19th October to provide for a review of the programme of pit closures; and demands that no pit be closed until the Select Committee on Trade and Industry concludes a review of the costs and benefits of closing the pits and the comparative costs and benefits to the nation of retaining them in production.

Last week, when we announced this debate, it was dismissed by one of the newspapers as a parliamentary ritual. Far from proving a parliamentary ritual, the debate has already proved a parliamentary first. It is the first occasion in the history of Supply days on which most of the Opposition motion has been conceded by the Government in the 48 hours since it was tabled.

We begin our motion by regretting the failure of the President of the Board of Trade to announce a review in his statement on Monday. We now have it, on no less an authority than the Prime Minister in his briefing yesterday, that it was always the intention of the President of the Board of Trade to announce a review. Somehow, in two hours of statement and answers to questions, he ran out of time to announce it. We are told that the great communicator was unable to express himself lucidly in the frenetic atmosphere in the House.

In the motion, we also call for the review that the President of the Board of Trade did not announce on Monday. The right hon. Gentleman will remember that I called on him to give us a review. This is what he said:

> "A review . . . will . . . raise a range of conflicting arguments upon which there will be no agreement before, during or after the review . . . I am responsible for the Government's energy policy . . . and I shall make clear the basis on which we intend to proceed."—[*Official Report* 19 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. 233.]

That was on Monday. On Tuesday, Lord Wakeham made clearerer the basis on which they intend to proceed. It is appropriate that Lord Wakeham should have been chosen for that role. After all, it was Lord Wakeham who, during the last general election, issued a press release with the heading "Labour's plans for coal would mean lost jobs." For good measure, the following week he added another press release, in which he said:

> "I want to set the record straight, by restating the profound commitment of this Conservative Government to the coal industry and to everybody who works in it."

I understand why Lord Wakeham would wish to rescue his credibility from the assault on it by the President of the Board of Trade. On Tuesday, Lord Wakeham made it plain that there was going to be a wide-ranging review, that the issue of how much coal was burnt by the electricity industry would be a part of it, and that we could look again at whether gas should substitute for coal and whether it made sense to import so much coal.

I must ask the President of the Board of Trade: who is responsible for Government energy policy? Is Lord Wakeham still responsible? He has done more to make clear the basis on which they will proceed than the right hon. Gentleman did in two hours on Monday.

Finally, our motion calls for the Select Committee on Trade and Industry to carry out an inquiry. On Monday, the President of the Board of Trade managed to address the House for two hours without once uttering the words "Select Committee." By Tuesday, the Prime Minister was telling us how pleased he was that there might be a Select Committee inquiry and how full the co-operation with it would be. My only regret is that, when we tabled the motion, we did not call for a general election now, in the hope that they might call for that too.

I notice that the Government have sufficiently retained the habits of parliamentary ritual that they are not able to accept our motion but have tabled an amendment. If they meant what they were saying yesterday, why cannot they accept our motion after swallowing so many parts of it?

I do not flatter myself that it was the cogency of our arguments that convinced them. What shifted Ministers was a nation united in anger at the destruction proposed for Britain's mining communities—an anger that transcended party political differences. I know that, because my office has been inundated for the past seven days by calls from Conservative supporters from Surrey to Somerset. Conservative Members know it, because they have had the same experience with Conservative voters in their constituencies. The President of the Board of Trade knows it, because he knows to what extent he has had to shift his position during the past three days.

We await the right hon. Gentleman's speech with eagerness to find out how much further he has moved today, because there are still two flaws in the Government's broad promise of a review. First, it will be a review of only two thirds of the closure programme. The amendment is adamant that the review will affect only 21 of the 31 pits. We are told that the other 10 are uneconomic and must close. Grimethorpe produces coal at £32 a tonne. That is cheaper than the coal imported to Britain.

But the review promised by Lord Wakeham went wider than simply a pit-by-pit examination of whether any one pit was profitable. The review promised in the House of Lords yesterday was to look afresh at whether it made national sense to burn gas rather than coal. If it is to be a real review considering broad questions of energy strategy, why should one fifth of the British coal industry be shut down before we receive the answers?

Another flaw tempers our joy at the change of heart. Yes, the Select Committee may carry out an inquiry, but it is clear from the Prime Minister's amendment that the review that the Government have in mind is a review by the Government—by the Department of the right hon. Gentleman who made the decision. How seriously can we take the proposition that, having made the immense blunder, the President of the Board of Trade is the right man to make a success of reviewing it? If we are to take it seriously, we must hear today from the right hon. Gentleman which part of the decision he now thinks that he may have got wrong and needs to be reviewed.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: I shall give way on this occasion, but I am conscious of what Madam Speaker has said about the number of people who wish to speak.

Mr. Conway: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. While he is on the matter of responsibility, will he explain to the House on what basis the leader of his party, when in Cabinet, agreed to the closure of 277 pits?

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman flatters my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition too highly by suggesting that in the few months that he was a member of the last Cabinet quite so many pits were closed —[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."]

I shall take up the hon. Gentleman's point. I have several times heard the President of the Board of Trade reciting the figures for the closure of pits since 1945. That means—I think that this was the thrust of the claim of the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) —that what we see now is not a new energy strategy but the continuation of previous trends. A large number of pits were closed in the 1950s and 1960s as the demand for house coal collapsed, but there was a new market for coal for the power stations.

During every Government since 1945, be it Conservative or Labour, there has been an increase in the amount of coal going to power stations to be turned into electricity. The Government elected in 1992 will be the first post-war Government to propose reducing the amount of coal being burnt for electricity. That is the source of the current crisis in Britain's coal industry. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who sits before us is the Minister with responsibility for industry; he shares with the Chancellor the responsibility for pulling industry out of recession and putting the economy on the road to recovery.

Last week, there was another announcement: the unemployment figures, which show an increase of 32,000 in the number of people out of work. The level of male unemployment is higher than at any time since the 1930s, even after the many times that the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues have manipulated and massaged the unemployment figures.

There can be no higher aim of economic policy than reducing unemployment and getting Britain back to work, yet, in the same week, the President of the Board of Trade added another 30,000 to the unemployment total. For the men who live close to each other in the small communities that were shattered by last week's blow, the offer of retraining is an insult unless someone tells them where the jobs are for which they are to be retrained.

It was not just the miners who lost their jobs because of the right hon. Gentleman's statement. They are only the first wave. There are the 5,000 staff at the coal power stations who also will not work if the mines cease to produce the coal to burn. There are the 10,000 men who work the freight trains and lorries who also will not work if there is no coal to transport. There are people with jobs in the factories that supply the mines, 20,000 of whom are likely not to work if there are no mines to supply.

That will bring redundancies to places far from the coalfields—to Tewkesbury, where they make the pit chocks; to Basingstoke, where they make the cable belts; to Pudsey, where they make the underground motors; to Worcester, where they make the mining chains; to Chippenham, where they make the electronic controls. These redundancies will reach every part of Britain including the Tory part. The real casualty list of last Tuesday does not number 30,000; the total number of jobs destroyed by that statement is more than 100,000. The country was looking for a decision that would expand the economy, not tear another great hole in the demand in the economy.

We must therefore ask the President whether he will now admit that he got this part of his decision wrong and that the damage to the economy is a powerful argument for reviewing his decision.

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar): What message will the hon. Gentleman give to the Yorkshire miners who will lose their jobs because Labour-controlled Leeds city council has decided to use imported Colombian coal?

Mr. Cook: The right hon. Gentleman has just joined us in this House—[HON. MEMBERS: "A promotion."] I have to confess that I have flattered the hon. Gentleman, in that not even his Front-Bench colleagues love him enough to make him a right hon. Member. I understand, however, that he knows something about local authority law. It is therefore disingenuous of him to come to the House and protest about the consequences of the law on competitive tendering which the Conservative Government passed and which removed freedom of action from local authorities.

To return to the present troubles, the President of the Board of Trade is fond of reminding the world of his title —that he is indeed President of the Board of Trade. Our economy faces another challenge on another front as well. We have a trade gap with the rest of the world which is mounting at the rate of £1 million an hour. That is a major challenge to our economy. If the right hon. Gentleman closes these pits, in the short run Britain will survive only by increasing its imports and in the long run Britain's industry will continue in production only if it imports gas to run the power stations that will replace the coal power stations.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No.

On Monday, the right hon. Gentleman told us that North sea gas will last for 50 years. His own Department does not believe him. It has published a thick assessment of the reserves of North sea gas which shows that proven gas reserves will last for 10 years. The undiscovered possible reserves may last for 50 years, but, as the Department says, those are the reserves to which least certainty can be attached. They may exist, but they will certainly not come in at the price of gas from the North sea today, as we move into the deeper water.

There is another reason why we know that the Department does not believe the right hon. Gentleman. Last month it published energy paper 59, which contains the Department's scenario for the year 2020, well within the right hon. Gentleman's 50 years. It makes it plain that, in the year 2020, Britain will be dependent on importing its gas from Siberia, Algeria and Norway. By the year 2020 Britain will be importing three quarters of its primary energy needs—this in a nation that five years ago was self-sufficient in its energy demands.

How much will that add to the trade gap? How many more export orders will our declining engineering industry

[Mr. Cook]

have to find to pay for the gas on which it will depend to run, and what other country in Europe would be daft enough to make itself dependent on imported energy when it is sitting on hundreds of years of coal reserves? Will the President now admit that he got it wrong when he endorsed a strategy to replace British coal with imported sources, and that the impact on the balance of trade is another reason for him to admit that he was wrong and to review his decision?

Mr. Philip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Can the hon. Gentleman name one occasion during the huge rounds of pit closures in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s when a Government of any colour initiated an independent review of those pit closures?

Mr. Cook: I will answer the hon. Gentleman's question when he tells me of a single compulsory redundancy under the last Labour Government. He knows perfectly well that there has not been one compulsory redundancy in the mining industry, not just under any previous Labour Government but under any previous Conservative Government either.

Mr. Oppenheim: On a point of order—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I seem to have a point of order. It had better be a point of order to me in the Chair, and not a matter for debate.

Mr. Oppenheim: Lest the hon. Gentleman wishes inadvertently to mislead the House, may I point out that miners in my constituency——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat. He is debating with me and I am not in a position to debate with him. He must wait to be called. If he is fortunate, he might catch my eye.

Mr. Cook: There is another portfolio in the President's lap. As well as our Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and our President of the Board of Trade, he is now Britain's energy Minister. Therefore, his decision must be judged on whether it adds up to a sensible energy strategy for Britain.

What is most worrying about last week's decision is the fact that it is impossible to glimpse any energy strategy behind it. I hope that, when the President addresses us, he will spare us his solitary claim to justify that energy strategy that, as he has claimed in the past seven days, gas-fired electricity is cheaper. It is not, and nobody outside the DTI believes that it is. The Select Committee on Energy, which has a Conservative majority, does not believe that it is.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): It is much cleaner.

Mr. Cook: I would take the hon. Lady's sedentary intervention more seriously if her Government were not importing orimulsion, which is the dirtiest fuel known to mankind.

The Select Committee's report in February said that electricity from present coal power stations would be generated at prices of up to 2·2p per kWh; that electricity from the new gas power stations which will replace it will start at 2·6p per kWh; that it is almost impossible to discover a single new gas power station which will generate electricity that will not be more expensive than the existing coal power stations; and that the one gas power station which has started to generate electricity is doing so at 3p per kWh, which is more expensive than almost all the coal power stations.

Last week, the chief executive of PowerGen said:

> "Our coal-fired plant is able to generate more cheaply than most of the gas-fired plant which is now threatening to displace it."

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: I shall give way on this occasion, but it must be the last.

Dr. Hampson: It happens that the Select Committee also stated:

> "if improved technology had not been available there might have been no new entrants to power generation in Britain."

It added that combined-cycle gas turbines are

> "much the cheapest form of new generation, but are economic at smaller sizes than conventional coal-fired stations."

If the hon. Gentleman reads the submissions that many of us have received from the electricity trade unions, he will find that they too agree that gas-powered stations are more economic.

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman, as my hon. Friends will have noted, has made an elision in referring to comparisons between new gas-powered stations and new coal-powered stations. The question that his right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has to answer is, why should he shut down coal-powered stations that have another 10 or 15 years of useful life, stations that have been built and paid for and are therefore producing electricity more cheaply than a new power station can possibly do?

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: I know from long experience that one might as well get the pain over with.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Gentleman is referring to power stations that have been written down and are therefore producing cheaply. A power station that my husband went round the other day—*[Laughter.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. It was not very funny.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The Opposition evidently do not wish the be informed. The power station has been written down to £195 million. Alongside it, a cleaner plant is being constructed at a cost of £220 million. The surrounding landscape will be devastated, because it is necessary to extract the limestone. Production now is cheap, but if we take into consideration the cost of the cleaner plant—as I have said, it will be £220 million—production will be jolly expensive.

Mr. Cook: First, I bow to the authority and expertise that is the basis of the hon. Lady's intervention. Secondly, I refer her to the Select Committee. As well as taking into account comparisons between new gas-powered stations and existing coal-powered stations, it considered price comparisons once existing coal-powered stations had been desulphurised. The figures showed—even after allowance had been made for that cost—that existing coal-powered stations were still producing electricity at a lower price than new gas-powered stations.

If the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) is serious about wishing coal-powered stations to be fitted with clean technology, she must ask those who occupy the Government Front Bench why, even now, only two coal-powered stations are being retrofitted, when every coal-powered station throughout Germany has been fitted with clean technology. Indeed, Germany has done so time and again by using technology developed in Britain that is not being applied here.

The two chief executives of both Britain's generating industries have gone on record as saying that electricity from their coal-powered stations is cheaper than the electricity that will be generated by the new gas-powered stations. I must tell the President of the Board of Trade that the statements of those two chief executives carry more credence than his promises of the flat opposite.

I remind the right hon. Gentleman of his case. Last week, his case was that his decision would produce cheaper electricity, which would support industry and create jobs in industry. If the chief executives of our two major generating companies are right—that the decision will result in dearer electricity—by his own logic he is imposing a penalty on industry and destroying jobs in industry.

Over the past eight days, however, I have noted another interesting shift in the right hon. Gentleman's presentation of the economic case. When he discovered that he could not demonstrate that electricity from gas would be cheaper, he shifted his ground to inventing a subsidy. By last weekend, he was quoting a subsidy to the coal mines of £100 million a month. That has turned out to be a complete mystery to British Coal, which was unaware that it was receiving £100 million a month. It turned out to be a complete mystery to the right hon. Gentleman's officials at the Department, who were unaware that they were paying £100 million a month.

In yesterday's edition of *The Daily Telegraph*, one of those officials was quoted as saying that the President of the Board of Trade had in mind "a theoretical subsidy". I must say to the President of the Board of Trade that the job losses are not theoretical; the hardship to the families and the destruction of coal mining communities is not theoretical. In the months of his review, the right hon. Gentleman will have to find a harder financial case for closing those pits than a theoretical subsidy that nobody is paying them.

The Secretary of State then fell back on another position when he discovered that he could not justify the subsidy. He took refuge in the sweeping assertion that, because the electricity supply industry wants to produce electricity from gas, it therefore must be cheaper. That is the way markets work, he tells us. They always give the consumer the best deal. They are never distorted by the commercial interests of the company selling the product, are they?

The first thing that the President of the Board of Trade should note is that there is no market in electricity consumption. The consumer does not have a choice. The consumer does not wander to the wall and wonder, before he turns on the switch, "Will I go to LEB or NORWEB tonight? Who is offering the best spot price?" What the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues have created are private monopolies in which the consumer has no alternative.

The second point that the President of the Board of Trade must take on board is that the regional electricity companies have shares in most of the gas power stations being built. It does not matter to them if they pay more, because they cream off the profits as owners of those power stations. The only reason they are doing that is that they see it as a way of undercutting PowerGen and National Power. What will we be left with?

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): What about the regulator?

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman has asked about an official appointed by his own Government—an official chosen by his Government after, we are told, an earnest process of head hunting. And lo, that earnest process of head hunting came up with the choice of the man who had advised them on the privatisation of the electricity industry—a man who is plainly under judicial review at the present time for being in default of his powers under the Electricity Act 1989.

To sum up, we are now left with an energy strategy that makes no sense to the consumer because it results in higher prices, no sense to the economy because it results in higher unemployment and deeper recession, and no sense to national security because it writes off access to our coal reserves. It does make commercial sense to those electricity companies. Is the right hon. Gentleman really going to let Britain's energy strategy be decided by what is in the commercial interests of those electricity companies, even if it is against the national interest?

It is no good the President of the Board of Trade spreading his hands in innocence and saying that all the gas stations were the decision of the electricity industry and not his decision. Every one of the gas-fired generating stations coming on stream was given a licence to do so by Ministers. As late as August, the President of the Board of Trade himself approved two further licences—that at a time when, as the right hon. Gentleman would have us believe, he was agonising over the number of pits that he would have to close. If the right hon. Gentleman really was agonising about the effect on the coalfields, why did he approve two more licences for two more stations that will take out two more pits?

On Monday, the President of the Board of Trade said that the electricity companies would not sign a coal contract, even though he had spoken to them nicely. He may even have spoken to them rudely, but he said that they would not sign up, and asked what he could do.

The remedy is in the right hon. Gentleman's own hands. Condition V of the licence makes it explicit that the electricity supply industry must buy electricity from the cheapest source. It is not doing so, but is closing pits to buy from a more expensive source—and the right hon. Gentleman should not let it get away with that. The President of the Board of Trade should no more let the electricity supply industry break the law in its purchasing than he should have connived with British Coal in breaking the law over its redundancy package.

The pits that are being abandoned contain some of the richest coalfields in Europe—seams that are about to be flooded. No wonder the rest of Europe thinks that we have gone mad. The President of the Board of Trade says that he must not let his heart rule his head. I will not quarrel

[Mr. Cook]

with that—I do not want the right hon. Gentleman's heart to rule his head—but I ask him to use his head in providing an energy strategy that is in Britain's interests.

I agree with the right hon. Gentleman, however, that the plight of Britain's mining communities has touched the heart of the nation, which has been moved by reaction to the statement that the right hon. Gentleman is destroying not just jobs but the virtues of close-knit, loyal communities based on a work force that understands that solidarity is important not just to the output of the shift but to the lives and safety of its members.

Another characteristic of mining communities is the courage that they have shown in mining coal from the earth, and in rescuing workmates trapped under that earth. But there is another kind of courage than physical courage—the courage to admit that one was wrong. It does not carry the same risks of danger, but it demands some humility.

The President of the Board of Trade owes it to miners to show that courage and humility. He should admit that he got it wrong and promise a real review of energy strategy, that no pit will cease production until it has been proved that the nation does not need its coal, and that he will intervene to challenge the electricity industry's short-sighted priorities.

If the right hon. Gentleman will do those things, I will applaud his courage. If he will not, I warn him that we will harry him at every turn. We will press the miners' case before breakfast, before lunch, and before dinner—and we will get up and do that again the next day. We will mobilise the public anger that the President of the Board of Trade has aroused until he admits that he was wrong, agrees that the British economy needs the British coal industry, and removes the axe that he has poised over 31 pits.

4.18 pm

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to insert instead thereof:

> "recognises the difficult economic judgments the Government had to make in accepting British Coal's proposals to close 31 collieries; endorses the Government's conclusion that British Coal should introduce a moratorium on the closure of 21 of these pits unless the workforce agree otherwise; welcomes the speedy action of the Government in introducing special assistance measures for coal mining areas; and notes that the moratorium will enable the Government to take views and evidence on the future of the pits in question and to consider these in the context of the Government's energy policy, including the consequences of that policy for British Coal and the employment prospects for the industry, and allow the Trade and Industry Select Committee to consider the issues as it thinks fit, and the House to debate the issues that will be presented to it in the New Year before decisions are reached about future closures.".

I think that the whole House will have listened to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) rehearsing broadly the same approach to nationalised industry that caused such devastation to so many industries under the Labour regimes. Regardless of the advice of management, difficult decisions were put off, costs were subsidised and change was prevented, at considerable cost to the rest of our economy, and cost to the consumer as a consequence.

Everyone will have realised that, in setting out his arguments today, the hon. Gentleman gave no concept of the cost of the implications behind his words. He gave no indication of how he would carry his policies through, or of the consequences for the industry itself and its customers; he gave no indication of the costs, or of the competitiveness of the industries that depend on the electricity generating industry.

On Monday, I made a statement to the House in which I acknowledged the existence of widespread concern at the speed of the proposed rundown of the coal industry under the previously agreed proposals. Consequently, I announced that British Coal would be allowed to proceed with the closure of only 10 clearly uneconomic pits, after the statutory consultation period had been completed. I also announced that the remaining 21 pits originally identified for closure would be the subject of a moratorium until early in the new year, and I confirmed that there would be no compulsory redundancies during that period, although voluntary redundancies would still be allowed to proceed under the terms announced by British Coal last week.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heseltine: I certainly intend to give way during my speech, but it is important for me to set out the answers to important questions for the benefit of the House. I hope that I shall be able to answer a great number of the questions raised by right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House, and it may be helpful if I am able to do that in an orderly way so that the comprehensive nature of what I intend to say is available to the House before we discuss its implications.

Finally, I announced a substantial and very wide-ranging package of new measures to assist the coalfield communities as and when they suffer job losses, or in anticipation of such losses.

The consequences of the introduction of the moratorium will be as follows. First, it will enable negotiations to continue between British Coal and the electricity generators on new coal contracts. Secondly, it will enable a widespread process of consultation to take place with all the principal providers and consumers of energy, the trade unions and other interested parties. That process of consultation will allow us to examine in detail whether the case for further closures has been made, and whether ways and means can be found to increase the use of coal and, as far as possible, to lessen the impact of any closures.

Self-evidently, those who wish to make representations or submit evidence to us are full masters of any decision about whether that should be published. I neither seek nor have the powers to prevent whatever publication they choose. I shall commission my own inquiries. I intend—with one exception to which I shall refer immediately—to make public the findings of such inquiries.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way.

Mr. Heseltine: No.

Madam Speaker: Order. The President of the Board of Trade has made it clear that he will give way later.

Mr. Heseltine: The exclusion that I must make is that I shall not be able to publish information with which I am provided in confidence and which is commercially sensitive. Unless I give that assurance, it is inevitable that private sector companies could well withhold relevant facts and figures from my inquiry. I assure the House——

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I appear to have a point of order. I hope that it is a point of order for me to deal with and not a matter for debate.

Mr. Hood: It is a point of order for you directly, Madam Speaker. Is the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister in order if we are now told by the President of the Board of Trade that information will be withheld from the Select Committee which is to hold the inquiry?

Madam Speaker: I must inform the hon. Member and the House that the amendment would not have been printed were it not perfectly in order.

Mr. Hood: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is it further to the original point of order?

Mr. Hood: Yes, it is, Madam Speaker. The President of the Board of Trade has said that some of the information presented to him will be kept from the Select Committee.

Mr. Heseltine *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hood: He has. Will he now clarify that statement, and if he cannot do so——

Madam Speaker: Order. If the House were to allow the Minister to proceed, we should know exactly what he was talking about.

Mr. Heseltine: Let me make it absolutely clear that I have no powers to constrain a Select Committee in any way. It may make any inquiries of any parties. It has very powerful weapons at its disposal to compel attendance and to secure what information it requires.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Dr. Reid: Will the Minister give way on that point?

Mr. Heseltine: No.

Madam Speaker: Order. I understand the anxiety of hon. Members, but the Minister has barely got a word out of his mouth.

Mr. Heseltine: I think that the House appreciates that I have no power to constrain the proceedings of a Select Committee, and I would not be involved in that process.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Heseltine: I shall give way to my hon. Friend.

Several hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Cash: My right hon. Friend referred to the Select Committee inquiry. His own inquiry will deal with questions that would exclude the 10 pits that are to be closed. Therefore, I ask him, his having considered the letter that I wrote to him this morning, to be good enough to give me an indication of whether he would take the Trentham pit out of the 10 pits that have been listed, in the light of the evidence that I have given to him in that letter.

Mr. Heseltine: I want to deal seriously with the point made by my hon. Friend, although I should have come to a part of the speech where it would have been easier to do so. However, my hon. Friend has put the question to me. He gave me notice yesterday lunchtime of specific information that he had available about Trentham. I received that information around lunchtime today. I have, of course, made as early an inquiry as I can from the Coal Board in what are obviously very limited circumstances. I cannot tell my hon. Friend that I can withdraw the Trentham pit from the list of 10, in the light of the reply that I will be sending him and the information that the Coal Board has made available to me, but I think that I am able to help my hon. Friend, in that—and I shall say this a little later in my speech—when a colliery is going through the consultative process it is the responsibility of the Coal Board not to prejudice the outcome of that consultative procedure. By that, as I understand it, it is the Coal Board's responsibility not to do anything that would preclude the continuation of that pit, should the consultation produce evidence so to justify. I hope that my hon. Friend will understand that that is as full an answer as I can give in the circumstances and in the time.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: I shall give way to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn).

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): May I ask the Secretary of State to explain one point arising from his last answer? Is he saying that if evidence in the review is brought to bear that could affect the fate of the 10 pits that he has sentenced already, that, too, would change the view on the 10? It is a factual question. It is very difficult to understand the argument. Is he saying that the 10 pits could be reprieved in the review, when they have already been closed under a decision taken without proper consultation?

Mr. Heseltine: The right hon. Gentleman has raised the generalisation that flows from what I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). The statutory consultative process is now beginning in respect of the 10 pits. It must be a genuine consultation, and it is the responsibility of the Coal Board so to manage those pits during that consultative process that if it is persuaded that there is a case to continue the pits it will not have prejudiced that position during the consultative process.

Mr. Benn: If it is true that that is open to British Coal in the light of the consultation, which the right hon. Gentleman says is now to be resumed, why was the decision announced on Monday that, whatever happened, the pits would close? The Secretary of State has prejudged the consultative process, which he has now used to try to win support from his own Back Benchers. What is the position of the 10 pits? Are they able to be saved, and if so why did the right hon. Gentleman say that they would all have to close?

Mr. Heseltine: As the right hon. Gentleman and the whole House know, British Coal has advised me that these pits are uneconomic. *[Interruption.]* It is no use the Labour party arguing against a consultative procedure that it followed when it closed pits. British Coal is

[Mr. Heseltine]

proceeding along that path, and I have made it absolutely clear that it must fulfil that statutory obligation. That is the position.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): My right hon. Friend will be aware of my question, because I have discussed the matter with him. There is much confusion about this point. It is not understood exactly what has been said. Does he mean that there will be care and maintenance in those 10 pits for the whole of the consultative period, because in the High Court yesterday Charles Falconer QC, on behalf of British Coal, said:

> "But we give an assurance that what we do will not prejudice the outcome of the consultations".

Does that mean full care and maintenance, because there is much confusion about whether it does?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend, who has taken a vast and proper interest in these matters, is asking me to reaffirm the very point that I made to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford and the right hon. Member for Chesterfield. The Coal Board is compelled by the procedures to maintain the option of continuing with the pit. It must indulge in the appropriate care and maintenance to keep that option open. I do not believe that I could have said it more clearly.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: I must get on.

Early in the new year, I shall publish a White Paper setting out the results of my inquiries set in the context of the Government's energy policy and making clear the consequences of this for British Coal, the implications for individual pits and the employment prospects for the industry.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): I am most sorry to interrupt my right hon. Friend as he is moving on, but I still believe that the issue of the 10 pits is of paramount importance to many Conservative Members.

If those pits are left on a care and maintenance basis, and if there is consultation, does that mean that at the end of the consultation period they can continue open, and continue to produce coal, if the consultations and the Coal Board's decision suggest that that should happen? If so, how are the 10 pits different from the other 21? Why are they not all subject to the moratorium?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend has asked the question to which I have already, in part, given the answer. The distinction, for which the House is fully entitled to ask, is that those 10 pits are actually losing money now—*[Interruption.]* They are losing money now, at the prices that prevail now—and British Coal knows that from next April it will not obtain those prices. That is why those 10 pits will be subject to the procedures that will make it possible to close them. *[Interruption.]* I confirm to my hon. Friend——

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. There is another point of order.

Mr. Robert Hughes: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. It would help the House considerably, and it would probably help you too, if the President of the Board of Trade would use the microphone and address the Chair, instead of turning his back on the House and addressing his Back Benchers.

Madam Speaker: That is a helpful point of order for me, because I cannot hear the President of the Board of Trade at all.

Mr. Heseltine: I am finding it difficult to hear myself, Madam Speaker, so I appreciate your difficulties.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: May I reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), and reiterate what I have said? The statutory procedures for closure must not prejudice the outcome of those procedures, but the advice of the Coal Board is that those pits are now losing money, and therefore the board's advice to me is that they should proceed to closure. There is no case that I can see for waiting until the end of the moratorium in order to begin the consultative procedures; the advice from the management of those pits is clear—

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members should not persist. The Minister is making it clear to me that he is not giving way at the moment—*[Interruption.]* Order. I am sure that the Minister will make it clear when he wants to give way, and I ask hon. Members to let us proceed with the debate until then. I want to hear more Members speak. I want to hear not only the Front Benchers but the Back Benchers, too.

Mr. Heseltine: Early in the new year I shall publish a White Paper setting out the results of my inquiries in the context of the Government's energy policy, and making clear the consequences of that policy for British Coal, the implications for individual pits and the employment prospects for the industry. Before then the Select Committee on Trade and Industry will have a full opportunity to consider all those issues as it thinks fit. Members of the House will also have an opportunity to debate the issues fully. I shall present the conclusions and future decisions to the House.

I shall now set out in detail how I intend to proceed with the review. I say at once that I have——

Dr. Reid: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am sorry to interrupt now, but I have been trying to intervene and refer to the question asked by—*[Interruption.]* I have been trying to raise a point of order, subsequent to that raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood)—a point of order about the resolution itself. The question is whether the resolution is in order—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry, the question is whether the Government's amendment is in order. It would be in order only if it could be shown that the information available to the review would be equal to that available to the separate inquiry that has just been announced.

If the amendment was accepted as being in order prior to the knowledge that there were to be two reviews, one by the President of the Board of Trade and another by the Select Committee, and that the information available to the President of the Board of Trade under commercial confidentiality could be used by him to overrule the Select Committee, surely it cannot be in order now, because that information undermines the basis of the amendment. That is what the President of the Board of Trade is trying to present to the House. He will overrule it on the basis of information that is not available to the Committee—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has been rising to intervene on the President of the Board of Trade by saying that he wanted to refer to the White Paper. He now raises with me a point of order which has already been raised. The amendment would not be acceptable and it would not have been selected by me unless it was perfectly in order. I have already dealt with that matter.

Mr. Heseltine: I want now to set out in detail how I intend to proceed with the review. I must say at once that I have listened most carefully to the many points that have been put to me, particularly by my right hon. and hon. Friends. I believe that I will be able to address their concerns. I intend to look separately at every one of the 21 pits in question and decide whether the case for closure has been fully made.

I have today invited Boyds, an international mining consultancy of world repute, to report to me on the viability of those pits. I also intend to appoint consultants to report on the prospects for British Coal, including any alternative markets that may exist for this product, and to comment generally on the competitiveness of British Coal as an organisation. I shall be having discussions with the generators and the 12 regional electricity companies to satisfy myself that the market prospects for coal have been correctly assessed and that no company is abusing its position in the marketplace.

I will, of course, consult the regulator charged by Parliament with this responsibility. I will report to the House on the level of coal stocks, both at the pithead and at the power stations. I will consider whether plans to run them down are sensibly phased. I will set out for the House the consequences of the switch to gas and the whole question whether gas is cheaper.

I will produce for the House the latest estimate of the likely reserves of gas and the conclusions that we draw from that. I will report to the House on the present scale of gas-generated power stations in production, in build and in the planning process. I will review the use of the consent powers as foreshadowed by my predecessor in his statement of 9 March. I will consider whether it is sensible to mothball——

Mr. Robin Cook: Before the right hon. Gentleman concludes his list, will he answer a simple question to which the House is entitled an answer? Why did he not do all those things before announcing last week's decision?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman is fully aware that we have considered all those things, but the House wants further and better details—*[Interruption.]* It is because we are persuaded that that is the right way to go that I have promised the House that I will set out these issues and that the House will have a full opportunity to consider them. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order.

Mr. Heseltine: I will be considering whether it is sensible to mothball some of the 21 pits which were due to close. I will explore once again the opportunities for the private sector in the production of coal. Finally, I will report on the existing and anticipated level of imports and the wider economic implications of this.

Throughout that process, I will be pleased to receive the views of all interested parties, both inside and outside this House. Let me also promise the House this: the consultation process will be aimed at considering all views without restriction. It will have no pre-ordained outcome. The concerns of the House will be met fully in this respect. It will be a genuine review.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his most helpful and detailed clarification of the parameters and elements of this thorough review. The words used towards the end of the amendment are very important. They are

"the Government . . . allow the Trade and Industry Select Committee to consider the issues as it thinks fit".

Is it not therefore, in the light of what my right hon. Friend has just said most helpfully, the same thing as saying that he will accept the recommendations of the Select Committee?

Mr. Heseltine: The House knows that I have always tried to be as helpful as possible to Select Committees. However, I have to say that no Minister can give a blank cheque to a Select Committee.

At the end of the three-month consultation period, I will present a White Paper to the House taking into account all the arguments that have been presented and setting out our full conclusions and their implications for the coal industry within the context of our wider energy policy.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South) *rose*——

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it not a tradition and courtesy of the House that when Ministers give way—which is entirely voluntary—they should do so on a basis that recognises that there are different sides and different parts of the House?

Madam Speaker: It seems to me that the President of the Board of Trade has hardly got into his swing yet. He will probably do that later.

Mr. Cormack *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I believe that the President of the Board of Trade was about to give way to the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack).

Mr. Cormack: Those of us on the Conservative Benches, and there are many of us who have been extremely concerned over the past week, much appreciate the thoroughness of the review that my right hon. Friend has announced. It is for that reason alone that many of us will support my right hon. Friend in the Lobby this evening. If, by any chance, the review is not as thorough as he promised—although I fervently believe that it will be—we will still have the opportunity to vote against the closures.

Mr. Heseltine: I can only say that that thought had occurred to me.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): If the review is to be as far reaching as the right hon. Gentleman has said, does he accept that it could affect the profitability or otherwise of pits, including the 10 pits that the right hon. Gentleman has on his list for closure, one of which, Taff Merthyr, was said to have made a £5 million profit? Will he also give an assurance that there is absolutely no substance in the report in today's *Guardian* which suggested that seven more pits, including Tower in Wales, could be on the hit list?

Mr. Heseltine: I will come to an important part of that, but let me give a categorial assurance that I have instructed British Coal that there is to be no change in the number of pits on the closure list. It is 10 and there will be no change in that position. I hope that there will be no room for doubt about that position. I hope that that reassures the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Beith: Why did the right hon. Gentleman's list contain no reference to the obligation on the electricity industry to buy nuclear power at whatever price it is offered? Will that feature in the review, as it was mentioned in the Coal Board's statement as one of the reasons why its market has declined?

Mr. Heseltine: Of course. I am coming to that later in my speech, but, of course, in anticipation of what I am going to say——

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: Let me also say that I have instructed British Coal that development work should continue at the 21 pits covered by the moratorium for the period of the review so that there can be no question of the outcome of that review being prejudiced. I have set out as clearly as I can the comprehensive nature of the review I am to undertake. It would be wrong if I did not set the review in the context of the problems that exist.

The coal industry can sell only what the customers will buy. British Coal has said that the demand for its product from National Power and PowerGen will fall from 65 million tonnes this year to a maximum of 40 million tonnes next year, and only 30 million tonnes thereafter. It is inescapable that we have to take account of the millions of tonnes which are being produced over and above what the market will take.

I noticed that the hon. Member for Livingston, when talking about the record of the Labour party, seemed to think that it was perfectly all right for the Labour Government to reduce the number of pits and to reduce the number of miners when householders stopped buying coal, but when those who produce electricity for British industry stop buying coal, somehow or another a different set of criteria has to apply. All that one can conclude from that is that, when there were votes at stake, the Labour party was prepared to back the voter without regard to the interests of the manufacturing economy.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I make the very fair point to the right hon. Gentleman that nobody rigged the household market for coal in the way in which he and his Government have rigged the power station market for coal. I put it to him that he has invested so much in his judgment that the economic case for the closure of 31 collieries is, in his own words, absolutely unanswerable that nobody can realistically believe that he has what the Prime Minister calls an open mind about the future of collieries that he has already sentenced to death. Is he aware that in the House and elsewhere we know that he is now not working for the future; he is playing for time?

Mr. Heseltine: It was never an open mind for which the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) was famed, from what I remember, but the fact of the matter is that it reveals as clearly as anything that I can remember how little experience the right hon. Gentleman had in government. He talks about the choice and rigging the market. There was no market under a nationalised programme under a Labour Government. People turned up for beer and sandwiches, to be told what the allocation was going to be year by year, regardless of the cost to the consumer or the damage to the industrial base. It is because the Opposition hanker to go back to that that they cannot understand the language in which we are talking.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The Secretary of State has made it quite clear that he is not giving way.

Mr. Heseltine: And nothing more clearly revealed the hypocrisy behind the views of the Labour party than the behaviour of Leeds city council—*[Interruption.]* Yes, which actually cancelled its contract with British Coal in order to import coal. So can I understand from the right hon. Gentleman why it is right for a Labour-controlled city council to buy coal in a competitive market when it is wrong for the generators—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Once again, the Secretary of State has made it very plain that he is not giving way. Will the House now calm down and let him carry on with his speech?

Mr. Heseltine *rose*——

Mr. Battle: Will the Secretary of State give way, please? *[Interruption.]* On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think that I hear a point of order.

Mr. Battle: In what circumstances can I raise with the Secretary of State the fact that he is seriously misleading the House? When he was Secretary of State for the Environment he made it clear that local authorities could not know where they got their coal from.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has been in the House for quite a few years. He knows that that is not a point of order for me and he knows the avenues to go down.

Mr. Heseltine: I will tell the hon. Gentleman what opportunities he has got—get on the phone to Leeds city council and ask it. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is one of the most important debates to take place in the House for many years. There are many thousands of people outside watching the debate, so let us conduct ourselves in an orderly way and hear what the Secretary of State has to say.

Mr. Heseltine: I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson).

Dr. Hampson *rose*——

Mr. Hood: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) must take his seat. Mr. Jimmy Hood has a point of order.

Mr. Hood: My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) has asked to intervene and the President of the Board of Trade has refused to allow his intervention. May I tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman and the House know full well that it is a matter for the Secretary of State, not the Chair, whether he gives way.

Mr. Heseltine: I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West.

Dr. Hampson *rose*——

Mr. Hood: On a further point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: What is the further point of order?

Mr. Hood: The President of the Board of Trade has indicated to an hon. Member from Leeds that he wishes him to refer to a piece of paper that he wishes to be held up in front of the television cameras, and he has agreed. As I sit down he will give way to his hon. Friend and former campaign manager from Leeds. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman and the House know full well that it is a matter for the Secretary of State to decide to whom he gives way. *[Interruption.]* Order.

Ms. Walley: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The President of the Board of Trade has already indicated that he would give way to me. He has reneged on that. His hypocrisy is the same throughout the entire course of this debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for the Chair and the hon. Lady knows that full well.

Mr. Heseltine: I give way to my hon. Friend— *[Interruption.]*

Dr. Hampson: My colleague from Leeds, the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), made a statement about the situation in Leeds. I am intervening only because he raised a point of order to point out that the leader of Leeds city council—I am pointing it out to my right hon. Friend—Councillor Trickett, in the *Yorkshire Evening Post*, has apologised to the mining community of Yorkshire for the fact that the Leeds city council took a contract for Colombian coal because it was £600,000 cheaper than the equivalent contract for British coal. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Heseltine: I thought that the Labour party wanted a full and open inquiry into these matters. I thought that it wanted to reveal all the things that were going on, not just the things that suit the Labour party. *[Interruption.]*

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State—I repeat it once more—has made it very clear that he is not giving way.

Mr. Heseltine *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Battle: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must take his seat. The Secretary of State has made it clear on several occasions that he will not give way.

Mr. Heseltine: I thought that it was relevant to our debate today to read in the *Yorkshire Evening Post:*

"Leeds snubs Yorkshire pitmen to buy cheap coal mined by slave children in Colombia."

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Robin Cook: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The President of the Board of Trade has invited my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) to telephone Leeds city council. In order that the telephone exchange may be meaningful, will the President of the Board of Trade tell the House that his Government propose to release local authorities from the obligations that the Government imposed upon them? Those obligations mean that the local authorities do not know the source of the tender that they have received and leave them no freedom to take any alternative bids.

In the light of the right hon. Gentleman's invitation to my hon. Friend to blame Leeds council, will he now free that council and every other local authority to make the decisions that they want to make in the national interest rather than commercial interests?

Mr. Heseltine: There you have it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is exactly what the Labour-controlled councils want —freedom to build their empires, regardless of the cost. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is now time that the House settled down. Many thousands of miners, many of whom may lose their jobs, want to listen to the debate. They will be keen to hear what the Secretary of State has to say.

Mr. Heseltine: Back to the old monopolistic jobs for the boys at any cost.

Mr. Hood: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Heseltine: It is obvious to me and to the House that we need to consider these matters in a measured way, with the facts before us. It is obvious that the Labour party has no interest whatever in listening to the case that I intend to make, so I shall rely on my right hon. and hon. Friends——

Mr. Michael Carttiss (Great Yarmouth): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I appeal to you to ensure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is heard. As a member of the Government who wished to ensure that the coal mines were not closed, I want to hear why the

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Government believe that I should vote for them. Opposition Members have ensured that my right hon. Friend has my support tonight.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall try to answer that point of order. I have had great difficulty in hearing the Secretary of State because of noise from both sides of the House.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend has clarified the issue. The Labour party has no interest——

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you help me with a constitutional point of order? I thought that it was a matter of constitutional principle in the House that, if a policy was announced and that policy collapsed, the Minister who was personally associated with that policy made a further statement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Constitutional points of order in the House are not common.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Will my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State give me an assurance before he sits down that if, during his inquiry and review, it becomes apparent that the rules, disciplines and regulations attached to the legislation on the electricity privatisation are flawed—as several of us believe that they are—and prejudice the position of coal, he will introduce amendments to that legislation?

Mr. Heseltine: I say to my hon. Friend without reservation that there would be no point in the review if I were not prepared to consider such options. I have given the clearest possible undertaking to the House that the review will be genuine. I will listen to the representations. I will present the Government's views. The House will have an opportunity to debate the matter.

It is apparent that the Labour party is not prepared to indulge in a proper examination this afternoon. It is more intent on shouting down my argument. Labour Members are letting down the miners they have come here to represent. *[Interruption.]* Therefore, I will rely on my right hon. and hon. Friends to give me the three months that I require to set the matter in proper order. I hope that they will support me and the Government's amendment in the Lobby tonight.

5.6 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon) *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members leave the Chamber quietly please?

Mr. Bruce: I hope that the House can now debate the substance of the big hole in the Government's energy policy rather than the ritual exchanges that we have just witnessed. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members show common courtesy to the hon. Member on his feet and leave the Chamber quietly?

Mr. Bruce: The Secretary of State has had, by his own admission, an extraordinary few days. He should revise and review the speech that he made to the Conservative party conference. It seems to be U-turns before breakfast, lunch and dinner. It is interesting to note that he is now talking about a review, although there were huge omissions from what he had to say about great areas of energy policy.

I suggest to Conservative Members who have expressed their concern and opposition to the Government's performance over the past few days that any of those who believed that the problem was merely a measure of presentation should now accept that that is an unacceptable excuse for supporting the Government. The presentation was totally unacceptable. It was utterly brutal and ill thought out. It was also based on a fundamental mismanagement of energy policy that goes back many years. It is difficult to see how a Government who have persisted in mismanaging energy policy for so long are likely to come back to the House in three months with a substantially different or altered energy policy.

On several occasions in the past few days the Secretary of State talked about the market for coal as if it were an absolutely fixed, defined law outside his or anybody's control that had been submitted effectively to the market place by an invisible hand. I suggest that that shows an intellectual vacuum in the Government's thinking. To suggest that there is no alternative to his definition of the market is the last refuge of the scoundrel. Everyone knows that markets and business decisions have to be based on judgments about future developments and a number of different factors. It is a matter of opinion how the market for energy will develop. It is not a matter of simple fact, as the Secretary of State has tried to pretend in the face of overwhelming and growing national opposition.

People can be wrong, and—sad to say for Britain—the Government have been too often and too consistently wrong on energy policy. It is sad that the Secretary of State apparently has not yet recognised the strength of feeling and views outside the House among ordinary men and women who believe that the Government are fundamentally wrong in their policy.

The Secretary of State has shown little understanding of why people have been so angry during the past few days. I should have thought that many of his hon. Friends would have told him about the phone calls and letters that they have received from his supporters—Conservative party members who are utterly confused as to how the Government have got into this mess. They cannot understand how we can conquer unemployment, avert bankruptcies or pay our way in the world if we tear the heart out of the industrial base of our economy, and yet that is what the Government appear to be intent on doing.

The Secretary of State's last few remarks suggest that—at least for the benefit of tonight's vote—he has broadened his outlook. The review cannot simply consider the case for closing 31 pits. It must be a review of the roles of gas and nuclear power. I suggest to the right hon. Gentleman that he would have had more credibility if he had been prepared to put a moratorium on the development of gas-fired power stations until the outcome of the coal review had been completed. As those developments continue they will limit options for coal, which puts into question the Government's sincerity in producing alternative opinions.

The former Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy said pertinently that if the review is to be genuine and total, it should be a review of 31 pits and not of 10 and 21. The Secretary of State failed to answer that criticism with any credibility or authority.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): If the Secretary of State had given way to me earlier I would have raised this matter. The moratorium should include opencast coal, because the relationship between opencast and deep-mined coal is close. The Secretary of State is diverted for the moment—[HON. MEMBERS: "Permanently diverted."] Yes, but perhaps he could listen to this argument. There will be outrage in areas which are threatened with opencast coal mining while deep coal mines are being closed down.

Mr. Bruce: The Secretary of State's diversion is disappointing. If it is a reflection of his open mind, it is not being demonstrated with any conviction to the House—he does not even have open ears, let alone an open mind. If this is the way we are to carry on, his discourtesy does not give us any confidence that in three months time things will be any different from the way matters stood last weekend.

Coal does not face a squeeze on the market because of inevitable forces within it, but because it has been put at the end of the queue in the Government's privatisation programme, after gas and electricity. That is the reality. The hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) intervened in the Secretary of State's speech to seek assurances that the Government recognise that they have mismanaged the privatisation of electricity. Lord Parkinson was determined that electricity should not be privatised as a monopoly and so he cleverly devised a duopoly, which works in much the same way, with much the same consequences. He could not privatise nuclear power. Those Members who served on the Committee told him, hon. Members told him on Second Reading, and on Third Reading, that that would not be possible. He assured us that he knew what he was talking about and that we did not. Fortuitously for him he resigned and left his colleague Lord Wakeham to sweep up the mess and to make the embarrassing statement to the House.

The net result is that a moratorium that does not tackle the failure of the market for electricity does nothing other than prolong the agony and postpone inevitable closures, and is not likely to lead to a serious review of the case for coal. I hope that Conservative Members who expressed such strong reservations understand what they may be taken in by, and that they will not be taken in.

Can the Secretary of State tell us why it is apparently sensible to mothball coal-fired power stations, which have half their useful lives left, and yet continue to squeeze extra life out of nuclear power stations, which have long passed their original lifetimes? What is the proper justification for that, and will it be tackled in the review?

Secondly, why are coal-fired power stations which are of no interest to existing generators not offered to others who might be willing to take them over?

Mr. Heseltine: It is for the hon. Gentleman to raise those matters with me. Even if I did not want to raise them —which I shall—I would have to respond to him. He has not fully understood the comprehensive nature of what I have told the House. It is within his discretion to make representations to me or to encourage others to do so, and I will have to answer them.

Mr. Bruce: Of course, the right hon. Gentleman will say that and he will get his submissions. The question is how well is he prepared to listen and whether he will be prepared to accept a finding from outside his Department. He has said that he is conducting his own inquiry independently. One wonders to what extent he will judge his findings, as opposed to those of a more independent body such as the Select Committee.

Mr. Wigley: The hon. Gentleman mentioned the alternative possibilities for certain pits. Is he aware that it is possible that the private sector will be interested in the Betws deep drift mine in the Amman Valley in west Wales, yet it is among the 10 down for closure? Does that not demonstrate that that is a crazy way to deal with the issue, if we are to keep all the options open?

Mr. Bruce: I shall come to that, although I think that the hon. Gentleman has argued the case well enough. British Coal's priorities might not always accord with the priorities of others who can do something with a mine and make it profitable where British Coal has failed.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central) *rose*——

Mr. Bruce: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman but I have given way several times and I wish to make room for other Members to speak.

Another question which must be considered is why there is a dash for gas. I was disappointed to hear that during the past 48 hours both the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister have almost implied that if there is such a dash it must be because someone thinks that it is profitable; it must be because the market is right and therefore it must not be reassessed. All the experts recognise that the reasons for the dash for gas are nothing like as simple as that. They are complex, but the main reason is the monopolistic position of the two generators, and the desire of local electricity companies to give themselves more bargaining power with them. Because the regulator cannot prevent them from passing the cost of their mistakes on to the consumer, they will buy more expensive gas to achieve diversity and simply pass on the costs.

If a model along the lines of the American regulator had been copied, that could not have happened. No American regulator would have allowed it to happen. That should be considered in the legislation for electricity.

Consumers are being asked to pay to produce a more effective market because the Government's legislation failed to produce it. In those circumstances I do not understand why we should create 60 per cent. of excess capacity that the country does not need, at an extra cost to the consumer. It seems as if one sector's perceived short-term profit is being bought at the expense of the nation's long-term profit. That cannot be in the national interest and I urge the Government to include that in their review.

I shall suggest some avenues that the Government should pursue while the review is taking place. First, can they extend the moratorium to all 31 pits, because that is the only basis which could give credibility to the Government's sincerity when they say that it is a genuine review rather than a delayed stay of execution? I am glad that the Secretary of State acknowledged that development work will continue. Can I seek clarification on whether such work will continue at all 31 pits or only at 21? Secondly, miners are worried about how their redundancy payments will be calculated. I have been advised on the

[Mr. Bruce]

matter, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), who went down Rufford pit this morning, said that specific questions were asked of him. The miners wanted to know whether the redundancy payments would be based on the last 90 days worked, the 90 days worked up to this weekend's announcement or on an average of, for example, £300 a week? That is clearly an important point.

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for letting me intervene yet again. I wanted to cover that point in my speech but eventually decided that it was impossible to make progress. I have looked carefully at the matter and instructed British Coal that no miner must be disadvantaged by the announcements that have been made in the past few days—no miner.

Mr. Bruce: I am grateful for that helpful intervention from the Secretary of State.

It would still give greater credibility to the scale of the review if the moratorium were to extend to gas developments. There should be a requirement that the coal stations that are being taken off the market before they are fully exhausted should be offered to others. That would seriously alter the balance within the market. There should be a review of the oldest Magnox stations, as that factor will clearly affect the demand for coal.

It should be recognised that the regulator should have more power and should be required to act more speedily. Professor Littlechild's invisibility during the past few months has worried many of us. His published findings will be utterly irrelevant if they are not produced sooner rather than later. I hope that he listens to our debate and takes appropriate action. That would create more confidence in him than many of us have at present.

We are greatly concerned that any review should be genuinely independent. There should be something more than a review by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. It should be recognised that we want an assessment of the entire energy strategy, not just the future of 31 coal mines. If the Government are not prepared to consider the electricity market, they should refer the matter to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to explore and, if necessary, introduce additional legislation to correct the position.

I think that honest Members of the Government and Conservative Members will acknowledge that the privatisation of electricity is not yet a resounding success. It would give the Government more credibility were they to produce further legislation rather than pretend that something that is not working is satisfactory. Nobody believes that pretence—not even the Secretary of State. He was not responsible for the legislation—I am not sure whether he has read it. In those circumstances he would have no problem in tabling suitable amendments.

It is sad to see how depleted the Tory Benches are now; it suggests that too many of those who had shown a recognition of the seriousness of the position are now prepared to go along with the Government. If any hon. Members who are still uncertain—if there are any—decide to back the Government tonight, I believe that they will live to regret it, as will their supporters. They will realise that the Government are only delaying the agony, not tackling past mistakes. Were the Government to be defeated today it would force a much more fundamental reappraisal of their energy policy than they have yet laid before us.

The Government's survival tonight would mean that the muddle would be likely to continue, with the probable consequence of dearer electricity. It would inevitably result in closed pits, while the balance of payments would move further into the red. All the economic factors about which people are concerned would deteriorate. Even the long-term security of electricity supply would not be guaranteed.

A defeat for the Government tonight would be welcomed, even by most Tory voters. It might even do the Tory party good to be forced to reassess the fundamental mistakes that it has made. It would certainly do the country good.

5.25 pm

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): One of the most remarkable features of the Government's announcement on the prospective coal pit closures has been the deep concern and the essential rationality of the questions raised in constituents' letters. They have searched for facts and tried to come to grips with the reality of the position. That has happened to such an extent that even Arthur Scargill and his heavies have decided to lie low and try to encourage a rational debate.

Against that background, it is all the more regrettable that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State should have been subjected this afternoon to a frenzy of baying and points of order that were not remotely constitutional when trying to put forward a rational and constructive case for examining the facts calmly and factually. He was subjected to choruses of barracking, interruptions and shouts such as to belie entirely the claim that the Opposition seek a review, although that word appears on the Order Paper.

If the performance that we have witnessed from the Opposition constitutes a review, what on earth would happen if the Labour party decided to move from a review to a campaign to prevent such pit closures? My right hon. Friend would have to come to the House covered by one of the tanks that are made so successfully in Leeds. It betrays the claim of those who say that they are concerned that they have exposed my right hon. Friend to such treatment this afternoon. But it further enhances the essentially constructive and rational way in which my right hon. Friend seeks to progress.

I want him to agree with me on the prospects for a bright future for British Coal, particularly for those pits that I am proud to represent in Selby. There are seven mines, including Kellingley and Gascoigne Wood, which make up the Selby group or complex. As my right hon. Friend reminded the House last Monday, £1·3 billion worth of investment has been sunk into the Selby complex, largely by him and his predecessors in this Government. As a result, we now have a complex with 4,000 employees set to produce 12 million tonnes a year, which works out at about 3 million tonnes a year per thousand men employed in mining.

To put that in perspective, 1,000 men at Grimethorpe, one of the older pits, one of my neighbours in Yorkshire and one of the 10 set to close in my right hon. Friend's initial list, produce less than one third of the quantity produced by 1,000 men in Selby.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd) *rose*——

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth) *rose*——

Mr. Alison: I must finish my argument, but then I shall certainly give way to the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright), my neighbour in south Yorkshire.

The implications of the Selby productivity level was vividly brought out in the fifth report of the Select Committee on Energy, which showed that, compared to the recent United Kingdom national average of 5 tonnes per man shift, Selby mines regularly score 30 tonnes per man shift—six times the level of national average productivity.

Mr. Enright: British Coal has acknowledged the stupendous strides and improvements made by Grimethorpe. I deeply resent the slur cast on the miners who work there, live in my constituency and are all to be thrown out of work at Havercroft, Ryhill and Hiendley, thus leaving a desert.

I ask the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) to join me in appealing to the President of the Board of Trade to reiterate an important part of his speech. I was informed this morning that all development had already ceased in Frickley and the other 21 pits. Therefore, I was pleased to hear what the President of the Board of Trade had to say and I would be delighted to have the backing of the right hon. Member for Selby in appealing to the President to repeat——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is a very long intervention.

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman has introduced a novel intervention technique—intervening in my speech to secure a response from the Secretary of State. I do not dispute that technique's validity, and if my right hon. Friend wants to intervene to reply I will willingly give way to him.

Mr. Heseltine: I cannot resist the opportunity offered me so succinctly by both sides of the House. I can reassure my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright). I discussed this matter with the chairman of British Coal yesterday. For the avoidance of doubt, I made it absolutely clear to him that he would ensure whatever level of development was necessary so as not to prejudice the outcome of the review of the 21 pits.

Mr. Alison: The hon. Member for Hemsworth alleged that I had cast a slur on Grimethorpe: I repudiate that notion. When I say that output per thousand men in Grimethorpe is about one third of that which we score in Selby, I merely draw the attention of the House to the fact that investment went into Selby in the 1970s and 1980s, whereas Grimethorpe is nearly 100 years old. These are the essential differences that demonstrate the structure of the modern coal industry.

Two reasonable points follow from the productivity achievements of the Selby pits. First, British Coal is producing coal at about £40 a tonne. If that can be secured with a productivity average of £5 per tonne per man shift, how much more competitive could British Coal be if output were concentrated in pits such as those in Selby, at six times that level of productivity?

With the landed cost of foreign coal at about £32 a tonne, a high-productivity British coal industry could beat all comers, foreign coal included.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that, if coal continues to operate in an unfair market, then, no matter what the productivity at Selby or any colliery, if coal has no access to the base load of electricity generation, even those pits will be impaled?

Mr. Alison: I do not believe that the figures that I have quoted sustain the hon. Gentleman's point. It was said earlier that Grimethorpe's production, at £32 a tonne, could beat imports; how much better could British Coal perform with output concentrated in pits such as Selby, where productivity is infinitely better than that secured at Grimethorpe? It could beat all foreign imports easily.

This point is further elaborated by one of the most interesting observations in the fifth report by the Energy Select Committee, paragraph 104:

> "Even a 20 per cent. change in the exchange rate changes the effective price of British coal relative to imported coal by £12 to £14 per tonne".

Given high-productivity Selby coal, and given the floating exchange rate, with the pound tending to drift down, the capacity to beat imports and to erect a solid long-term platform for British Coal—providing it from modern, highly productive pits—is almost limitless.

We seem to be a little mesmerised by the 40 million tonne figure quoted as the likely residual coal burn in our power generators, even though my right hon. Friend has confirmed that coal will continue to provide by far the greatest fuel input to power generation. We should not forget that British Coal is selling more than 13 million tonnes to other customers, including 1 million tonnes in exports. If we concentrate capital investment in modern pits—my right hon. Friend's strategy—there is a magnificent prospect for British Coal now, and there is even a prospect of expanding the output and sales of British coal.

My right hon. Friend's dual strategy of contracting old inefficient pits combined with a reasonable programme of mitigation of the effects of that for those who will lose their jobs, together with continuing his constructive work of the past and pouring in huge sums of capital investment to the pits of the future, is surely the way ahead. We ask my right hon. Friend to consider the pits with a future and not to allow himself to be mesmerised by pits dating from the 19th century, many of which are approaching the end of their natural lives.

We must look forwards, not back. There is a bright future for British Coal under my right hon. Friend's dual strategy if it is pursued rationally, constructively and deliberately—and that is what he promises to pursue.

5.35 pm

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I understand why the Ministers on the Front Bench nod in agreement when the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) tells them not to be mesmerised by what is happening. I do not know what would have happened to the people who took these decisions if they had been in my constituency last Tuesday night—and now we are told that those decisions are up for review.

The President of the Board of Trade said that this action was to do with costs to electricity consumers. Perhaps he or the Minister for Energy will tell us why, given that, since the privatisation of electricity, the cost of British coal has fallen in each of three succeeding years —those costs constitute 70 per cent. of the costs of the

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generators—and the price of domestic electricity has risen by about 30 per cent. in the same time. The nation wants answers to these questions.

This House today was as silent as a graveyard compared to the reaction to the announcement last Tuesday in the mining communities that I represent. It was a Conservative who brought up the trivial issue of a Labour council buying foreign coal. Last week, 30,000 families were shattered by the announcement by the Department of Trade and Industry, and it is shameful that a Minister should attempt to trivialise the argument in such a way.

The right hon. Gentleman told his hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) that there is now some doubt about whether Trentham, which we were told yesterday is to close, will actually close. Miners in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon), working at one of the 10 pits, were refused access to their work underground there this week. So the President should stand up and tell us what is in the review and what is not. The Government amendment states that 21 pits will be included—not 21 plus Trentham. He owes it to the miners and their families in these 10 collieries to specify what will come under the review.

Mr. Heseltine: I do not want to leave the hon. Gentleman in any doubt. I had hoped that I had explained the position with total clarity, but I shall repeat it. The 10 pits moving to the closure procedure are subject to statutory procedures within which all these issues can be explored. I have given the clearest undertaking that, if a case emerges differently from how the Coal Board has put it to me, the board is responsible, during the statutory consultations, for preserving the option that the pits can be given a new lease of life. That is therefore part of the review procedure with which Labour Members will be familiar.

The review procedure for the other 21 pits I have already outlined to the House. I shall conduct it, and the Select Committee will also conduct a review. So there will be two types of review, depending on the two categories of pits. I hope that that removes uncertainty on the matter.

Mr. Barron: The right hon. Gentleman's intervention clarifies little. How can anybody say that any of the 10 pits are worth keeping open when the work force at some of the pits were sent home when the men tried to prove that the pits should remain?

On Monday, the President said that there was no market for coal because the generators, not just PowerGen and National Power but the so-called independents, had chosen to burn gas. He said that that was because gas will produce cheaper electricity, but no one agrees with him. PowerGen and National Power have admitted that, over the next few years, it will be more expensive to burn gas than to burn coal. British Gas has expressed concern about the extensive use of gas in power stations, and earlier this year the report from the Select Committee on Energy was scathing about this dash for gas.

In a statement to the press in March, the President's predecessor, Lord Wakeham, said that he was considering reining back the use of gas. He should have been considering that, because he gave permission for the construction of gas plants, whether they were needed or more expensive or would decimate the coal industry. It was only in the face of evidence from almost every section of the energy industry that he admitted that something had to be done, not by the market but by the Government. That was the Government who rigged the market in favour of nuclear power and who not only allowed but encouraged the abandonment of coal in favour of gas. Why are we now being asked to believe that the Conservative Government will be able to conduct their energy policy properly when we never had a level playing field in the past? Is it because the present policy is the same as the one that applied before the election?

I have some minutes that have never appeared of a meeting last December between Lord Wakeham's office, when the noble Lord was Secretary of State for Energy, and British Coal. His policy was described as being to reduce the United Kingdom's coal industry to less than what could be economically sustained by the market by allowing a second tranche of gas stations operating on a guaranteed base load and with long-term contracts. That is evidence of meetings between the British Coal Corporation and senior civil servants and Ministers at which they were warned about what would happen to the coal industry if that second tranche went ahead.

The Government even got round the EC directive against the use of gas in power stations, because they were giving permission for gas-fired stations to be built before the directive was abandoned. They ignored the warning that 22 million consumers would face higher electricity bills because of the sweetener deals agreed between regional electricity companies and independent gas generators. They even dismissed the threat to our balance of trade when Britain loses energy self-sufficiency and has to rely on imported gas and coal.

The President of the Board of Trade told the House on Monday that imports were a matter for generators. He said:

"It is not a matter for me."—*[Official Report*, 19 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. 228.]

It seems that his office and his position have little to do with trade and industry. If the right hon. Gentleman is not responsible for the trade of this nation, who is? His much-heralded interventionist speech took him about a week to abandon. Now that his rhetoric has been exposed to the whole nation as empty, he tries to buy off his critics by:

"giving time for a wide understanding and a slower pace in certain circumstances."—*[Official Report*, 19 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. 229.]

I am not convinced that an opportunity to look seriously at the long-term needs of this country through a moratorium on 21 of the threatened pits has to do with our long-term energy needs. It has more to do with trying to get the President off the hook that he has been on since Tuesday of last week. He said on Monday:

"My task in announcing the moratorium and promising to come back to the House is to provide for the House the evidence on which the 40 million tonnes calculation is based and, consequentially, the evidence to show why there is no greater market for the pits that face closure. That is the task that my review must undertake, . . ."—*[Official Report*, 19 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. 220.]

The right hon. Gentleman might as well not bother having any review if he chooses to use words such as that, which threaten 30,000 miners and their families.

After reciting a long list, the right hon. Gentleman said that he would appoint a company called Boyds, a mining consultancy. Last year, that company was involved in looking into the privatisation of the British coal industry. Its report has been kept secret, but the infamous Rothschilds report which appeared last year and the announcement on Tuesday of last week are directly related. We can look forward to eight coal mines by the end of this decade—fewer than the number announced.

The country needs clear and unequivocal answers to the questions posed over the past eight days. Most important, the 2,000 coal miners who work at Maltby and Kiveton Park collieries in my constituency need to know whether the review will be a face-saving exercise for the Government or whether it will determine the nation's needs for years to come.

Last week's decision should not be seen in isolation from the closures over seven years of almost 150 coal mines and the loss of more than 140,000 jobs. In the past two years, my constituency has seen three of its remaining five pits closed. As a consequence, unemployment has increased by 52 per cent. In addition to the closure of the three mines, a coke works has closed and there have already been job losses at Kiveton colliery, the closure of which was announced at the end of March. Supply industries have also suffered and there has been a knock-on effect whose impact is already being felt by local shops and services.

The travel-to-work area covering Maltby has 16·5 per cent. total unemployment. Male unemployment is 23 per cent. Among those aged 25 to 30, mining in south Yorkshire provides one in four jobs. At a stroke last week, 2,000 people in that age group in the Rotherham borough were threatened with the sack. Last month, 68 vacancies were advertised in Maltby and Dinnington job centres—a ratio of one vacancy for every 66 people registered as unemployed. Those areas already have assisted area status, the trumpet blown last week by the DTI when it made the announcement. The Government's amendment mentions the introduction of special assistance measures. They would need to take that back to the drawing board.

Last week, the Government said that they would speak to English Estates, which has a good record in providing factory space throughout Britain, but, in the past 12 months in the Rotherham borough, 30 per cent. of factory floor space has become vacant because of the current recession and the pit closures. No simple answer will be provided by people running into those factory spaces in the Rotherham borough where jobs are threatened. There are too many empty factories as it is.

Last week, we were also told about clearing pit sites and making them available for sale or development. The Rother Valley already has 655 acres of derelict land as a direct result of pit closures. The closure of Kiveton will increase that to over 760 acres.

Last week the DTI mentioned RECHAR. I do not know how many times we have heard about that in the House. We were told that RECHAR was the answer to the problems that would be caused by the job losses. The scheme was approved in principle in 1989, and eight months ago the Government announced that agreements had been reached with the European Commission to enable money to be spent in coalfield areas. When the President of the Board of Trade came to the House on Monday, only the expenditure of £782,000 of the £23 million allocated by Brussels for south Yorkshire had been agreed. Absolutely nothing is currently being done about using that to sort out our problems.

We have already seen the Government's commitment to the regeneration of coalfield communities in action. In my constituency and many neighbouring constituencies, that commitment is pathetically poor. The communities of Rother Valley reacted last week with shock and disbelief to the news that the Government were prepared to compound the already desperate problems that those people face.

Kiveton colliery was widely regarded as having only a short life, despite the fact that the low seams in the colliery are worked with great difficulty but great skill by the miners and that it has made good profits in earlier years. Yet in spite of the expectation that at some stage in the not-too-distant future the colliery was likely to close, no steps were taken to encourage inward investment in the area. Nothing has been done to alleviate the effect of the closure on a community with high and rising unemployment.

The other colliery in my constituency that will be affected by recent announcements—Maltby—is the one in which I worked before I left in 1983 to come to the House. Members of my family live in the area. It was announced last week that Maltby would be one of four collieries to be mothballed. It is just completing a £183 million investment programme, and, as the right hon. Member for Selby said, the future of British coalmining lies in a high investment of capital in mining areas. An investment programme of £183 million has opened up some of the richest coal seams in Britain. They equal anything that has been found elsewhere, including the Selby coalfield. Everybody at Maltby, from the manager to the newest recruit, was told last Tuesday that he would be sacked before the end of March 1993. Nobody at the colliery or in the community could believe that such a senseless decision had been taken.

Maltby has been a showpiece coalmine. It has been heralded as an example of the future of British mining. The national press reported last week that its work force had won the Business in the Community award for voluntary effort.

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Would it be in order for hon. Members to follow Madam Speaker's injunction and to restrict the length of their speeches even outside the 6 to 8 pm period?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sure that everyone in the Chamber is aware that many right hon. and hon. Members wish to contribute to the debate. There is no limit on the length of speeches except between 6 pm and 8 pm. In the meantime, I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will bear in mind the fact that there are many who wish to speak.

Mr. Barron: For health reasons, this is the first time that I have spoken in the Chamber since being re-elected in April. It is my intention, however, not to let last Tuesday's announcement—it will have a devastating effect on my constituency—pass without comment. At the same time, I should like soon to resume my place and let others participate in the debate.

As I was saying, Maltby colliery has been a shining example of what the future of British Coal should be. Those involved have worked throughout the community. I have received letters from business men whose companies are not directly affected by the announcement. I have received a letter from a local head teacher who is

[Mr. Barron]

concerned about the future of the children in his school, who are themselves fearful of the poverty and homelessness that is a direct result of unemployment. The chairman of the area health authority has written to highlight both the physical and psychological damage to miners and their families that will be caused by pit closures and consequent unemployment.

The opposition to the closure announcement has been unanimous. I have never known such breadth of opposition and depth of anger. Rother Valley Conservatives from Dinnington and district have sent me a copy of the letter that they wrote to the Prime Minister last week. Part of it states:

> "In view of the fact that during the last few years the nearby Maltby colliery has had a multi-million pound modernisation packet and now finds itself being 'mothballed', we are finding difficulty in arguing against the accusation that this money has been spent only with a view to privatisation."

Their meeting was unanimous in its "feeling of disgust" at what was described as the decimation of coalmines.

Political parties, Churches, schools and other representatives of the local community are joining this Saturday in Maltby to express their anger at the Government's actions towards their local pit and to every pit that is under threat. This is not a narrow, party-point-scoring exercise but the expression of entire communities throughout the country. They are saying to the Government that they, the Government, are on a course that is unacceptable to the British people.

The President of the Board of Trade keeps telling us that he has made it clear that National Power and PowerGen should consider the impact on communities of their decisions. On 9 April, those who voted Conservative did so because they thought that they were voting for a Government who would accept responsibility for the social fabric of the nation, including mining communities. They were wrong. The Government have made it clear that they do not accept the obligation placed on them by the democratic process back in April. In reality, they think that decisions should be made for commercial and business reasons and not for the government of the country. The Government have no justification for using the argument that they have produced against 30,000 miners and tens of thousands of others who will be affected by the announcements of last week. It is time that the Government considered whether they are fit to govern the nation when the people have said that they believe that they are not.

5.55 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): There is no doubt that the announcements of last week—enormous numbers of threatened pit closures and redundancies—came as an appalling shock to many. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State fairly recognised this afternoon, the suddenness of the decision indicated that the handling of the matter had been too speedy and too rushed. I think that that must be recognised. That is the starting point for the return to the more balanced approach that, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) said, has always been the aim of successive Governments in dealing with the transformation and modernisation of the coal industry.

It must be recognised, however—I believe that right hon. and hon. Members with longer memories than others will accept this—that under successive Labour and Conservative Governments since the second world war it has been the policy to create, by modernisation, a smaller but highly efficient coal industry. That process has been inevitable. That has been the aim of successive Governments, and there have been many difficulties along the way. I shall outline shortly how these difficulties seem to arise and cause such agony.

It is not true—this is what the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) seemed to suggest—that there lies ahead the wipe-out of the coal industry for power generation in the United Kingdom, the rest of Europe or the world. Coal, particularly that which is internationally traded and including highly competitive British coal from many superb pits, will continue to play a major part for decades ahead in electricity generation. It is our job to ensure that the conditions that allow that to happen are maintained and developed.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is right to go for a review. He would be even more right—I hope that he is saying this—to set in place policies and programmes to ensure that every redundancy is handled sensitively with the utmost care. The entire policy of shaking up appallingly the lives of many thousands of dedicated workers, many of whom are employed in awful underground conditions, must be handled in a way that is worthy of the tradition of the Conservative party as well as that of the Labour party. There must be humane social policies when we are all faced with appalling levels of change.

Why did everything arise so suddenly? Everyone was caught by surprise. I want to focus on the relevant institution, which has not had much of an airing so far in the debate. I refer not to the Department of Industry or British Coal but to the Treasury. I suspect that if we trace the powder trail from where the explosion took place last week, we find that it began in the Treasury. I do not have inside knowledge of how these matters suddenly came to the fore last week but I have a personal and painful experience of the same thing happening on a smaller scale about a decade ago when I was Secretary of State for Energy. I shall share with the House what happened then. It will see for itself, I suspect, that something similar happened in the recent past.

Matters begin with the Treasury getting into a public expenditure cutting mood, which heaven knows it is in now. When that happens it begins to say, "This sort of subsidisation, especially with growing stocks of coal that are not being sold, cannot continue." Pressure is put on the Secretary of State to cut cash limits and investment limits. The Secretary of State then goes to British Coal—previously it was the National Coal Board—and says, "This is your funding position. You had better start drawing up plans that will realistically fit the proposed funding." The industry produces plans and returns to the Secretary of State, who examines them. At that stage, the plans always leak. That is not the result of Government malignancy but because British Coal, which is a huge organisation—previously it was the National Coal Board at Hobart house—find it impossible to keep them secure.

At that point the whole thing turns into uproar and the Minister is left with a fizzing hand grenade in his hand. The question is whether he can run fast enough to his Cabinet colleagues before the damn thing blows up. In my case I ran very fast, but not fast enough and the thing blew up and quite hurt my hand, but I have recovered now. That is what occurs when such issues come to the fore and plans are leaked in advance before Ministers have time to complete their plans. My right hon. Friend has made it clear that what was in the pipeline was a major, sensitive and elaborate programme to handle such a gigantic transformation.

I draw two lessons from the experience that I have recounted and from the uproar of last week. First, we must prepare years ahead when it comes to the transformation of this huge industry. We must involve every Department in the social programmes and the community revitalisations. My right hon. Friend is now seeking to do that with the help of Lord Walker and others. Every village and community must be visited; every family problem must be understood.

The transformation must be undertaken on a careful, prolonged basis. That is what they did in Belgium when its huge coal mining industry was reduced to zero. That is what happened in Japan where the work force were reduced from 348,000 to 5,000, working in only five mines. To some extent, a similar programme was undertaken in France and that is what we must do. I am glad that we are hearing about those transformation plans now. I think that I can guess why we did not hear about them so clearly when the whole thing blew up a week ago.

My second conclusion, which will not be welcome to my right hon. Friends, is that the Treasury will screw up anything given the chance. In this instance it is important to examine the relationship between the handling of the coal modernisation programme, the inevitable redundancies that will occur, the deflation that we and the rest of the world are experiencing and the current state of public expenditure policy. Those things are linked and it is not entirely right just to concentrate on the narrow issue of energy policy. We must consider it in the wider context of the Government's economic policy. I understand, greatly to my delight, that that policy is now beginning to undergo an adaptation as we face the fact of worldwide deflation and recession and the prospects of rapid recovery retreating into the future.

The pressures for economies in the coal industry, which I am sure are necessary, are undoubtedly part of the programme designed to contain the growth in public expenditure. Those economies are the first taste of many similar economies in all sorts of programmes. Last night the Prime Minister said that there are many other unpopular decisions to come regarding public expenditure.

When my right hon. and hon. Friends call in general terms for cuts in public spending, that sounds terrific, but we must recognise that when cuts are made to particular programmes it becomes a sensitive and difficult issue. It is no use just running from those decisions when we are faced with something that we do not like. There is also the great danger that the public expenditure drive can become too rigid and lead to the kind of explosions and over-sudden decisions that we have seen in relation to the pit closures and the coal modernisation programme.

My right hon. Friends believe that, next year, public expenditure should be subject to a rigid, control total which cannot be broken and into which everything must fit. It is thought that if one cannot stop expenditure on unemployment benefit from going up, something else must be cut. That concept has great relevance to the coal modernisation programme and should be treated with great care. We tried that concept in 1982 and 1983 and, frankly, it did not work. Even if one puts in place a control total in boom times, one ends up cutting capital spending because one cannot cut a lot of social spending. In times of deflation it is wrong to cut public capital spending. It is wrong to pursue policies too quickly which, in times of full employment, might be more appropriate. I urge my right hon. Friends to be extremely careful about that control total as it might lead to more decisions that will lead to explosions similar to that which occurred over the coal modernisation programme.

In times of deflation, public spending should be determined by what can be prudently financed—what the markets will finance without forcing up interest rates. Right now lower interest rates and more public spending, but not just any kind, are both possible. Hon. Members who follow such things closely will know that narrow and broad money are not swelling as one would expect; they are well under control. It would be perfectly possible to reduce interest rates further as long as that was announced by the Bank of England and not seen as a politicised gesture. I know that I have bored hon. Members with my favourite hobby horse on many occasions, but until we depoliticise the announcement of our short-term interest rates we will continue to have difficulties when handling short-term rates and monetary policy. In the light of existing deflation we could now have lower interest rates.

We should not cut capital spending now. We should restore any existing cuts that may have been agreed, or proposed by Treasury Ministers a few weeks ago. We should increase capital spending. The huge City of London transport programme, for example, would provide additional employment and help, if not directly to miners, certainly to the ancillary and heavy engineering businesses.

We want to see a package for small businesses. That could all be done without any inflation risks. If hon. Members question that, they should consider countries such as Japan which has vastly increased its anti-deflation packages without any risk of inflation. Above all, we need to reform unemployment policy.

On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to know whether we are now subject to the 10-minutes rule? If so, when are you going to ring the bell on my speech?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The 10-minutes rule operates between 6 pm and 8 pm. The right hon. Gentleman commenced his speech at 5.55 pm, so he will have to finish by 6.10 pm.

Mr. Howell: I shall try to pitch my speech even shorter than that.

To cope with the challenges raised by the pit closure programme we need to restore and increase capital spending in the public sector. We need a rescue package for small businesses. All that could be done without the risk of inflation. We also need to reform unemployment policy. I am not satisfied that we spend £8·9 billion a year on unemployment benefit when we get nothing for it. Even the word is wrong—today there should be no need for anyone to be unemployed involuntarily. The idea of the scrap heap is an outdated concept that belongs to the economics of the past.

Everyone in our society should have a function and should have the dignity afforded by performing it, unless

[Mr. Howell]

they happen not to want to work. Everyone should have the opportunity to perform that function even though it may not offer a full economic wage. The transformation and the modernisation of the mining industry should proceed at the right speed and every miner and worker related to the industry should be reabsorbed into a job or function, if only after a while. That can be done and is consistent with any changes to the industry.

When interviewed last night, the Prime Minister recognised the tasks that confront us—in part they have been prompted by the suddenness of the decision on the coal industry. We must get on and cut interest rates further—it is perfectly prudent to do that providing that the Bank of England announces those cuts, not the Treasury. We must increase capital spending; we should certainly not cut it. We must also revise the unemployment strategy from head to toe so that we get far better value for the enormous expenditure that is poured out now.

Last night the Prime Minister said that he and the Government were looking for "a strategy for growth", recovery and the future. Out of the suddenness and shock of the coal industry decision we have the opportunity to outline and carry out such a strategy. Without it there will be no growth, no recovery and no future worth having.

6.8 pm

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): I participate in this debate with a heavy heart. In the past 13 years, it seems that every time I have spoken in the House it has been on an Opposition motion about closures, sackings, rundowns or the collapse of British industries. This debate is indicative of much that is wrong with Great Britain in the 1990s.

Ten days ago, seven Ministers meeting in secret agreed to slash Britain's coal industry from 50 collieries to 19 by closing 31 pits, with the loss of 30,000 mining jobs and 50,000 to 60,000 jobs in related industries. Tragically, most of those losses are in areas already suffering unacceptably high unemployment.

The closures announced last week were the most savage rationalisation ever inflicted on any sector of British industry, and come at a time of deep recession and massive unemployment. They are also a waste of Britain's most enduring energy resource. This country has the greatest coal deposits in western Europe, and most of them are to be left in the ground in collieries that will be flooded and filled with gas.

That seven-man, secret decision was not divulged to the Cabinet, Parliament or public, and the subsequent uproar when the public realised the extent of the industrial vandalism being inflicted on the country scared the wits out of a considerable number of Tory Members in marginal seats—many of whom subsequently made public statements that they could not and would not support the Government in any vote on that policy in the House. That caused the Government in turn to panic.

The Government were terrified that they might lose a critical vote, and on Monday we had the spectacle of the President of the Board of Trade coming to the House with a statement that apparently offered concessions. I submit that they were aimed more at buying off dissident Tory MPs than at meeting the country's energy requirements.

I read the right hon. Gentleman's statement to the House three times, and nowhere did he mention the word "review". Today's appalling speech by the right hon. Gentleman will cause bewilderment among the miners in my constituency who are to lose their jobs, because he never addressed any of their problems. Today, the President of the Board of Trade said that everything is to be reviewed, whereas on Monday he said that virtually nothing was to be reviewed. His main concession was that British Coal would immediately close only 10 collieries. He stated:

> "We have therefore concluded that, for the time being, British Coal should be allowed to proceed with the closure of only 10 pits, which it has told me are currently loss making and have no prospect of viability in the foreseeable future."

The case of Parkside colliery in my constituency is absolute proof of the necessity for a wholly independent review of the closure programme and of Britain's energy requirements. On Monday, I told the right hon. Gentleman that the closure of Parkside without further review was incredible. He replied:

> "The figures that British Coal has shown me for that particular colliery indicate that it is not able to make a profit even in today's circumstances. That is the real world that I have to confront."—[*Official Report*, 19 October 1992; Vol 212, c. 205, 224-225.]

The closure of 10 collieries was confirmed by the Prime Minister yesterday, when he replied to my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition:

> "So that there is no dispute or misunderstanding anywhere in the House, let me make clear the position of the 10 pits identified by my right hon. Friend, and that of the others that he mentioned in his statement. In our judgment, the 10 pits that he specifically named have no sustainable economic future".—[*Official Report*, 20 October 1992; Vol 212, c. 315.]

In the information that the Coal Board has given the Prime Minister and the President of the Board of Trade, it has at best been economical with the truth, and at worst has told them a pack of lies.

Parkside, opened in 1964, is a profitable colliery. British Coal's own figures show that in 1987-88 the colliery made a profit of £5,093,000; in 1988-89, £3,258,000; in 1989-90, £1,720,000; and in 1990-91, £5,074,000. Despite a difficult first half-year in 1991-92, Parkside still made a profit of £2,874,000.

Although the first quarter of this year also was difficult, new coal-face machinery costing £6 million has just gone on stream and is being bedded in. The miners at that colliery expect the pit to be profitable by Christmas. If Parkside closes, that £6 million machine and all the other equipment there will be left to rot in the ground. None of it will be salvaged.

Parkside is strategically placed at the junction of the M6 and the M62. It can compete with imported coal, and serves the entire north-western region with fast access. It has a guaranteed market at Fiddler's Ferry power station, which takes 80 per cent. of its coal, only eight miles away by train.

The British Coal figures for Parkside prove that it is profitable. If it merits a review, I suggest that any figures suggesting the unprofitability of all the other collieries on the closure list are also dubious. If the review is to be meaningful, all 31 collieries must be individually examined and the facts presented to the House and the country. The miners of Parkside and all my other constituents are entitled to nothing less.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This matter seriously concerns Wales, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is to wind up the debate. I hope very much that right hon. and hon. Members representing Welsh constituencies will be called.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We will have to wait and see.

6.18 pm

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): Last week's announcement of 31 pit closures certainly shook everyone in the country. There are no pits in Brent, North—at least, none has been discovered as yet—but the strength of feeling on the issue in my constituency is stronger than on any other in the past 10 years. Judging by the mailbags right hon. and hon. Members have received, whatever the closures may have done for miners—for whom I have full sympathy—they must have increased the number of postmen being employed.

The idea of putting 30,000 miners out of work in one fell swoop, some at three days' notice, and of jeopardising the jobs of 70,000 other workers has shaken the country—particularly at a time when we are moving from recession to depression, for we are almost in a depression now, and what was said by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) gave us an idea of the desperateness of the measures that are required.

In the Lancashire town where I grew up, there was only one employer—the cotton industry. I grew up during the depression of the 1930s, when unemployment, especially male unemployment, was intense: the family earner, whose wife and children looked to him for their income, could expect to be out of work for a long time. Mass unemployment is evil. It destroys the family, and it destroys the sense of community.

Now, there is a new factor. In the 1930s, people could move more easily, because houses were generally rented. They could move from the north, which was experiencing a depression, to London, which was then experiencing prosperity—it no longer is: my constituency is currently in the depths of a depression that particularly affects middle-class workers who used to be employed in the City. Now, even people in the mining villages have bought their own houses—with the Government's agreement, and backed by my own enthusiasm—and many are trapped by negative equity.

In many ways, the Union of Democratic Mineworkers enabled the Conservative Government to defeat the miners in 1984-85. It is unduly felt that the union has now been stabbed in the back for what it did.

I am glad that the Government have retracted a good deal of what was in the original statement: the future of 21 pits is being reconsidered. I only wish that that applied to all 31. That, surely, would be a generous and sensible gesture, especially in the light of this afternoon's exchange in the House between the Secretary of State and others. I also welcome the review. Any such review must be both thorough and open. It must cover two areas—the existing situation, and the country's future energy policy.

I suspect that energy pricing has been rigged against the miners, and that some pits are being closed unfairly—that there has been no free market or level playing field. That should certainly be examined. There should be an investigation of the relative cost of production, and of how the mines compare with gas and nuclear fuel which is heavily subsidised by Government. Secondly, the review must consider the long term. It is said that the country has 250 years of coal supply; we probably have only 10 or 20 years of gas. It would be suicidal to use up that gas, which represents a strategic reserve in the long term. The world is now a much more dangerous place than it was before the collapse of the communist empire in Russia. Years ago, I did not think that I would ever say that, but I have now seen what is happening in eastern Europe, north America and elsewhere. We should conserve our stocks of gas, coal and oil for the future.

Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford, I feel that any policy decision that the Government make at this time of high unemployment should take employment into account. I would welcome nil inflation, but I certainly do not want it if it would involve nil employment. Every Cabinet decision should relate to how many people it will employ. One thing that can be said of coal is that it is a labour-intensive industry. Similarly, I hope that the Government will help with the extension of the Jubilee line, which will employ 12,000 people. The first item on the Cabinet's agenda from now on should be the effect of its proposals on the employment market.

The points that I have made have also been made by my constituents. They feel that the miners have been let down. It is now up to us to make it clear that they have not been let down, and I am also glad that the Select Committee is doing its best to bring about a return of confidence. Many Conservative Members—although we may differ on economic policy—are one-nation Tories, and it strikes us as very serious to condemn to continued unemployment areas that have no employment alternative.

Although I represent a London constituency, I shall never forget what unemployment was like in the 1930s in the area were I grew up. I trust that the review, when it is published, will give the mining industry sustenance and hope for the future; and I trust that we will have a distinctive policy for energy, covering 20 to 30 years, with which all hon. Members on both sides of the House can agree.

6.25 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): One of the 10 pits is in my constituency—Betws, near Ammanford. It should not be on the list, because—as the Secretary of State and the Minister know very well—it is an anthracite pit, and anthracite is not dependent on any contracts between British Coal and the two power generators. The market relates to domestic heating, and possibly to industrial heating as well.

Even in west Wales, the demand for anthracite exceeds supply. We do not really have any problems with imports; we can just about compete on price, and we can certainly compete on quality. Betws is a modern pit. British Coal has mined anthracite there for 15 years or slightly more; at one time it employed nearly 500 people, but that is now down to 100. It is not an uneconomic pit: it is uneconomic only in the sense that British Coal—having mined it traditionally for 15 years, using the equipment that it has used in other mines to extract soft rather than hard coal—does not wish to extract any more coal from the seams that it has been mining, and probably cannot do so. That does not mean that there is not a considerable amount of coal left in those seams—in the pillars, as they are called. British Coal, however, cannot extract it, because it is locked into a certain way of mining that does not lend itself to the process.

[Mr. Denzil Davies]

Under those seams lie other seams, but British Coal has decided that it does not wish to make the investment—essential investment, perhaps—that would be required for it to start on those seams. It has decided to leave the anthracite coalfield. It still extracts anthracite by opencast mining, but it is no longer interested in the slant and drift methods.

It was announced that Betws was likely to be closed some time ago, before the list was published. Some of us decided, having talked to the magnificent leadership of the NUM—it is a magnificent leadership in the Betws colliery, and, indeed, throughout south Wales—that, if British Coal was bent on leaving the anthracite coalfield, the only alternative apart from closure was to see whether other operators were prepared to come in. After all, British Coal was to be privatised in any case. Would other operators—responsible and respectable companies—be prepared to extract the remaining coal, use the money from that extraction to boost cash flow and then decide whether it was possible to go for the other seams?

If a different mining method were used—I am not talking about pit ponies or pick and shovel; I am talking about the under system that has been developed in the United States and, to some extent, in South Africa, a technique in which British Coal was not interested—a considerable amount of coal could probably be extracted from Betws. After there had been some publicity, three separate organisations contacted me and my office a few weeks later and said that they were interested. One of them is an international mining company. It has had no previous connection with Britain, so it is not Hanson or anybody like that. The second company is owned by a business man with high technology factories in the south of England, but he has local connections. The third company is Ryan Mining, which has now made its intentions public. It has shown tremendous commitment. I pay tribute to the chairman of Ryan Mining, Mr. Hodson, for his tremendous commitment and dedication to the coal industry in south Wales.

These three companies would, I believe, be acceptable to the leadership and members of the National Union of Mineworkers. We are not talking about cowboys or fly-by-nighters coming in to flout the safety rules and everything else. That would be unacceptable. We are talking about responsible organisations that are interested in coming into the area.

I hope that British Coal decides not to close Betws. If, however, it decides to do so, the problem will be not the men, or the coal, or the shortage of bidders but British Coal. I have discovered that it is almost impossible to communicate with British Coal. Whenever one puts forward any ideas they are shot down. One cannot get through to the right people. The mining of anthracite coal in west Wales is governed from Nottingham, so one cannot get hold of anybody. Therefore, rumours are flying around.

A few weeks after the announcement of the closure, journalists rang up British Coal and were told that British Coal did not know what it wanted to do with Betws. A few weeks later, a business man rang me up and said that he wanted to go and have a look at the pit. I rang the office of the chairman of British Coal and asked him to get in touch with that gentleman. He was told by British Coal, however, that on no account was he to go near the Betws pit. He was told one cannot buy a coal mine just as though one was going into a Kwik Save supermarket. That gentleman said to me, "British Coal should really have sent a car to fetch me. It should have laid out a red carpet for me. I was actually going to put money into that pit during a slump, during a recession. I wanted to invest money in that coal mine and save possibly 60 or 70 of the 100 jobs."

Rumours are still flying around. I was told by the lodge secretary the other night that bricklayers are now going down the mine and beginning to brick things up. I do not know why they are doing that. I see that the Minister for Energy shakes his head, but perhaps his writ no longer runs that far. In his speech the President of the Board of Trade used the word "instruction". He is a bit of a lame duck President these days. I do not know how far the Minister's instructions go, but I have been told that the bricklayers are going down the pit and bricking things up.

I was also told the other day—no doubt the Secretary of State for Wales can answer this question—that British Coal has approached the Welsh Development Agency and asked it to turn the site into a business park. The last time the Welsh Development Agency took over a mining site in Wales it turned it into a Tesco supermarket.

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: No, my time is limited. I have only two minutes left to me.

I hope that the Secretary of State for Wales, who is to wind up the debate, will say that on no account will anything be done to close down Betws, to cement it up, or whatever else British Coal wants to do.

Mr. Eggar: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: Yes, I will give way to the Minister.

Mr. Eggar: I can give the right hon. Gentleman that assurance. I shall personally make sure that British Coal responds to indications of interest from the three parties he mentioned, or from any other parties. We shall not preclude that.

Mr. Davies: I am grateful to the Minister for that assurance.

We are not romantics. We believe that the anthracite coalfield of west Wales can be developed for the economic good of the area, that value can be added to it by the creation of other jobs. The anthracite coalfield can contribute to the economic well-being of the area. It has also made a tremendous contribution to the Welsh language and to the cultural life of the whole of that community. We do not intend to let that go. We shall fight to preserve it. We shall regenerate the anthracite coalfield of Wales.

6.34 pm

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): We have heard a lot recently about the importance of Select Committees in reviewing the case for pit closures. May I begin, therefore, by reading from the final report of the Select Committee on Energy, submitted in the spring of this year. The final sentence in paragraph 19 says:

> "we believe that the Energy Committee should remain in being even if the Department of Energy is abolished . . . we firmly believe that this is not the time for the House to reduce its ability to scrutinise energy matters."

How right we were then and how right we are now. In our previous report dealing with the market for coal after 1993 when these contracts expire we said:

> "if a significant portion of the UK's coal reserves were abandoned, which we hope will not happen, resulting in a major reduction of long-term energy security, the Government should understand that the country would see this not as a commercial decision, but a largely irreversible decision of historic significance to the United Kingdom."

We were right about that, too. Therefore, one wonders whether our reports were well used by the Government or whether the Select Committee on Energy wasted its time. One has to draw the conclusion that any other Select Committee that looks into the matter will be wasting its time, too, unless there is a positive pledge from the Secretary of State and the Minister for Energy that the Select Committee's report will be taken seriously.

We are told that there is no demand for coal. Yesterday, however, I chaired a conference in France, called Coal Trans, which was attended by 1,050 delegates. They talked about how they were going to trade coal on the world market. They are looking at a potential vacuum here, and there was the gleam of nice cash registers in their eyes.

We are also told that our coal stocks are too large. Of course they are. We have carried strategic stocks of coal for a long time, in case there should be strikes. We are told, too, that it is expensive to stockpile coal. We are not told whether it is the space on the ground that is expensive or whether it is the capital cost of tying up the stocks that is expensive. If it is the capital cost that is expensive, British Coal and the Government should do the same as any other business has to do: sell the coal at a price at which it can be sold, even if it is a marginal cost price, rather than try to hold out for the full price.

We know that there are no contracts for coal beyond 1993. That seems to have come as a great surprise, but we have known that for a long time. In our report on the consequences of electricity privatisation we reported in paragraph 149:

> "The new evidence we have received has made brutally apparent how drastically and rapidly Britain's coal industry will contract if present policies continue."

We also referred to the fact that contracts should be in place.

Other hon. Members have referred to the fact that the coal industry is suffering because it was privatised after the electricity supply industry. I believe that it should have been the other way round. If coal had been privatised first, there would have been safeguards for the electricity supply industry. The shame is that those same safeguards, which could have been devised then, were not devised for the coal industry.

As for contracts, as far back as 1988 we said in another Select Committee report that contracts should be put in place quickly for the benefit of the coal industry and for the benefit of all the generators. It is said that British coal is expensive. That may be so. We know that British Coal has a plan to bring down the price of British coal to the same price as world coal by 1994-95. Why, then, after 40 years of investment in the coal industry since the second world war and the spending of £17 billion since 1979 alone are we thinking of cutting out 60 per cent. of our coal industry when we are within two years of getting coal prices down to world market prices?

Since the 1984-85 strike—I do not wish to dwell upon that—new working methods have been introduced into the pits and there have been dramatic increases in productivity. One could argue that that was a year lost, and I regret that we lost that year. We could have been a year further down the road without that strike. But let us not forget that the Government were able to continue to run the country and businesses survived because of the new union in my native Nottinghamshire, the Union of Democratic Mineworkers, headed by the remarkable Roy Lynk. I spoke to him last Saturday—he was down the bottom of Silverhill and I was in the comfort of my sitting room—for a long time and about many things. I asked, "Roy, is there anything I can do to help you?" He said, "I think in many ways you have tried to help already. There is just one thing that I would like from your side of the House—a smidgen of appreciation." My constituents, all those associated with him and all miners, whether they belong to his union or the other union, want to give him more than a smidgen of appreciation.

We have heard about the dash for gas and the consequences of it, on which the Select Committee reported. In paragraph 154 of our report on the consequences of electricity privatisation, we referred to the fact that it would be wrong to allow the dash for gas to cut out British Coal to such an extent that in due course electricity prices increased, and wrong to cut out coal, which might add about 6 per cent. to the electricity bills of those who do not have a franchise tariff, compared with an increase of 11 per cent. from nuclear fuels, despite its having the fossil fuel levy to subsidise it. That should not be forgotten.

The Government have decided to shut 31 pits, with 30,000 redundancies at a cost of £1,000 million in redundancy pay. The topping cycle—the forerunner of clean-coal technology, in which we lead the world—was being developed at Grimethorpe. Last year, £10 million was required to keep that pilot plant going. The Government and the Coal Board could not find £10 million, yet they can now find £1,000 million for redundancy, and last week another £150 million was found to try to allay distress in coal mining areas. Like many others, I am tired of so-called investment in failure and redundancy. I want more investment front-end in success and opportunity, not investment back-end on redundancy and failure. The £150 million extra that was offered to miners would have built a demonstration plant for clean-coal technology. Texaco has had one in America since 1984, Germany has had one since 1985, another one has been in America since 1987 and Shell is building one on the continent that will be ready later this year.

The Government, in offering these massive unemployment redundancy terms and concessions to miners, have misread the mood of the people, who do not want to see redundancies, and have misread the characters of miners, who do not want charity money. I say to the chairmen of the regional electricity companies that the £30,000 that is paid in redundancy to miners who have spent all their lives in the industry is equivalent to one quarter of the self-awarded pay rises that those chairmen are giving themselves each year, and it is those chairmen who largely will cause the demise of the coal industry.

If the Government want my support, they must have an open, public and published review of the coal industry. They must state their energy policy, which they have failed

[Dr. Michael Clark]

to do for many a year. They must commit themselves to clean-burn technology and treat all 31 pits alike without putting 10 to one side.

I was disappointed to hear the statement in the other place yesterday that some reliance will be put on Select Committee reports. That statement was made by someone who had been presented with Select Committee report after Select Committee report when he was Secretary of State for Energy.

I cannot, as things stand, vote for the amendment unless all 31 pits are included. I do not welcome speedy action to give assistance to miners; I want speedy action to save the pits. I do not see this as being a decision in the context of the Government's energy policy, although I might if I knew what it was. I do not think that it is adequate to say that the House will debate Select Committee reports; we have debated all the Select Committee reports, and this is where we have arrived. If things do not change, I shall vote not against my Government but for the coal industry, even if it means voting for the coal industry in that Lobby——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The rule applies to all hon. Members equally.

6.45 pm

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): I have had the pleasure today of getting a bit of exercise, which I need, by walking a few miles around London with more than 200,000 people, who within seven days have responded by coming from all parts of the land to demonstrate against the disgraceful announcement that was made last week by the President of the Board of Trade.

It was an experience that I enjoyed in my younger years, when some said that such demonstrations would never happen again. I remind the Government and the hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) where that march went today. They must be worried and must think seriously what they are doing. The Government and the President—he wanted to be Prime Minister but now he likes to be called the President—have shown their lack of energy policy, of economic policy and their lack of concern for the hundreds of thousands of people who will be affected by that decision and whose lives will be made worse be their contempt for the British mining industry.

I am not convinced that the decision was made on economic grounds. I have been here for only five years, but I have never seen any evidence that the Government or Conservative Members believe in the British coal industry. Sadly, we have seen the politics of dogma, and in last week's decision we saw the politics of vengeance. I do not make that statement lightly; I honestly believe that it was vengeance.

The former Secretary of State for Energy, Lord Parkinson, said, "Remember 1972 and 1974." What did he mean by that? He could only have meant that the Government have intended all along to get their own back on the miners, their families and their communities for the 1972 miners' strike, which few miners wanted, and the 1974 strike, which, equally, miners did not want but which was necessary to fight to maintain their living standards. The 1974 strike led to a general election. Some people like to say that the miners brought down the Government, but it was a general election that brought down the Government, not the miners.

The British people had a fair-sized delegation on the streets of London today. It was a delegation, but only a small proportion of the millions of people who were disgusted by last week's statement. The statement was bad enough, but its tenor made it far worse. They were saying to the miners, "Your jobs will be gone in two days. By the way, don't say anything. Don't you dare open your mouths, or you will lose that redundancy money that we are promising you."

Some of us are old enough to remember when people were screaming at the miners to have ballots, in 1984. Yet Terry Wheatley, who used to be a British Coal manager at Thoresby colliery in Nottinghamshire, and is now an area director in the midlands, told the unions, "If you seek to hold a ballot on pit premises I shall consider that destructive action and we shall withdraw all your redundancy benefits." That struck a chord with hundreds, thousands, even millions of people in our country, because that is the way they are treated in their workplaces today. When they hear about such treatment, they feel akin to the miners, and they say no.

The Government had better listen. The British people are saying, "No; we have had enough. It is our coal industry to keep, not yours to shut down and sell off." The President of the Board of Trade's display today was appalling. We are used to the politicking in the House—we are professionals—but today I saw a man of jelly. I am being as kind as I can, but I still have to say that I do not know how that man can stand up, because he has no backbone. It is nonsense for a man to turn round, somersault and twist as he has done in a matter of 24 or 48 hours.

I walked through this House at a quarter to 11 last night, not long after the House of Lords had considered the matter and, wisely, reflected the view of the British people. I saw a lonely man walking into the Chamber with a colleague. I shall not mention the colleague's name, but he is sitting on the Government Front Bench now. They walked into the Chamber all alone, clicking their heels and looking about them. Guess where they were standing. Here, by the Opposition Front Bench. May I never move from this spot if the President of the Board of Trade and the Minister for Energy, who is now in raptures of laughter, were standing here. I thought that they were showing a little foresight, and getting used to the new side of the House towards which they are quickly heading.

We should think carefully before we make our decision tonight. Let us make no bones about it—we shall be deciding whether there will be a British coal industry. Some people will be bought off. I saw one hon. Gentleman on television this morning saying, "Oh well, 10 pits have gone, but we have a review for 21 pits." What nonsense. If anybody believes for a minute that the Government will save the 21 and close only the 10, he is kidding himself.

Far be it from me to advise Conservative Members on their political and professional futures, but they must think little of their constituents if they believe that they will be conned by such behaviour. We have a saying in Scotland, "That will sort the weak from the chaff." Conservative Members have been chaffing all this week, and we shall see who is weak and who is determined to stand by what they have been saying.

The weak will be in the Lobby with the Prime Minister and the President of the Board of Trade, but those who really have the backbone that they have been telling everybody they have will be elsewhere. To be fair to the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), he has made the same statement today, repeating that he will not necessarily vote for the Labour motion, but that he will vote for the coal industry. I take my hat off to him—and I do not do that often. He is standing by what he said seven days ago, and he is more of an honourable gentleman than those who said the same seven days ago but do not say a word now.

My time is running out, so I shall add only that what happens here tonight is important for the mining communities and for the broader community—with the hundred thousand jobs that will be lost in related industries. The mining communities will not win or lose the vote tonight. We shall not be impressed by those wishy-washy characters who go through the Lobbies to allow the Government off the hook—if that is what happens—to buy more time to save the job of the President of the Board of Trade, and in the hope of sacking 30,000 miners.

We shall come back. What happened in London today will happen again next week. There will be a massive rally on Sunday, and the campaign will go out to the British people until we save our British coal industry.

6.55 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I have more than a little sympathy with those who have opposed the closures—for two reasons. First, I represent a constituency which has suffered more than its fair share of closures over the past few decades. The second reason is the way in which the announcement was made. Not many Conservative hon. Members who have employed people in private industry would have given people only three days' notice that they were to lose their jobs, and I do not think it right for Governments or state-owned industries to act in that way either.

I also have more than a little sympathy with the complaints about the way in which some of the gas-fired power station contracts have been set up. It is never satisfactory when distributors act as producers too, and that may be a cause for complaint here. However, the regulators have the power to examine the contracts and the boards have a statutory duty to ensure that they are obtaining the lowest price. The regulator can penalise them severely if the gas contracts prove uneconomic.

However, it is often forgotten in the debate that we compete not only with British gas but with imported coal. There has been much concentration on German policy because the Germans subsidise their coal industry and their coal price is high. Many people have said that we should follow their example. Just because the Germans follow a mistaken policy it does not mean that we must do the same. Furthermore, the costs of the German policy are habitually underestimated, at £1 billion, whereas the true cost of all the direct and indirect aid more than quadruples that to £4·5 billion, because of the so-called "coal penny" —a levy on energy-consuming industries. Hon. Members who go to Germany will find that that policy is far from popular. It is highly controversial, especially in the steel industry, and is certainly not the subject of any cosy consensus.

Leaving Germany aside, we live not only in Europe but in the world economy, and we have to compete there. We currently pay £43 a tonne for British mined coal. The import price into the United Kingdom is £33, the OECD average is £26, and the price in Australia and the United States is as low as £15 to £18 a tonne.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Oppenheim: No, I am sorry but I am short of time.

In their heart of hearts, many Opposition Members know that the easier British coal seams were worked out long ago—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Anyone who goes down pits such as Bentinck, on the border of my constituency, and crawls along the narrow face will know how difficult it is to win such coal and how skilled the men are at winning it. None the less, it strikes me as a wrong economic policy to mine difficult coal regardless of the cost. Why turn what has traditionally been an asset to the British economy into a millstone around the neck of British industry by penalising it with high energy prices? Not to buy cheaper imported coal would be sheer protectionism. To put it simply, the Government would be putting the interests of one group and industry above others by placing a ban on cheap imports.

The history of coal since the war has been just that. For years, the National Coal Board had cosy guaranteed contracts with the Central Electricity Generating Board, and imports were virtually banned. As a result, consumers and industry paid over the odds for coal; taxpayers paid a huge subsidy to the Coal Board and the economy as a whole was penalised. For every job preserved in the mines, jobs were lost elsewhere. That is, and always has been, the cost of protectionism.

It did not even really help the miners. They still lost their jobs by the tens of thousands. They were paid less than they are now in real terms because, being protected from foreign competition, there was no incentive to raise productivity. As a result of that, they could not be paid as much. The British coal industry is a classic example of the failure of Government policies of intervention in industry.

Meanwhile, other countries benefited from diversity of energy resources by opting for cheaper imports of energy. Japan closed down virtually all its mines. As a result, it buys as cheaply as it can on the world markets. In the EC, France, which has a socialist Government, has long since closed down the bulk of its capacity. It now has only 20,000 miners. France buys coal at £26 a tonne and Italy pays £33 a tonne. Those are far lower prices than we pay.

It is often argued that we need domestic supplies for our energy security. However, even with the closures, 30 to 40 per cent. of our energy needs will be met by domestic coal, on top of which we have indigenous gas, oil and nuclear which will give us far greater security than most. I should have thought that simply to refuse to import energy and to use up our domestic supplies as soon as possible would guarantee our insecurity rather than our security in energy supplies.

We are, anyway, over-reliant on coal in comparison with our main competitors. Sixty-seven per cent. of Britain's electricity comes from coal. That is higher than the level in all the major EC countries. Even Germany, which is much quoted, gets only just over 50 per cent. of its electricity from coal. The figure in France is 8 per cent.

[Mr. Oppenheim]

Even the United States, the land of cheap coal, gets only 55 per cent. of its electricity from coal. We are way out of line with out international competitors.

Opposition Members argue that foreign coal is unreliable. Very little of the so-called cheap foreign coal which is habitually sneered at comes from Russia, Poland and the third world. Opposition Members say that those countries are unstable and that we cannot rely on them. However, those countries will become even more unstable unless richer countries like ours trade with them and allow them to sell to us the goods that they can best produce.

I sometimes find it extraordinary that people who call themselves socialists urge us to refuse to buy products from poorer countries. That does not sound much like the brotherhood of man. The vast bulk of our coal imports do not anyway come from the third world, from Poland, Russia, eastern Europe or Colombia. They come from the United States and Australia. They supply the overwhelming bulk of our imported coal. They are long-standing allies of ours and they are stable democracies. There is a huge and diverse competitive international energy market and if we cut ourselves off from it, we will penalise our industry and our economy as a whole.

My experience in Amber Valley has shown me at first hand the problems caused to coal communities when there are pit closures and I understand those problems. However, I must point out to Opposition Members that most of the pits in my constituency—in fact, almost all —were closed down under Labour Governments. The miners received a pittance in redundancy and even their concessionary coal was taken from them. Contrary to what the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said, the redundancies were effectively compulsory. I suggest that he should not come to my constituency and tell the thousands of miners who were made redundant under Labour that they were not made compulsorily redundant.

Amber Valley is also an example of regeneration after coal. Notwithstanding the effects of the recession, it has built up a very successful, diverse industrial base since the coal mines were closed and I willingly pay tribute to councils of all parties that contributed to that regeneration.

So despite the perversity of the situation in which I find myself in supporting an avowedly interventionist Minister who, for once, is doing the right thing by the market, which I support, as I believe in open markets and a liberal open economy; and despite my deep concern about the way in which the whole issue has been handled, I will oppose the Opposition motion.

7.5 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): When the collieries were closed in Amber Valley, there was full employment in this country—not like the situation facing the miners at Silverhill today. I want to speak for the miners at that colliery which, in case the constant references by Conservative Members leave anyone in doubt, is in my constituency. I want to speak for the staff at the colliery and for the families who depend for their livelihoods on the colliery continuing to produce coal.

Those miners want to work and they proved that on Monday morning when, despite the closure announcement, they turned up ready to work. However, they were sent home. When the President of the Board of Trade was still in the Chamber, I wanted to ask him how any of the 10 pits will be able to prove that they are economic during the next 90 days when the miners are not allowed to work. If the Minister who is on the Front Bench answers any of the questions, he must address that issue. If he does not, the exercise in relation to those 10 collieries is cynical and cosmetic.

The debate is about whether the miners at Silverhill will ever work again in the colliery which they have worked to make economically competitive and whether they and their families will be condemned to unemployment and poverty by a callous, incompetent and short-sighted Government.

In effect, Silverhill has been condemned to closure by the President of the Board of Trade and the Prime Minister. On Monday, the President of the Board of Trade said that Silverhill was "currently loss making" and that it had

"no prospect of viability in the foreseeable future."—[*Official Report*, 19 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. 205.]

The Prime Minister repeated the same charge yesterday and stated categorically:

> "In our judgment, the 10 pits . . . have no sustainable economic future."—[*Official Report*, 20 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. 315.]

On what did those two mining and energy experts base their judgments? Where is the evidence that leads them to that conclusion? It can be nothing in the recent history of Silverhill. The colliery has made a consistent profit in each of the past four financial years. In 1988-89 it made a profit of £3·6 million. In 1989-90 the profit was £620,000. In 1990-91 it was £1·1 million and in the last complete financial year—1991-92—it was £1·94 million.

The figures for 1991-92 are perhaps the most remarkable. Not only did the miners produce their biggest-ever output of 932,000 tonnes, but they did so in the face of considerable geological difficulties. By August 1991, Silverhill colliery was as much as £3 million in the red as the men struggled to cope with those geological difficulties. By sheer hard work, by April 1992, they turned a deficit of £3 million into a profit of £2 million. In seven months, they were able to add £5 million in profit in that colliery.

The miners in Silverhill are realistic, as are miners everywhere. They know that they work in conditions which are less easy and less attractive than some of the so-called super pits in which some miners can almost walk along a seam. Silverhill miners are forced to crawl along seams less than 3 ft high. That makes their achievements of last year all the more remarkable.

Since 1988, with a work force of between 750 and 800 men, the colliery has produced more than 850,000 tonnes of coal a year. Last year was a record. Therefore, how can the Prime Minister and the President of the Board of Trade tell us that those miners have no sustainable economic future?

The miners know the difficulties that they have to contend with. They know because they work in those difficulties every day. They know that coal does not jump on to the conveyor belt. They know that they have to struggle to mine that coal. They know that they can go for weeks without producing any useful coal, only to clear the way for substantial gains later. That is exactly what happened at Silverhill last year and that is exactly what can happen again if only the miners are allowed to work.

How can the Government conclude that there is no future for Silverhill and the other nine pits of the 10 when British Coal last year drew up a five-year plan for Silverhill? That plan looks forward from 1992 to 1997; it is based on the production of coal at economic prices over that five-year period. That plan picks out the best bits of the colliery and the best bits of the remaining reserves. On the basis of the record of that colliery, when it published that five-year plan, British Coal had every expectation that the colliery would survive and would develop along economic lines.

It is not only a five-year plan that British Coal was prepared to put forward on behalf of Silverhill colliery. There is also a new face ready and available for work. British Coal has spent £4 million on preparing that face and it could be mined today if only British Coal and the Government allowed the miners at Silverhill to take advantage of that opportunity.

Those are the economic facts of Silverhill. How can they be reconciled with the Government's present position? According to the Government last week, Silverhill and 30 other collieries were uneconomic. Today, Silverhill is not to benefit from the review, from a moratorium or from any other public consideration of its position. Its miners are not even allowed to work. Where was the Government's credibility when they said on Sunday that there was no turning back? How is it that the Government say, "Oh yes, for the 21 collieries there is a need for a review"? How can they tell us that for the other 10 that review cannot be available?

We need to consider those 10 collieries in the context of the review that is available for the other 21. If that does not happen, it will be difficult to give much credibility to the review that the Government are proposing in relation to the 21. How can those 10 collieries be condemned by the process that originally condemned all 31 without the 10 now being considered? Conservative Members who doubted over the weekend how they would vote tonight have to square their consciences in relation to the 10 collieries. How can they say that they were doubtful about supporting the Government over the weekend when they cannot still support those 10 collieries tonight?

The miners of Silverhill want a real review. They want the opportunity of putting their case economically in the way that they do best—by cutting coal. That is what they must be allowed to do, even in the 90-day period. They must be given the opportunity to work. They must be given the opportunity to compete on a level playing field with the other energy resources that are available.

7.12 pm

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): I must confess that the original statement by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade embarrassed me, but I welcome the review. Traditionally, the United Kingdom has had a four-fuel economy for electricity production, and a balance must be maintained among the fuels.

In Germany, by the end of the century, about 30,000 jobs will go. Their production will abate considerably from 72 million tonnes. Bearing that in mind, we must consider whether we will accept the German idea and have what is known as a strategic element for coal in the economy. The Government would then have to decide what that figure should be.

I am in favour of an expanding coal industry, as are the Government. They now have the largest share of electricity production, and that will continue to be so, but two other matters arise. One relates to imports and was dealt with by my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim). Imported coal has a 1 per cent. sulphur content, whereas local coal has a 1·5 per cent. sulphur content. That is why power-producing companies are turning to gas. They are turning to imported coal because of the lower sulphur content. *[Interruption.]* I hope that Opposition Members will listen to what I have to say.

Coal has many great problems. We have the problems of nitrous oxides, sulphur dioxide and carbon dioxide, all of which are inherent in fossilised fuels. Unless we confront those issues, and if we are eventually to face a European carbon tax, the industry will be in great difficulty. Further, there are some important issues regarding the disposal of fly ash and, if limestone is used, of calcium sulphate, which has no market. Also, there is subsidence and the fact that working in mines is still a dangerous occupation. All those matters will have to be dealt with in the review.

Hon. Members will appreciate that a coal mine producing coal for a power station has a maximum efficiency of 37 to 38 per cent. A gas turbine has an efficiency of 52 per cent. That is why people are seriously considering gas turbines.

I hope that the Minister realises that, in respect of nuclear power, which is one element of United Kingdom fuel production, a 1994 review later will be totally inadequate, and that we must bring it forward and let the industry know precisely what is to happen. Hon. Members will recognise that it would be wrong to destroy one industry, the coal industry, and at the same time destroy another by getting rid of our nuclear power industry. Those stations have been here for many years, and they are here to stay.

The Minister might like to consider the nuclear levy that is to terminate in about 1998. As the company made a substantial profit last year, that could be considered in the review. That might be a helpful suggestion.

I do not know why so many hon. Members fear the threat of gas. About 11,000 MW of new capacity is envisaged. However, in a free economy, much of that might not materialise. In respect of the assessment of domestic reserves in the United Kingdom, I firmly believe that between 45 trillion and 55 trillion cu ft may be available. Many of our reserves have not yet been discovered, but, believe me, North sea reserves have consistently been underestimated.

The House should have no problems in recognising the general position of gas in Europe. In the Netherlands, 50 per cent. of electricity is produced by natural gas. In Italy, the figure is 18 per cent., and in western Germany it is 8 per cent. If we are to share and have a balance between fuels which is good for the supply industry and, in particular, for the miner, it is right not to destroy another industry which contributes to the economy.

I wish to say a few words about the cost of electricity from various sources. The price for the cheapest available low-priced gas—although it has recently increased—is between 2·5p and 2·6p per therm. Higher-priced gas works out at 2·7p to 3·1p per therm. Imported coal with flue gas desulphurisation works out at 2·6p per therm, but British coal with FGD works out at 2·93p per therm. I apologise

[Sir Trevor Skeet]

for quoting so many figures. If coal is to succeed against its competitors, it must be imported coal. That would not be helpful to British miners.

We must also look ahead. We expect to hear shortly that the European Communities (Amendment) Bill will come back to the House. If we go further towards ratifying the Maastricht treaty, possibly a carbon tax will be introduced in the United Kingdom. That could be the final death knell of the United Kingdom industry. I hope that it will not come but that we will bypass Maastricht and keep sovereignty in our country.

It may be said that, having devalued the pound by 10 per cent., we are fairly successful and the prices of gas and coal will come into equilibrium, but it would require another 10 per cent. devaluation to bring about a proper equilibrium which will benefit the coal industry.

You have enjoined us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to be brief to enable as many mining Members as possible to speak. I wish to make two further observations. We are naturally worried about one or two points.

From the beginning of this century, the amount of coal produced in the United Kingdom has fallen consistently, largely because consumption has fallen. That has been traditional under all Governments. Therefore, the decision of the President of the Board of Trade is simply a continuation of that pattern.

A similar trend has occurred in western Europe. In France, little coal production remains. In Belgium and the Netherlands, it has been abolished. In Germany, it has been gradually diminished. In the United Kingdom, many people recognise that we cannot keep coal in stocks for ever. It is expensive to do so, and the more the coal is exposed to weathering, the more it is destroyed. By Christmas, the stocks of coal will amount to about 50 million tonnes. It will cost the taxpayer—to whom we must all account—£800 million per year to maintain the stocks.

The burden on the taxpayer is enormous. I beg the House to ensure that we consider the matter coolly.

7.23 pm

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): I find it extraordinary that this evening the Secretary of State for Wales will reply to the debate and deal with problems in the county of Durham. That is little compensation to him for being ignored last week. I found the remarks of the President of the Board of Trade this afternoon insulting. I am sure that the 30,000 people who marched through London and the many millions of people who support the trade unions and the miners on this occasion also found his remarks insulting.

The President of the Board of Trade has been rumbled by the House and the nation. His platitudes and crocodile tears will not be accepted. People will treat them with the contempt that they richly deserve. Indeed, on Monday he did not even know where Vane Tempest colliery was. He could not respond to me about Vane Tempest. He referred to Easington colliery, which is one of the 21. He did not even know where Vane Tempest was. That showed his contempt for the workforce at Vane Tempest, the people of Seaham and, indeed, the population of Easington. For his information, Vane Tempest has made a profit of £2·3 million this year. It can go forward with the correct inward investment to make further profits in future.

Easington colliery is in profit. It has tremendous reserves lying under the North sea, where subsidence is not a problem. The reserves lying under the sea cannot be exploited by opencast mining. They will be lost to the nation for ever. It will cost some £48 million to close Vane Tempest colliery. The hon. Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland) had better wipe the smirk off his face or he might get it wiped off outside. The hon. Gentleman shows contempt for workers who have given a lifetime to the industry and the nation. It is disgraceful.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): That is one way to get rid of votes.

Mr. Cummings: The Government will lose votes.

Unemployment in Seaham is the highest in Great Britain. Seaham has the smallest number of job opportunities. With the loss of Easington colliery and Vane Tempest, unemployment in Easington will be 17 per cent. overall. But that disguises figures of 20, 25 and 30 per cent. in villages which previously had coalmines. It disguises an overall figure perhaps in excess of 50 per cent. among young people between 16 and 24 who have never had a real job. It is a disgrace to see fine young men standing on corners who should be underground moving coal for the benefit of the nation.

In Easington we shall have an imbalance of population. Young people will have to move away. We shall be left with an aging population chronically sick and disabled from a lifetime of work in the mines and heavy industry at a time when services are diminishing as a result of the Government's attitude to expenditure on social services. A feeling of helplessness and hopelessness exists in the community of Easington and, indeed, in the north-east as a whole.

We have heard the promises and platitudes of the Government. The people of Easington have not received one penny piece from RECHAR or any other funds. In 1984 and 1985 the finger was pointed at miners and people said that they were the enemy within. I ask now who is the enemy within. It is a Government who will rely on Algeria, the middle east and the Soviet Union for future gas supplies. We all know what happened when the Soviet Union fell out with Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania: the Soviet Union turned the gas off. Are we to be subjected to that in the future?

A tremendous amount of money—£15 billion—is in the mineworkers pension scheme. Who will get their grubby hands on it? Have Conservative Members and people from the City got their eyes on it? Of course, they have. Thousands of acres of land are also held in trust by the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation. There are tennis courts, football grounds and miners' welfare halls which were paid for off the pit point by miners. That property is held in trust which can be negated by this Parliament. We have to beware. We must ask ourselves what we can do. We can bring to an end the incestuous behaviour of the electricity supply companies—stop them involving themselves with generating plant. The Minister can ensure tomorrow that power generators burn British coal. This is Parliament. We make the laws, we amend the laws, and we can make a law tomorrow to make the generators burn British coal.

When I first came here I said that I was a child of the mining industry, and was proud of it. I have a great love of my community, heritage and culture. My grandfather did not leave me vast estates or money; he left me an industry whose reserves had been worked prudently and had been conserved for future generations. I would like to be in the same position and to be able to leave future generations secure in their energy resources well into the next century.

7.30 pm

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): I understand and respect the passion with which the hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Cummings) spoke. Last week's announcement by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade angered and outraged the nation. In the 22 years that I have been in the House I do not recall any Minister so misjudging the public mood.

I opposed that decision and I shall continue to oppose it on social, economic and energy grounds. The scale, the time scale—five days to five months—and the brutality of that announcement, which consigned 30,000 miners and their families to the slagheap of unemployment at a time of the highest male unemployment since the 1930s, is unacceptable. And so it has proved for the nation and for millions in the ranks of the Tory party.

The miners are not asking for charity. They are asking for jobs and for a level playing field. What can they do with the average redundancy pay of £22,000 that they are being offered? As they live in isolated communities they cannot sell their homes. They cannot get on their proverbial bike—as Lord Tebbit would no doubt urge them to do—because they cannot move to a place where there are jobs, as they could not find a home even if they were able to find a job.

I oppose the decision on economic grounds. A week ago, I wrote to the President of the Board of Trade to ask him two questions: what was the Government's estimate of overall job losses that would be consequent on throwing 30,000 miners out of work, and what would be the cost to the taxpayer of people who last week were contributing their tax, national insurance and value added tax to the Revenue, now that they are out of a job, on the dole and drawing social security? I have received no reply.

I had the opportunity to put those questions, face to face, to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and to the Secretary of State for Social Security. To my utter amazement they admitted that they did not know the answer, and that no cost benefit analysis had been made by the Government of the consequences of that decision to the taxpayer. No properly run company would contemplate sacking half its employees in a given field without carefully analysing the costs involved. I am at a loss to understand how the President of the Board of Trade felt that that was not necessary in this case.

Perhaps I may help my right hon. Friend. The best estimates that I have been able to get from the Commons Library—they will have to stand until the Government come up with figures of their own—are that putting 30,000 miners out of a job would lead to a loss of at least 100,000 jobs, and an annual cost to the taxpayer in lost tax revenue and increased benefits of in excess of £1·25 billion. On top of that is a further £1·15 billion in redundancy pay. The cost of throwing them on the dole would far exceed the £1 billion that would have been required to subsidise every tonne of coal produced by British Coal last year down to world prices at a rate of £15 a tonne. I request that a cost benefit analysis be instituted by the Government.

I oppose the decision on energy grounds because, beyond the nostrums of the free market and laissez-faire, the Government have no energy policy. A free market is the last thing that we have. It is a rigged market, in which the dice are heavily loaded against British Coal and British miners. A nuclear subsidy of £1·2 billion a year is paid for by an 11 per cent. surcharge on every consumer's gas bill. Meanwhile, the regional electricity companies have a direct incentive to embark on a dash for gas because it provides the quickest way to establish generating capacity and not because it provides cheaper electricity. They are allowed to pass on the cost to the consumer.

Nigel Lucas, professor of energy at Imperial college in London, said recently on BBC television:

> "By buying gas-fired electricity from independent power producers, the RECs are probably paying up to 50 per cent. more than the price of electricity which might be available to them from existing coal-fired stations."

The dash for gas will almost double the rate at which we are using up our North sea gas supplies, which will run out in the early decades of the next century. What then? Pipelines from Siberia, at vast expense, or tankers from Algeria? The costs will be enormous.

World energy prices are low, but what if there were to be another middle east crisis—we have had those in the past—and there were a shortage? Prices would go through the roof. We would have no security of supply and would rue the day that we abandoned British coal.

Government policy—if such it can be called—is driven by opportunism and short-term considerations. That is something that must change.

I welcome the major change in Government policy and thank them for it. It represents a victory for common sense. If people power in my Manchester Davyhulme constituency, and in every other constituency, has played its part, let us not forget the silent and lonely vigil kept by an elderly miner 1,200 ft under ground in Silverhill pit—Roy Lynk, to whom the House and the Tory party in particular owed a debt of gratitude when parliamentary democracy was threatened by the Scargill strike of 1984.

I am grateful to the Government for heeding requests for a full and wide-ranging review of energy policy and for the assurance that I have received from the President of the Board of Trade that his review will tackle the unlevel playing field which operates against British Coal.

On that basis, I shall support the Government in the Lobby tonight, but that is not the end of the matter. This is just the first round. Ahead of us lie three months of hard pounding. The Government have to convince us in the debate on the Floor of the House early in the new year. The Government have 90 days to come up with a detailed, coherent energy policy——

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): Hypocrite.

Mr. Churchill: When Labour were in government they closed pits twice as fast as any Conservative Government—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House is getting too carried away.

Mr. Churchill: It must be an energy policy in which British Coal and British miners have a central part to play in the provision of base load electricity during the decades ahead.

It is no good my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade saying that there is no alternative. He must make it his task before the 90 days expire to come up with an alternative; he must set his Department the job of finding an alternative. If he fails to do so he will be selling short future generations and the security of Britain's energy supplies. He will be failing the Government and the Prime Minister. He will be letting down the nation. He will rekindle the anger and outrage that he has stirred up, and will lead the Government to defeat on the issue when we have the substantive vote. It is not only the 23,000 miners who have been granted a 90-day stay of execution; the same is true of the President of the Board of Trade.

7.40 pm

Mr. Terry Patchett (Barnsley, East): I am grateful to be called in the debate, and I have promised my colleagues that I shall be brief.

I was anxious to speak in the debate as two of the 10 collieries that are to close are in my constituency: Houghton Main and Grimethorpe. I worked at Houghton Main for 26 years and I am familiar with its reserves. Those two collieries are linked, and many is the time that I have walked the two and a half miles underground to Grimethorpe colliery, so I am also familiar with its reserves.

The argument is not about reserves, but about losses. When I investigated the position at Grimethorpe colliery I found that it had made a profit in the past two years. In recent months it has produced coal at £1 a tonne cheaper than imported coal that the generating industry has attracted to this country.

Some four or five collieries have been closed in my constituency. The closure of a further two will mean an additional 2 per cent. on the already high unemployment figure. The Barnsley metropolitan authority has lost between 25,000 and 30,000 mining jobs in recent years. We have been concerned about that and have looked to the Government to assist us in rehabilitation. They have promised help once again. But our experience has been that any movement has come from the local authority in spite of the Government, whose standard spending assessment has always worked against the Barnsley local authority.

There have been many arguments in the House about the RECHAR money, designated to assist our district. We finally received a commitment, and central Government tried to take the credit for that allocation, which came from Europe. As yet, we have not had a penny of that, and I blame that delay on the Government. Therefore, it is easy to understand the cynicism that we feel about promises made about replacement jobs.

Grimethorpe colliery is profit making. Houghton Main colliery had some trouble a few months ago, but has now settled down and is making profits. The reason for the trouble was that the management insisted on throwing money down the drain on an area of coal that the local branch of the National Union of Mineworkers knew was a waste of money. If we are to have moratoriums and investigations, and if British Coal is to report to the Select Committee, will the conclusion be that the pit could have been profitable but the management persevered and lost it millions? There must be a detailed analysis that goes much wider than merely studying a broad spectrum of pits. I would not expect the colliery manager of any of the pits involved to say that it was his fault and he was sorry about the bad mining practices. We must make a deep and clinical analysis of the profit and loss.

I listened carefully to the President of the Board of Trade this afternoon and I still do not understand the position of the 10 named collieries—I do not know whether they are in or out of the review. The President's speech this afternoon tended to confuse me more. We are dubious about what he has said, as we have experience of previous reviews.

When the news was announced in my constituency that we were to lose Houghton Main and Grimethorpe collieries, there was shock, outrage and disbelief. Then the moratorium was announced and we could not honestly believe how the Minister or British Coal could have decided that 10 out of the 31 collieries would not be treated in the same way and would not have the same review or investigation.

One of the main problems that has faced Houghton Main and Grimethorpe has been the ever-moving targets. One week the staff were told that they were doing well if they had made a specific advance, and were given a pat on the back and told to go home and play. The next week a different target was put forward. I do not entirely blame British Coal for the moving targets, as I do not believe that it knew what was happening. It has been blackmailed by the generating industry with overseas coal and for too long it has not had proper answers. It has also been blackmailed due to the dumping of coal in Europe, about which it has complained to the European Commissioners. It has received no assistance from the British Government for the two to three years that the dumping has occurred.

The Government can do nothing about energy because they have neglected their responsibilities. They have sold off the power generators who are now dictating the terms. I do not expect PowerGen to be concerned about the state of the country. I expect its loyalty to be to its shareholders. What matters to it is its shareholders, not the balance of payments, who pays for unemployment and the loss of revenue through loss of taxes. It has no responsibility for those aspects, yet it dictates our energy policy.

I accuse the Government of having no say in this country's present energy policy. They have been happy to see our manufacturing base smashed. We have become the laughing stock of people all over the world who cannot believe that a country such as this, which is so rich in energy sources and indigenous fuels, has got itself into this mess.

I understand that the review will analyse what has been called the uneven playing field. However, I have already heard Ministers saying how much has been put into the industry. We have had to repay with interest a large chunk of capital investment, while the Government have made out that the money was a gift of assistance. However, a major slice of the money was used for redundancies, not to support the industry. We remain cynical and angry.

Whatever the review or the Government's amendment says, I cannot accept that the people who made the initial blunder in introducing such a policy in the way that they did will change their minds when they hear the results of the review. We are setting those same people up as judge, jury and executioner.

I do not expect Ministers to change their minds radically, but I hope sincerely that they will stand back and look at the overall impact on the economy. When they consider not only the number of jobs that are likely to be lost, but the effect on the rail and steel industries, the energy market, transport and local traders in my constituency, I hope that those Ministers do not remain sitting back. I hope that they will at least put the 10 pits alongside the other 21, and treat all 31 in the same way. I hope that they will consider the overall economic impact on the United Kingdom of their stupid decision.

7.48 pm

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): There would be little point in using the short time available to me tonight to flagellate the Government further for the errors of judgment in last week's announcement. The situation has changed significantly over the past five days. I want tonight to be constructive and to make a number of suggestions to the Minister about the way ahead.

I speak as a Nottinghamshire Member of Parliament whose last pit closed shortly before the last general election. I want to express my gratitude to the President and the Secretary of State for Wales, to whom I spoke over the weekend. I fear that I called him out of his constituency surgery. I am grateful for the clear hearing that I received from both of them.

The Government have made it clear that they want to look again at these issues. I trust what the Government have said. I have five suggestions to make.

The first is that there is immense confusion over the relative prices of coal and gas. There is a real fear that gas is being wrongly favoured and that the treatment of written-down power stations that produce from coal is not correct.

As I understand it, the regulator has all the powers that he needs. Condition 5 of the licence granted to the regional electricity companies makes it clear that electricity must be produced

> "at the best effective price reasonably obtainable having regard to the sources available".

In a recent announcement the chief executive of Powergen, Ed Wallis, made it clear that

> "our portfolio of coal-fired plant is able to generate more cheaply than most of the independent gas-fired plant which is now threatening to displace it."

We need these matters urgently investigated by the regulator; and we need a report, to be issued rapidly.

In this country, unlike in the United States, the regional electricity companies can invest in gas projects and guarantee the offtake from them. In the United States that would be illegal. I hope that that will be considered too, because two can play at that game. If it is acceptable for the industry, why could not the Government, when they come to privatise the mining industry, include in that package the 40 per cent. stake that the Government hold in the generators? We need a level playing field in this area.

My second constructive point is that there are serious question marks hanging over the judgment and management skills of British Coal at the most senior level. I am not talking about area management; I have the greatest possible respect for people like John Longden who try to manage the Nottinghamshire coalfield. But there is little confidence in the negotiating skills at the top of British Coal. I am delighted that the Secretary of State has once again called in Boyd to advise him, and I know that an earlier Boyd report made a number of recommendations making it clear that British Coal is not well managed at the top.

We all accept in Nottinghamshire—I hope that we are realistic—that coal is under great pressure, and I accept that manpower will have to decline. But some of the old mines can be worked for two or three years by a relatively small number of miners—the coal comes out for practically nothing. These are the sort of management decisions that we need to examine.

We need to look at Richard Budge's suggestion, announced last night from his company RJB. I cannot understand why Calverton—not in my constituency but not far from the border—was in the list of pits originally proposed for closure. It sells about 70 per cent. of its coal to the private sector—70 per cent. does not go to the electricity industry. Obviously the pit should not be closed down; the 70 per cent. should be expanded to 100 per cent.

Some pits have access to huge reserves and it is clearly futile to close them. Perhaps they need to be mothballed, but certainly not shut. Above all, I urge the Government to use the expertise and advice of Malcolm Edwards. He is respected throughout the industry; he is a realistic friend of the coal industry; he is a keen privatiser; and he is an adviser to the Union of Democratic Mineworkers. The Secretary of State should see him urgently and hear what he has to say.

My third suggestion is that the Government follow the lead given by Commissioner Cardoso, who in his latest initiative said that coal capacity in Europe may need to be reduced. But he asked: why start with Britain—the lowest cost producer? The German industry is contracting. Let us put flesh on the idea of the single market. British coal could be delivered to central Germany, including all transport costs, at a saving to the German economy of £40 per tonne. These are important matters relating to the single market, and I urge the Government to pursue that initiative.

Moreover, British Coal has launched an anti-dumping complaint which may have fallen foul of subsidiarity. Will the Government look into that again, and allow British Coal to pursue the complaint?

My fourth suggestion has to do with coal stocks, which are very large. They need to be. British Coal carries the whole strategic reserve. We cannot store hydro-electricity or nuclear power, gas, or very much oil, but we can store coal. At the moment British Coal is carrying 14 million tonnes, which is probably 4 million tonnes too much, and the generators are holding 33 million tonnes; but if, as we hear, the generators are seeking to run down 10 million tons in one year that would cause a massive distortion of the market. We need to be wary of temporary expediency affecting long-term strategic judgments about size.

In the House I have consistently opposed the arguments for imported coal. Half the coal that comes into this country through the ports is not necessary. I notice that the original plans which the generators had in respect of new port facilities—I voted against them in the House—are not proceeding at the moment, which is evidence that the economic case for imported coal has not been made.

My fifth constructive point is this. There will be similar problems in the nuclear industry unless we announce as soon as possible that the nuclear levy is to be dismantled between now and 1998. The facts are well known: if the same levy were available to the coal industry, coal could be delivered free of charge and still show a profit of between

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£10 and £15 a tonne. Bradwell, the old Magnox reactor, is being kept open until 1998 purely because of the levy. That is not a level playing field; it hopelessly distorts the market. We must dismantle the levy.

I want to make it clear that I am not starry-eyed about the coal industry—I understand the pressures that the industry is under. They are many and various. There has been a long-term contraction in the coal industry and that contraction will not end overnight. It will continue, and I accept that.

The emissions targets to which both parties signed up almost toll the bell for the industry. But our aim must be to give coal a fair deal. These matters must be handled sensitively, not in the manner of some 19th-century mill owner. I genuinely believe that the coal industry deserves better—none more so than the UDM, whose members have met every single productivity target set for them. They have done everything management has asked. They have negotiated for the industry—the NUM has not had a look-in in recent years. They ushered in modern, forward-looking, constructive trade union practices and sounded the death knell of a peculiarly unpleasant form of militant trade unionism—and saved this party and this country's bacon in 1984. Many of the UDM and their families paid a high personal price during the strike and the national contribution of Roy Lynk, one of the heroes of the 1980s, has been greatly underestimated.

In the public interest there should be 10-year contracts with the generators. That is what happens around the world wherever deep mines are worked except when pits have an arrangement with a captive power station. The UDM has earned the right to these contracts, not for reasons of sentiment but because of its record of reliability and on economic grounds.

These are five constructive suggestions. I invite the President and Lord Walker, who achieved remarkable success in regenerating Wales, to visit Nottinghamshire as soon as the plans for the East Midlands development office are further advanced. I want them both to come to Nottinghamshire to talk to local people, to those in the industry and to all the many bodies concerned about regeneration there.

I shall support the Government tonight. It would be churlish not to in view of the change in their position of the past five days. I believe that the review is real, and I and my constituents will be among the first people to contribute to it.

7.58 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I intend to speak for less than 10 minutes even if the rule does not apply.

The hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) has done himself a disservice, as do other Tory Members who have enjoyed a great deal of publicity defending the coal communities, if they deny the words that they uttered a few days ago and go into the Lobby with the Government. Certainly there have been many promises, but many of the touches that the Government have applied to their policy in recent days have been cosmetic.

I tried to intervene in the Secretary of State's speech because I wanted to ask him whether, during the review, he intended to give licences to the gas-fired stations which are now in the planning process. I intended to ask whether, if the review revealed that an arrangement of great disadvantage to the electricity consumer applied, he would revoke the licences that he has already granted. I would have asked for a guarantee to the House that the legislative base upon which faulty licences were issued would be amended during this Session.

The right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) spoke about the splendid productivity at the Selby pits. Enormous productivity matching that at Selby has been achieved in many other collieries. The right hon. Gentleman failed to understand that even the most profitable pit is likely to disappear by the end of this century unless a different regime applies, because collieries will not have access to baseload electricity. If coal is to be allowed to work only on the margin of peak demand, no one will wish to work in collieries, because they will be at an appalling disadvantage.

Hon. Members who seek to defend the industry should pause before deciding to vote with the Government, because the Secretary of State joined in the rejoicing of some Conservative Members who spoke about the importation of coal from Colombia. That coal is mined by children in dangerous pits. I represent not only my constituency, which has been devastated by Government policies, but NACODS, the colliery association of underground officials who have made such an enormous contribution to mine safety. That contribution has enabled Britain to have a proud record, but apparently that record is not admired by some Conservative Members. Because of the success and safety record of British mines and mining technology, a considerable export market can be maintained.

It is time that Conservative Members started to consider the economy and the balance of payments deficit, because the fundamental weakness of the British economy is the failure to export. Sooner or later, the enormous trade deficit will have to be resolved or Britain will continue the decline which has marked the Conservative years. To write off the export potential of coal and mining engineering would be irresponsible. However, I have not detected any great concern about that in what the President of the Board of Trade and his colleagues have said.

The Secretary of State for Wales visited my area when he held another office and will remember the work carried out by David Trippier in securing, or attempting to secure, the future of the Dearne valley, which has been viciously assailed. In the last few weeks, the Environment Minister who was supposed to be caring for the Dearne valley has been replaced by an Under-Secretary of State for Social Security. That means that, instead of speaking to a Minister in the Department of the Environment, I have to speak to a Minister whose responsibility is social security. Does that mean that the Government have now written off my area, and that, although cosmetics have been applied to try to bring Tories into the Government lobby, we are not to have the sincere and serious review that an energy policy requires?

I have real reservations, and my questions about the licences need to be answered quickly, as do the questions posed by my hon. Friends. If the answers are not satisfactory—and so far they have not been—I hope that the hon. Members for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) and for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), who have been eager to secure publicity for their championing of the mining communities, will act with some consistency and vote with us.

8.4 pm

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): We have heard much about the importance of jobs and communities in mining areas. Those matters are important, but I wish to speak about the jobs and communities which depend on gas-fired power stations. There are no coal mines in the county of Cleveland, nor does it have a coal-fired power station. It has a nuclear power station, and a gas-fired station is under construction.

Two important companies, ICI and British Steel, are desperate for cheap energy and jobs, and communities depend on those companies. The lobby of Parliament has been impressive in terms of the number of people who came to London and those who wore lapel badges in support of the coal industry. However, workers in the gas supply industry have families and mortgages and live in communities as well.

The gas supply industry is important. In parts of my constituency, unemployment is as high as in any of the mining areas. Gas will soon be delivered via the new CAT pipeline from the North sea into Teesside at Seal Sands. That represents a capital investment by Amoco of £500 million. That is important for the local economy, and jobs have been created not only because of the pipeline but because of the gas exploration platforms.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda) *rose*——

Mr. Bates: I shall not give way, because time is short.

Those two gas and oil exploration platforms were constructed in Scotland. Gas is already being piped ashore, and the Enron power station represents a commitment of about £1 billion of capital investment. Some 2,000 jobs in my area depend directly on the construction of that power station. Another gas-fired power station, the Neptune project, is on the drawing board. It is likely to be constructed and that will mean more than 2,000 construction jobs. The pipeline is delivering about 300 million cu ft of gas per day and has the capacity to bring to Teesside about 1,500 million cu ft of gas per day. That will have a dramatic effect, not only because direct jobs will be created in two new gas-fired power stations, but because some of the gas will be processed to produce propane, butane and naphtha.

The Opposition talk with vigour and determination about the balance of trade. Naphtha is used by companies such as ICI and BASF in Cleveland and is currently imported from Rotterdam. By 1996, Teesside will be able to export to Rotterdam gas derivatives such as propane and naphtha. I hope that all hon. Members agree that that industry is important to us. About 4,000 to 5,000 jobs depend upon it in my area, and just because the general election is over we cannot ignore the environment.

Gas-fired power stations produce less than half the CO_2 emissions of coal-fired power stations that contribute to the greenhouse effect. Nitros oxides are crucial when it comes to protecting our environment, and these are key concerns. As I have said, industries in the north-east need to be competitive as a result of cheap energy. I have in mind ICI, BASF, British Steel, Nissan and British Alcan. Thousands are dependent on cheap energy.

Some say, "Listen, is there that demand? Is it really going to be cheaper?" Would companies be investing about £2·5 billion if they thought that the plants would not be effective? Would AMOLO be investing £500 million in a 250-mile pipeline out into the North sea if it were not to be cost-effective? Of course these projects will be effective.

In the north-east, I am second to none in acknowledging the part that the coal mining industry has played in the past. I do not deny that role. However, the strength of the north-east has always been its ability to look to the future. In the 1890s and the early 20th century, much of our wealth and prosperity depended on coal, but the prosperity of the region and of industry generally in the 1990s and early 21st century will depend upon gas, and that industry should have our support as well.

8.11 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Entirely lacking from the Conservative party has been any awareness of the sense of public outrage that people could be treated as the President of the Board of Trade did when he announced the closure of 31 pits. Of course, individual Members may take a different view, but I say that it was callous and brutal. That treatment came from a party that prides itself upon a citizens charter and a classless society. That is why hundreds of thousands are marching in London today. The little seminar on gas prices does not get near what the real argument is all about.

All my right hon. and hon. Friends know that these events are part of a sustained attack upon the mining industry. It is taking place because the previous Prime Minister regarded the National Union of Mineworkers as the enemy within. That term was coined for that reason. It gives me huge pleasure that the Tory party threw out Thatcher and the miners re-elected Scargill. That man told the truth, and truth still has value in the politics of our society when all the lies, half truths and half promises about independent reviews are dismissed.

The President of the Board of Trade said that he agonised over the decision that was before him. He is not the one who will suffer agony if pits are closed. If he agonised, why did he not have a review during that process? If there had been a review, others could have submitted other views while his discussions took place.

I have a letter that came from the office of Cecil Parkinson when he was Energy Secretary. It is a response to someone who wrote from Derbyshire, and states that the privatisation of the electricity industry will have no effect on pit closures. Ministers have lied, lied and lied again about the mining industry. That is why people are so incensed.

Do not tell us that this is all about market forces. If those forces applied to the farming industry, half the farms in Britain would have closed years ago. We could get cheaper food from New Zealand and Australia. Of course, the Tory party depends on the farmers and so it supports them. I am not in favour of applying market forces to farms. It is not possible to close a farm one year and open it the following year. We all know that the miners have not received set-aside grants. They have not been given money to stop producing coal. That is the reality of the debate.

There was a preparedness to pay a great deal of money to the gamblers two weeks ago when so-called market forces were working on the currency. That, I think, has played a part in these matters.

I am intensely proud that I had a role to play in the energy policy of the Labour Government. That Government authorised the Selby project, as we

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authorised the Drax B coal-fired power station. We encouraged 42 million tonnes of extra capacity to be found. Selby was opened and there was an assisted burn scheme. We recognised that the then Central Electricity Generating Board needed a small grant to change the merit order of the power stations so that more coal could be burnt. We introduced earlier retirement for miners, something for which they had pressed for a long time. We then—*[Interruption.]* Closures took place after negotiation and agreement. They concentrated mainly on pit exhaustion and dangerous working. As the then Secretary of State, I offered the NUM a veto on all closures. I discovered that Australian coal had been imported on the instruction of the now Lord Walker when he was Secretary of State for Energy. When it arrived it was so expensive that the generating board sold it to France at a loss.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Benn: I shall not give way for one moment.

We require a re-examination of energy policy that brings fuel suppliers, fuel industries, customers and unions together. There was such a re-examination from 1976 onwards; the papers were published and the discussions were serious. When that process takes place it will be necessary to determine the objectives of the energy policy, and one of the objectives of the Labour Government was extremely simple. It was that everyone should have heat and light at home. That was not a bad energy policy objective. It was a recognition of the fact that in the end an energy policy is judged by whether people can get hold of energy.

It has been said, "If there is surplus coal, why not give it to pensioners?" That is a sensible argument. Coal could be supplied free of charge to the generators to pump it down the wire, as it were, in the form of cheap electricity. There are those who shake their heads in dissent, but that is an energy policy. It is one in which Conservative Members do not believe, because they believe in profit and not in people. That is what the argument is about.

We must think about imports and opencast mining.

Mr. Richards: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I hope that it is a point of order.

Mr. Richards: It certainly is, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) to rewrite history?

Mr. Benn *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is clearly not a point of order. I take strong exception to such a use of points of order.

Mr. Benn: I hope that the time taken by that point of order is taken into account, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am advancing a serious argument that has more in common with what those outside this place are thinking than with the little arguments that we have heard from Conservative Members.

It is necessary, of course, to consider opencast mining. The environment of a village is destroyed by stripping it, as it were, for opencast mining. We must have regard also to desulphurisation, assisted burn and winter fuel concessions. As many have said, how can we justify subsidy by way of the nuclear levy, a fuel that is three times as expensive as coal?

The House should not think that that for which I am arguing cannot be done. In 1945, Winston Churchill as Prime Minister, a distinguished predecessor, presented the Fuel and Power Act—I operated under it and so does the President of the Board of Trade—which, when enacted, charged the Secretary of State with the general duty of securing the effective and co-ordinated development of coal, petroleum and other mineral resources—fuel and power—in Great Britain. That is the statutory responsibility of the President of the Board of Trade. He is not merely a spectator of market forces. Indeed, in 1973 he was a member of a Government who introduced the Fuel and Electricity Control Act which bore on every fuel transaction in the country. When the right hon. Gentleman was a junior Minister he controlled the supply of fuel to the aircraft industry.

The result of tonight's Division will not determine the issue that is before us. If anyone thinks that it will, he or she is making a great mistake. In fact, the British public have been awakened to the realities of the mining industry and to the rotten philosophy of the 1980s. We were told that everything was about cash and that chartered accountants had to be brought in to tell us what to do. That is not what it is all about. The issue is whether our society puts people in a place of dignity and serves them or whether we hand over money to gamblers who create no wealth. Arthur Scargill has been rehabilitated more quickly than any man I have known. Within 24 hours, everyone knew that he was right. The miners certainly did.

What has happened—I warn the Government about this—is that after 10 years during which people took things that they should never have taken, there is a return of self confidence and hope. It was that sort of self confidence and hope that got Mandela out of prison and got the Berlin wall down. Next it will get the President of the Board of Trade out of his office in favour of a better society.

8.19 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): I have to advise the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) that the spectre of Arthur Scargill is one that would unite those on the Conservative Benches and our constituents as never before.

When the pit closure programme was announced last week a wave of anger swept over north Nottinghamshire such as I have never known before. In a time of deep recession that decision was brutal. I therefore called, together with other colleagues, for a moratorium for the sake of people's lives, their hopes and their aspirations. Until then, there had been no hope, no appeal, no reprieve. Therefore, I welcomed the decision to have a review and a moratorium on the closures. My immediate reaction was that they would give the pits a breathing space in which to prove themselves. I regret that that has not apparently proved acceptable to my constituents, but perhaps one can see why.

In my area of north Nottinghamshire—Opposition Members also represent that region—those closures, any closure, mean devastating unemployment in our travel-to-work area. The pit closures mean that possibly up to an extra 20 per cent. of the local population will be unemployed in that travel-to-work area and 30 per cent. extra in the villages. I am articulating those concerns to the House tonight. There are 3,000 jobs in the industry and 6,000 ancillary jobs at risk. My constituents have said that I should look after their interests and express them in the House tonight.

It is a Member of Parliament's duty and task to look after his constituents. I recognise that even the potential closure of some of the pits, in such large numbers and even after a review, is unacceptable to my community. If I vote against the Government tonight, would I be acting in accordance with unacceptable pressure, or would I be acting in accordance with the wishes, and indeed instructions, of literally thousands of people outside who have asked that I should express a view in such a way?

I have never faced such a difficult decision on behalf of my constituents. I accept that I am not the only one with such a difficult decision, but perhaps with the number of people involved, the pressure on me is greater. Tonight I voice that anxiety to the House and I express the words of pressure that I received this afternoon and continue to receive tonight.

My constituents, of all political parties and at all levels of society, have told me that they require a full and independent—I stress the word—inquiry, which must include the 10 pits which are subject to closure. I accept what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said about the problem with some of those pits which are unprofitable. However, the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon) has told me that one of those pits, Silverhill, which is next door to my constituency, has been profitable over the years. We are considering the future of the coal industry and the Government have said that we will have a review of it, but it will exclude one large pit in my area which, on the figures given, is profitable.

A difficult decision must be made. It is not the viability of the Silverhill colliery as such that is really at issue, but all the pits. If we are to have a review it must be a complete one.

I have asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to ensure that during the review it is business as usual. I have put to him two or three specific examples about how the work force felt that that might not happen. In fairness to my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Minister, I should say that I have been given absolute assurances about those anxieties. I have referred those assurances to my constituents, but I received a fax today from one firm in my constituency, Northern Specialised Site Services Limited, which said:

"Development work at Bevercotes"—

that is in my constituency—

"like other threatened collieries has been stopped".

I accept from my right hon. Friend that he has given instructions that that work will recommence, but, as I said earlier, I must recognise the fears of my constituents. Until they actually see that work recommencing, they will not believe that that will happen. I repeat that I am not casting any slur on my right hon. Friend and I recognise the considerable steps that he has taken.

Mr. Eggar: For the avoidance of doubt by my hon. Friend and his constituents, may I repeat that development work will continue at Bevercotes. If he or his constituents come to me with clear evidence or statements to show that development work is not continuing, I will personally instruct the chairman of British Coal that that development work should recommence.

Mr. Alexander: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reassurance.

Ms. Walley: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that all of us whose constituencies are home to the collieries in the 10 areas chosen for closure by the Government share the views of his constituents? If there is a case for development work to continue in the hon. Gentleman's colliery, surely exactly the same argument applies to each of the other nine collieries, including Trentham in the north Staffordshire coalfield. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving us the benefit of his views, but whatever assurances he has been given by the Minister, he should note that, last week, an all-party delegation from north Staffordshire, including the Bishop of Stafford, visited the Department of Trade and Industry and we were not given such assurances. I want the Minister to give me such an assurance tonight.

Mr. Alexander: The hon. Lady intervened to make a specific point, to which I do not think she expected me to respond, but no doubt it has been noted elsewhere.

The review must start with the most recent report of the Select Committee on Energy which concluded that electricity consumers had nothing to gain from a hasty rundown of the coal industry. The review must then look at some of the industrial practices in our coal mines, all of which have a bearing on profitability.

I make no criticism of trade union practices, but ours seems to be the only country that works only a full 15 shifts out of an available 21 in any one week. The first shift on a Monday therefore spend a lot of time making their working conditions safe, whereas if 21 shifts were worked, including at the weekend, mines could be much more profitable.

Why is Britain the only country that throws away 50 per cent. of the material that is brought to the surface, in the form of dust and rubble that is put on spoil tips? Other countries are much more selective in the material that they extract. I repeat that only a wide-ranging, independent review will do.

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood): Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that the review should include imports? Should not the Minister for Energy get on the phone to the Ministry of Defence, which in the next day or two is to announce the purchase of 300,000 tonnes of imported coal for Aldermaston, and 200,000 for Bicester? The British Government try to shroud themselves in the British flag while Russian coal is used to power the Aldermaston nuclear defence station. That is a pity and a shame.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Although I appreciate the strength of feeling that exists, I remind right hon. and hon. Members that interventions must be kept short—particularly in a debate of this nature.

Mr. Alexander: I am glad that a recent announcement by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade indicated that if British Coal cannot continue to work a pit economically, the private sector could become involved. That should have been done long ago. If British Coal cannot support a particular colliery, that is no reason to say that it can no longer operate. At present, British

[Mr. Alexander]

Coal would rather close a mine than allow anyone else to work it, and that must be wrong. I am glad that steps may be taken to make changes.

There are opportunities for private sector involvement in coal mining before it is run down and collieries are closed. There would be cost savings, greater competition, and an erosion in the level of imported coal. The private sector has a place in using its skill, technology and risk capital to revitalise the industry. Closures now would make it irrecoverable.

I ask for an independent review before our areas are devastated and the taxpayer has to foot a £1,000 million bill for social security and other payments. Nottinghamshire miners brought common sense, sanity and moderation to the ugly situation that arose in 1984, and I join other right hon. and hon. Members in paying tribute to Roy Lynk of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers for his role in that. Nottinghamshire miners did so often at great personal and family cost, and that is still continuing. Now they ask for common sense, sanity and moderation—and we owe them that.

8.33 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I must first declare my interest as secretary of the parliamentary miners group, and as someone who worked down the pits for 21 years and is sponsored by the National Union of Mineworkers. I have a badge to prove it, and unlike Roy Lynk I am not sending it back. I am proud of my NUM affiliations.

I am concerned about this debate not for parochial reasons but because if the proposals are pursued, every pit in Derbyshire will be wiped out by the end of the current financial year. Shirebrook, Bolsover, Markham and High Moor will all go.

I took part in a magnificent rally today—and this time the march took a different route. Instead of going towards Trafalgar square, we marched around Chelsea and Kensington—and we captured Chelsea and Kensington for Labour today. I have never seen so many people hanging out of windows, including those at the Kensington Gardens hotel—and, by Christ! is it posh. The people were cheering us on—"Good old Arthur." It was the return of the prodigal son, except that this time we will not kill the fatted calf because half of us are vegetarians. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) is anyway.

It was an exhilarating experience. Normally, the odd person makes a challenge or shouts an insult—but not today. As we passed the end of the road in which Princess Di lives in Kensington palace, I am certain that I saw her there with a bucket.

A catalyst has been at work in the past few days and has overwhelmed us all. We did not appreciate the extent to which the closures had got up the nose of many Tories and others of no political affiliation. We have all been swamped with letters from our constituents. The Government might have cobbled something together over the past 72 hours, but it will not work. The public will turn this Government over—and whether that happens this week, next month, or next year, you can bet your bottom dollar that that political sea change will make sure that this is the last run for home.

It may be that the President of the Board of Trade has been set up by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister. It is conceivable that something is afoot. It looks a lot like that.

We all knew that the poll tax would produce a lot of support for the Labour movement, but we did not expect so much over this issue. It is not a case of people holding a romantic view of miners. They have always done that, and I am not agin it. But unlike 1984, many people—Tories as well—now acknowledge that there is an economic argument to answer. There was in 1984, but we did not convince the public. This time, they have grasped it. The other day, I was on a bus from Chesterfield to Bolsover and heard some 11-year-old kids say, "Coal is 30 per cent. cheaper than gas, and 350 per cent. cheaper than nuclear." They knew. That is why I am convinced that the case is for real.

I will not troop through all the arguments, but it is common sense that if the price of industrial coal has not increased for six years, it must be getting close to being competitive. Let us also get rid of the nonsense about a £18,000 million subsidy. When such a claim comes from the mouths of the people who make it, it is bound to be a lie. There is no such thing as an £18,000 million subsidy. British Coal repaid £574 million to the taxpayer last year in interest on the money that it borrowed way back to pay for investment and redundancies. The nonsense about a £18,000 million subsidy has nothing to do with the real arithmetic.

Today, we are quids in. Everyone knows that after devaluation of between 12 per cent. and 15 per cent., British coal can compete with many imported coals. We thought that we might be able to do that some years ago, but now we know that is true. We should be having an export drive—selling coal to the Common Market. Where is the level playing field when German coal is coming into Britain at £110 a tonne? We should be selling them our coal, which after Black Wednesday is about £37 a tonne.

What is all this talk about money? Around £10 billion went down the drain on Black Wednesday. That would provide money for the miners. It would give every single miner currently employed by the industry money for 10 years—and there would be money for the pensioners and a bit for the health service as well.

A bit of a change has taken place. I think that we are on to something big, politically. It happens every so often. I have never believed in the idea that you are going to win every time you wake up in the morning, but sometimes things turn full circle. Nelson Mandela had to wait 27 years before that happened. The last time that we experienced such a change in the political and economic landscape was in the early 1970s; as a result, the Tory Government of the day had to put the Industrial Relations Act on to the back burner, and they had to settle with the miners in 1972. It finished with their being kicked out of office in 1974. History will not exactly repeat itself in this instance, but I think that it will come very close to doing so.

Let us put something else on to the agenda. It is not just a question of the miners; 3·5 million are without jobs. People will be living in poverty this winter, and there are pensioners who could do with some of the stocked coal to keep warm. The Government should use that coal instead of talking about the £100 million a month that it will cost to stock it.

What else is going to happen this winter? The Government are up to their neck in it economically, and, as a result, public expenditure cuts of about £14 billion are likely to be made. It looks as though there will be a pay freeze, or wage cuts, for millions of public-sector workers. We shall go into the autumn and the winter with more than just a small army from the NUM; millions of other people will be involved, right across the trade union and labour movement.

Make no mistake: the Government had better watch out. Things are going to change. The 1980s were miserable; the retreat has gone on for too long. I cannot wait to see the change. The 1990s have put socialism back on the agenda. They have helped us a little—and by Christ, we are going to see the results.

8.41 pm

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): We have heard a traditionally enthusiastic, if somewhat unrealistic, speech from the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), and we have all thoroughly enjoyed it. What would have happened if this Government had closed down as many mines as the Government of which he was part when they were last in office? It was uncharacteristically modest of the hon. Gentleman to suggest that, when he walked past the Royal Garden hotel, he was less of an attraction than Arthur Scargill. Perhaps we shall see more of that modesty in the future: if so, it will be welcomed by the whole House.

On Monday, I had quite made up my mind to vote with the Opposition, against the Government. *[Interruption.]* Hear me out. I was appalled at the way in which the Government were proposing to treat whole communities. I come from the Royal Forest of Dean, which is a former coal-mining area, and I have seen at first hand how the transition can be made from a community that is dependent on a single industry to one that is much more broadly and securely based. It takes time, however.

Years ago, when the mines in the Forest of Dean began to be run down, Rank Xerox was in the process of development and gave alternative employment to those who no longer worked in the mines. Then, in the early 1980s, Rank Xerox wanted to reduce its workforce substantially, from over 5,000 to just over 1,000. That, however, was done piecemeal: Rank Xerox invested heavily in small workshops and other facilities, so that its ex-employees could either create work for themselves or find alternative jobs. The initiative was firmly backed by the Forest of Dean district council, led by the late Arthur Cooper, who—with others—set about developing small industrial estates in the district. With the council's help, I persuaded the Government to make the Forest of Dean an assisted area. The transformation has been a great success, but it has taken time: such action must be taken gradually.

It was the lack of time, and the indecent haste with which the pit closures were proposed, that turned me—along with many of my constituents—against the Government's initial proposals. The letters of protest from my constituency have had to be weighed rather than counted, because there are so many. It is not that the people of the Forest of Dean want to support inefficient pits or an outdated mechanism; they were concerned about the way in which the Government proposed to treat whole communities.

I am very pleased that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has now changed his mind, and has agreed to a full and open review to keep all the interested parties abreast of what is going on. I am glad that he has also agreed to bring the results of his inquiry back to the House in January, in the form of a White Paper.

I believe that it takes a strong man to admit that he was wrong, and to do something to put matters right. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has done just that, and, rather than cursing him, we should give credit where credit is due. He has seen the error of his ways, and has made an effort to remedy the position. I thank him for initiating a review.

The coal industry now has a chance to prove its case, and we, who do not know the details, have an opportunity to learn the full truth behind the allegations about cheap German coal, price rigging, the running out of our gas supplies and the role of nuclear power. Nothing is to be hidden; nothing is to be done behind closed doors. This is the first-class outcome of what was a first-class blunder.

I spoke earlier about the success of the industrial development of the Forest of Dean, and the way in which it has rebuilt hope. In the heat of today's debate, however, it is important to remember that developing businesses need cheap and reliable energy. We must not lose sight of that. I have observed it at first hand in another industry, in my capacity as parliamentary adviser to the British Scrap Federation. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may snigger, but the industry is very important to this country. It does a great deal to preserve the environment, and to save energy costs.

In the course of my duties this summer, I had occasion to visit a gigantic steel works in Rotherham. Opposition Members may know of Rotherham Engineering Steels, whose entire feed stock is scrap metal. The cost of electricity is one of the plant's major production costs. Its annual electricity bill currently runs at £42 million, and the cost per kilowatt hour is 3·4p. In Holland the cost would be 2·2p; in France 2·3p; in Germany, 2·9p. Most of those prices are one third lower than the United Kingdom price. That high energy cost adds about £14 million a year to the running costs of Rotherham Engineering Steels.

High energy costs disadvantage manufacturing industry in this country: we should not forget that. We cannot go on indemnifying home-mined coal when it cannot be burnt at home or sold abroad. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) made that point. The same applies to the farmers: they cannot go on producing cereals that cannot be eaten in this country or sold abroad, and they are gradually being run down. The agriculture industry is gradually changing its ways—but such things take time.

Let me emphasise that today's debate is about people and their future, and about options. That is why I welcome the proposed wide-ranging review and the Select Committee's inquiry into the coal industry, which will enable us all to understand the pros and cons and plan the way forward.

I wonder whether there is any point in asking for voluntary redundancies throughout the coal industry at this time, so that when the review is over those who wish to remain in the industry but who are currently attached to unprofitable pits can be moved to more profitable ones and have a successful career underground. The economic argument for cheap energy remains unassailable but today the need, above all, is for care and understanding and a new opportunity for those who are no longer required in the mining industry. That care and attention has been

[Mr. Paul Marland]

applied before to the rundown of pits in south Wales. It will be done again. There is nobody better qualified than Lord Walker to ensure that the job is done properly. I am very pleased that he has taken the job.

In view of the changes that have taken place since Monday, I am happy today to give the benefit of the doubt to the Government and to vote in favour of their amendment so that everybody can take a fresh look at the facts, come back here in January and discuss the White Paper.

8.50 pm

Mr. Roger Godsiff (Birmingham, Small Heath): My constituency is not a coal mining area. It lies at the centre of Birmingham—what used to be the heart of manufacturing industry in this country. For 36 years the constituency was represented by Denis Howell, who has now, rightly, been elevated to another place.

I am speaking tonight because I wish to point out a few facts. Unemployment stands at 74,000 in Birmingham. Seventeen per cent. of the work force in the city are unemployed. Four out of 10 people in Birmingham have been jobless for more than 12 months. In my constituency, 26 per cent. of the working population are unemployed.

I state those facts because I wish the House and, in particular, my colleagues who represent mining constituencies to know that my constituents know what it is like to experience long-term unemployment—an experience which, I fear, will be shared by many people in Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Yorkshire in the very near future.

I also mention these facts because the impact of the closure of these pits will be felt not just in the mining communities. More than 30,000 jobs will most certainly be lost in the mining communities, but three or four times that number of jobs will be lost in the many firms that supply the mining industry. Many of those firms come from Birmingham. Many of those jobs are in the west midlands.

I know of firms in Birmingham that supply cable belts and winding ropes to the mining industry. They are not small contracts; they run into many hundreds of thousands of pounds. What is more, these firms export winding belts and cables. They need a secure base in this country. The closure of the 10 pits means that many of these firms will have to lay off workers and that a number of them will go out of business. The exports that those firms contribute to the balance of payments will be lost to this country.

The question that my constituents and the people of Birmingham ask is, what is the justification for the carnage that was announced by the Government last week? We are told a lot about the dash for gas and that it will result in lower electricity prices. I have heard nothing during the last seven days to convince me that that argument is proven—that there will be lower electricity prices which will benefit the consumer. What I can believe is that the electricity companies will make larger profits. Nobody has yet produced figures, however, that convince me that this country's consumers will benefit from the dash for gas.

Even if the economic argument for the dash for gas were proven, there are many other important factors that need to be taken into account. We all know that in this country there are 200 years' worth of good-quality coal available for the use of this country. At best, we know that there might—and I repeat "might"—be a 50-year supply of natural gas. We all know, too, that the nuclear power industry is beset by problems. Nobody in his right mind would base a national energy policy on the use, solely and simply, of nuclear power. Furthermore, we know that this country has a limited amount of oil reserves, but, once again, nobody will base the basic energy needs of this country on oil. Are we, therefore, really acting sensibly by abandoning Britain's rich coal seams for ever? Once the coal mines are closed, those seams will never be used again, those mines will never be used again.

What will happen if the Government's projections for gas are proved wrong? Shall we end up with the country's basic energy needs having to be accounted for by imported gas and imported coal? Above all, what will future generations think of us here today if we make them, and their grandchildren, totally dependent on other countries for this country's basic energy needs? I am sure that I do not need to remind hon. Members of the many conflicts that have taken place in the world over energy resources. That is what the Gulf war was about. Nor do I need to remind hon. Members of what happened in the early 1970s when this country was held to ransom by an oil cartel, the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries. Do we really want to place ourselves in a position where we can be held to ransom in the future over this country's basic energy resources and energy needs?

Even if there were a justifiable economic argument for the dash for gas, there surely has to be an even more important consideration—the community and social argument. Closure of these mines will destroy whole communities. There is no prospect whatsoever, whatever the Minister may say, that in the middle of a massive slump new industries will be brought into those communities. Thousands of redundant miners will not suddenly become thrusting, entrepreneurial business men, setting up their own businesses. It will not happen. What will happen is that those communities will wither and die. They will die as their coal resources die.

What will happen then? Hon. Members who have served as local councillors know what happens when communities die. Vast amounts of money will not go into council coffers and the Government will lose huge amounts in taxes and national insurance contributions.

Tonight, the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) openly said that he asked the Minister for a cost-benefit analysis of the closures. The Minister's answer was that one had not been carried out. The Government cannot tell the British people how much the closures will cost. The unofficial figure is £1·4 billion. The question that I have to ask is, why? That is what my constituents are asking. What is it all about? It is about figures on a balance sheet. It is about accountants drawing up a profit and loss account and deciding that, as loss wins, communities must go by the board. A civilised society cannot be run on the basis of accountants' profit and loss accounts.

Why did the Government reach this decision? I believe that the answer is to be found in the way in which it was done: "Three days' notice, and then your jobs are gone. Do not say anything and do not complain or your redundancy pay might be cut." That was brutal, heartless, uncaring and illegal.

I am not alone in believing that the roots of the Government's decision go back not five or 10 years but to what happened in 1974 right in the middle of my constituency at the Saltley gas works. During the miners' strike, an unknown NUM official from Yorkshire and a large number of Yorkshire miners picketed the works and prevented coal from being delivered, which resulted in the defeat of the Tory Government at the general election. I believe, as do many others, that what happened in 1974 figured very much in the minds of Ministers when they made their decision last week. The decision was not about economics or whether coal is better than gas but about revenge—the Tory party exacting revenge on the miners of this country for the Government's defeat in 1974. All hon. Members who want to see a future for the coal industry must support the Opposition motion.

9.1 pm

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): It is an honour to follow the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Godsiff). I congratulate him on choosing an important debate in which to make it. I appreciate that I have only a few minutes in which to speak, having sat here for almost seven hours waiting to do so.

When the announcement was made by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, I was shocked. In fact, I was ashamed that a Conservative Government had made it. Not only did it have an effect on me, but within 10 minutes almost all my constituency was clamouring to come into my office or was ringing. Since then, my telephone and fax machine have not stopped working and I have received hundreds of letters, not only from my constituents but from the great British people, who have risen up because of the decision.

As well as being a Member of this House, I am president of Yorkshire Conservative Trade Unionists. Having worked for so long in the area, I know that, as the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) said, they feel that we have let them down badly.

I must acknowledge the great step forward that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has taken in the past week, which I welcome. It is a serious step forward along the route that I asked him to take. I welcome the review and the fact that 21 pits are included, but, as my right hon. Friend knows very well, I do not welcome the fact that he was unable to include the other 10. The wider public outside are always concerned to ensure a sense of fair play.

I take the economic arguments. Representing a manufacturing area, and having fought for the textile industry for 10 years, I know about imports and that businesses must be competitive, but, having taken the decision to have the review, why did not my right hon. Friend include the other 10 pits? Had he done so, he would have had the backing of the House and of the country. We are talking not about 30,000 jobs but about 100,000.

We have heard some hon. Members say that the argument is about revenge and about trade unions. It is not; it is about people. Our industries and our communities are always made up of people. We cannot take the heart out of communities without causing misery, devastation and worry for many of those families. Of course, there is always rationalisation in industry, but does it all have to involve such huge numbers, in such a way that whole pit villages and mining communities disappear altogether?

I must say a few words about a lonely man sitting at the bottom of a pit shaft. He must really feel that he has let his members down—and they feel that he has let them down. But he must also feel that the Government have let him down. That man helped to keep the lights on in 1984 and 1985—perhaps against the advice of many people who talked to him. He took a band of men with him, and they kept this country afloat and alight. We owe him a much greater debt of gratitude, and I hope that we find a better way to reward that man for his eight years' work—I hope that he is listening.

I do not want to see our country held to ransom on energy policy in the future. I should like to think that in the years to come, when the history of this period is written, the Conservative Government will not be seen to have abandoned the miners and this country's energy policy. I would not wish to see myself depicted as having abandoned those miners and the whole coal industry, either. I regret to have to say to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade that I cannot support him.

9.6 pm

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): I have been reminded by one of my hon. Friends that in the Betws drift mine there is a famous Peacock vein of anthracite coal. We hope that the Peacock vein will survive, just as we hope that the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) will survive after she has joined us in the Lobby tonight. I hope, too, that she will not be alone in joining us there.

We have heard several fine speeches tonight. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Godsiff) on his maiden speech. We hope that in the years that lie ahead he will be able to participate in the pertinent and concise way that he has tonight. We have also heard other speeches from Opposition Members——

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. O'Neill: In a moment.

We have heard several speeches from those of my hon. Friends who, before coming to the House, spent their lives in the mining industry. They spoke movingly about the collieries in which they have served. From their experience both at work and in the service of their constituencies they know of the problems facing the condemned 10 pits. Indeed, my hon. Friends the Members for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett), for Easington (Mr. Cummings), for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood), for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) all spoke with great authority on the unjustified choice made between the condemned 10 pits and the other 21.

My hon. Friends drew attention to the fact that the debate has become the political fault line of the new Session of Parliament. Almost prematurely—certainly far earlier than we expected—the debate has brought up the whole question of how this country should be run.

That is not a new question; its genesis lies in the previous Parliament. It all goes back to the nature of the privatisations of gas and electricity, and especially to the regional electricity companies' ability both to distribute power and to own shares in the gas-fired production. We can pick over the bones to try to establish whether that was the intention of the original legislation, but the consequence has certainly been that the RECs can both

[Mr. O'Neill]

generate and distribute electricity. The relationship is not only dubious but questionable in that those companies have sizeable shares in the new power stations. If they have to pay an increased charge for gas-fired electricity, that can be passed on to their monopoly customers. They have no choice. What the gas-fired generators charge can be passed on to individuals and can be reflected beneficially in the balance sheets of the companies to which I have referred.

More importantly, the Government's protector of the public interest—the regulator—seems to be supine and paralysed. He is hiding behind the inaccessibility of evidence saying that he does not have the evidence upon which to act or make recommendations. If he does not act quickly, the exercise will be academic because the collieries will not exist and the future of our mining industry will be thrown into doubt.

We have been along this road before. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have referred to past oil prices and the sensitivity of this country to oil price rises. Reference has been made to the effects of political instability and in recent days we saw once again the impact of the variance in the rate of exchange.

We saw what happened when oil prices changed in the 1970s and 1980s. Let us not forget that gas prices are linked inextricably to oil prices and the two phenomena that occurred in the past could well be repeated. Some hon. Members have tried to lecture the Opposition about the comparative records of Governments in respect of redundancies. We have heard about the willingness of the Labour Government to introduce redundancies and pit closures. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) explained the manner in which he conducted many of the closures when he had responsibility for them.

Over the past few days, we have also heard about the record of the 1960s. It is worth placing on the record the fact that between 1960 and 1970 there were 300,000 voluntary redundancies. Between 1960 and 1964 under Conservative rule, there were 114,000 redundancies. Between 1964 and 1970 there were 186,000 redundancies. That works out at 28,500 a year under the Conservatives and 31,000 under Labour.

There is little to choose between the two. Certainly, there is little to choose between the two when we take account of the unemployment levels prevalent in the 1960s when the people who lost their jobs had an opportunity to go to other employment. They were given the chance of new work. During that period, both Labour and Conservative Governments were prepared to participate in and pursue energetic regional policies.

It is significant that it was the Macmillan Government who facilitated the construction of the Ravenscraig plant in Lanarkshire to create work for the miners who lost their jobs when the Lanarkshire coalfield closed. It is significant that the present Conservative Government have merely facilitated the closure of Ravenscraig and the decline of manufacturing industry in that part of Scotland.

We will no doubt receive promises and Government initiatives, task forces and visits from Prime Ministers. Some jobs will be created. Nevertheless, there is a feeling throughout the country that too little is taking place far too late. Certainly, the experience that I have instanced in respect of Ravenscraig is mirrored throughout the country. There is a profound feeling that the tidal wave of redundancies and closures must stop.

When the first rumours of pit closures emerged, the Government assumed that they would be received by the people in the way in which other lay-offs have been received. Somehow people would think, "Bad luck, but thank God it's not me." Only when the scale of the redundancies and their impact on whole swathes of the country became apparent did our people realise that enough was enough.

Conservative Members have referred to their mailbags, interruptions and demonstrations that they have had at their surgeries. They realise that people in Conservative constituences know that what is happening in mining areas will be happening in their areas before too long unless something is done about it.

When one industry—the mining industry—represents the sole source of employment for an area, it becomes all too clear how fallacious and criminally wrong was the Thatcherite view that there is no such thing as a community, only individuals and families. It is exactly because miners and their families make up what we know to be coalfield communities that public indignation rose to such levels. People became aware that not only the 30,000 British Coal employees but the 3,000 to 4,000 coal workers who are employed by the private contractors who drive the roads under the mines to facilitate the winning of coal will lose their jobs. About 72,000 people are employed by members of the associated British mining equipment companies. It is suggested that, pro rata, for every 1,000 jobs lost in coal mining another 600 will be lost elsewhere. The hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) suggested that 100,000 people will be affected, costing the Exchequer £1·25 billion per annum in lost tax, in social security and in unemployment benefits. On top of that there will be nearly £1·2 billion in redundancy payments.

The impact on areas where mining is the sole source of employment will be almost incalculable. What the Government——

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but there is now a buzz of conversation, which is discourteous to the hon. Gentleman who has the floor. I ask the House to be very much quieter.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): It is that little Whip.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The noise is not confined to one side, I have to say. Mr. O'Neill, please continue.

Mr. O'Neill: The Government have not realised that there is tremendous public respect and admiration for miners and for mining communities. In 1972 the public recognised that the miners had a case, and in 1974 the British public threw out the Tory Government who sought to make the miners dispute a pretext for the general election. In 1984, almost perversely, the British public backed the miners in two ways. One section supported the NUM in its valiant struggle to defend jobs and communities from the threat which tragically became the reality of closure and contraction, while the other section of the public fought miners who refused to strike and carried on working. But none of those who wanted to see the mining industry destroyed and none of those who supported the miners wanted the social and economic devastation which last week's statement unveiled. Faced with an outburst of public feeling on such a scale, it takes a monumentally inept Government to embark on such a course of action.

It is perhaps unfair to blame the whole Government. After all, it was only the magnificent seven who made the decision, but the magnificent seven, like their Japanese forebears, the seven samurai, were supposed to defend villages against tyrannical oppression. The Tory Government make the job of the magnificent seven to act as plundering vandals laying waste to villages, in much the same way as the United States general justified laying to waste a Vietnamese village on the basis that that was the only way in which the village could be saved.

By closing 27 mines British Coal would be left with 21 pits, four of which would be put on a care and maintenance basis, and there would be 17 pits producing coal. The output from the 17 pits will be 31·5 million tonnes in 1993-94 and 29 million tonnes in 1994-95. Output will not be 40 million tonnes because 11 million tonnes will be accounted for by coal which is already in the coal stocks. The Secretary of State for Wales might care to tell the House how, in 1994-95, we will achieve 2·5 million fewer tonnes of production. Will that come from an additional round of pit closures? If so, which other collieries will be closed? I say that not in a frivolous way; I speak as the hon. Member who has the Longannet mine in his constituency. It was announced last week that another report had suggested that——

Mr. Gallie: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it not the case—*[Interruption.]* I apologise, Madam Speaker. It was an intervention, not a point of order.

Mr. O'Neill: Something will have to be done about spurious points of order. I hope that the Chair—*[Interruption.]* Make no mistake about it: both sides of the House are using spurious points of order as a means of interrupting debate and spoiling the flow of discussion. That is something that must be considered. The inept interruption of the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) suggests that something must be done quickly.

There is a distinct possibility that in 1994-95 the size of the coal industry will be reduced further to accommodate the fall in production of 2·5 million tonnes that is anticipated between now and that time. There has been a drop in morale and production at the mine in my constituency, which was mentioned earlier as one of the possible candidates for closure. When people recognise that closures are taking place, they immediately feel vulnerable to a possible further round of closures. I urge the Secretary of State to clarify the position this evening.

We are not here tonight solely to talk about which mines should or should not be closed; we are talking about whether it is necessary for coal production in Britain to fall from 65 million tonnes to 31 million tonnes. Why have certain collieries been designated as running at a loss when we know that in recent years about 35 collieries have gone from loss to profit within 12 months? We also know that five of the 10 collieries that are on the hit list are in that category. It is suggested that six out of the 10 collieries are making a profit. There is no question of their being involved in making a loss.

It has been suggested by Lord Wakeham in the other place that an inquiry should be held to consider the future of the industry and the reduction in the size of the coal take. In the past few days we have seen the politics of the rolling statement. A little more has been disclosed in every discussion, every television programme, and every parliamentary speech. Yesterday, Lord Wakeham identified six points. He said that each colliery should be examined to see whether a case for closure could be sustained. We want to ensure that not just the 21 collieries but the other 10 are included in such an examination.

It has already been suggested today that Trentham is on one list and may go into the other. If that is good enough for Trentham, it is good enough for the other nine. We also want guarantees that, if the colliery review procedure is carried out in respect of the 10, they will not be disadvantaged by the failure to invest. We have had assurances for the 20, but we have not had assurances for the other 10. We need those assurances if the collieries are to have a future.

Mr. Heseltine: I confirm beyond any question of doubt that exactly the same comments I made about Trentham apply to the other nine. It is the responsibility of the Coal Board to conduct its statutory consultation. If, as a result of that consultation, it is decided that any one or all of the 10 should continue, the Coal Board must preserve those pits during the consultation so that they can continue to exist.

Mr. O'Neill: The President of the Board of Trade has not cleared up the matter to everyone's satisfaction. There is a simple way to do so. He could again intervene with British Coal, as he has done during the past two days, and require all 31 pits to be treated equally, so that throughout the British coalfield there will be a sense that justice is being done.

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to the hon. Member for giving way again in limited time. I have spoken to the chairman of British Coal—the hon. Gentleman may call that intervening—to establish that it is British Coal's responsibility to keep open the option that, if consultation provides such a conclusion, each or all of the 10 pits may continue in existence. I have also agreed with the chairman of British Coal that development will be kept going at the other 21 pits during the review so as not to prejudice their continued operation in any way.

Mr. O'Neill: I think that that tells us that there will be no development in the 10 pits, but that there may be in the other 21.

During the debate we have heard instances of miners being sent home from collieries—the right hon. Gentleman would have heard them if he had been present. That is not the way to keep a level playing field for the condemned 10, and until he can give us an assurance that he will intervene in that matter we shall not be prepared to believe what he tells us.

Mr. Heseltine: That is obviously a critical issue. As regards the 10 pits, it is necessary for British Coal to take what measures are appropriate during the statutory consultations to maintain viably the option for them to continue. That does not mean that they will be operating at full production during the statutory period, but that British Coal must be able to ensure that the option to continue exists at the end of the 90 days.

Mr. O'Neill: We shall wait to find out whether that is the final and definitive word from the President.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): Will my hon. Friend seek clarification of which 90-day review period is under discussion? As I understand it, the 90-day review period is the statutory consultation period for redundancy under the employment protection legislation. It has nothing to do with the future of the colliery or with the profitability, or lack of it, of the pits. The other review procedure is the independent voluntary review established after the 1985 strike—it is voluntary and it is up to both sides to agree to enter that procedure.

Mr. O'Neill: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, as that is a valid question. There is confusion. There are two 90-day procedures and we are not clear which of the two is being applied. It is fair enough if we are saying that there is a review procedure which is totally independent of the redundancy payment requirements, but that matter should be clarified during the right hon. Gentleman's winding-up speech—[HON. MEMBERS: "Now."].

Mr. Heseltine: It is the statutory period under the employment legislation—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]. But the matter of concern to the House is that the option to continue those pits in operation is preserved.

Mr. O'Neill: The situation is now clear. The President of the Board of Trade, probably inadvertently, misled the House this afternoon by confusing the statutory redundancy procedures with the review procedure, which was arrived at after 1985. Those of us who have been involved in collieries where the review procedure has been brought into play know from bitter experience that it is very difficult to win an argument with British Coal when it has decided to put a colliery into that procedure.

Yesterday, Lord Wakeham said that there would be discussions with the generators and the 12 regional electricity companies on the market prospects. I hope that the President ensures that the talks do not prejudice the prospect of coal share being maintained at 65 million tonnes by assuming that all the proposed gas-fired power stations will be allowed to proceed. We should like a response this evening to a question posed on a number of occasions: what is to happen to the future applications and those that are in the final stages of consideration? Will they be given the rubber stamp, as has happened in the past, or will there be an attempt to ringfence whatever figure is decided for the coal industry?

We have had an undertaking that there will be a belated examination of the dash for gas. I say "belated" and I am mindful that, yesterday, Lord Wakeham said:

> "There is no question but that gas is cheaper."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 20 December 1992; Vol. 539, c. 673.]

But the Government are supposed to be an open-minded Government who will take everything into consideration.

Lord Wakeham continued—this is the disturbing part—by saying that if the regional electricity companies chose gas in preference to cheaper energy sources and passed the cost on to the consumer in increased prices, they would be in breach of their licence conditions. That will be a fat lot of good to the mines if the closures have already taken place and it is impossible to reopen them. There is no threat to punish a breach of the licence provisions if the measure cannot be enacted quickly enough to restore to the collieries their right to supply coal to the power stations.

Consideration has been promised on the mothballing of some of the pits that are due for closure. The Frances colliery in Kirkcaldy has been operating on a care and maintenance basis for some time. Last week it was announced that, instead of being sustained, it would either be closed or sold if a buyer could be obtained. That does not bode well for the possibility of mothballing in future.

The last undertaking given in the House of Lords yesterday was to look at the proposed level of imports to see whether it was appropriate.

Mr. Tipping: Will the Secretary of State and the President—the great interventionist—say whether he has now picked up the phone to stop Russian coal being burnt at Aldermaston? He gave us a lecture earlier about another local authority. Will he stop 300,000 tonnes of coal from Russia being burnt at Aldermaston?

Mr. O'Neill: I think that the Secretary of State can answer that question when he winds up the debate. We all want to know what the attitude will be towards a wide range of imported coals and what the Government propose to do about the importation of coal from Colombia, which has risen by a phenomenal amount to 2·5 billion tonnes.

Leeds council has yet to sign a contract. Under the competitive tendering process, Leeds council exchanged letters of intent with the coal company. That undertaking has now been revoked. Until the competitive tendering legislation was introduced, there was an agreement whereby all coal burnt had to come from Yorkshire collieries. Therefore, we do not need any lecturing about Labour authorities being forced into taking on responsibilities.

The level of imports does not merely involve numbers, but quality. We want to ensure that orimulsion plays no part in the future energy mix of this country. We want to ensure that a potential pollutant of that character has no part in our energy mix.

It is assumed that if there is a second look at the closure programme it will involve little more than tinkering at the margins. There is certainly a feeling that the people who advised the Secretary of State on the initial statement are those who are to act as judge and jury on the review. In our judgment they are not people to be trusted. We do not have confidence in them or in the way in which they have carried out their responsibilities so far.

The Opposition believe that there is another way to carry out the review. We believe that our motion provides the means whereby the Government can enjoy the respect and confidence of the people of this country—if they carry out the review independently, if they afford the Select Committee proper access to all the materials, and if they require the companies to provide the information on which the Select Committee can make its judgment.

The coal industry does not ask for special pleading. It responded like no other industry in the 1980s to the challenges of new technology and of change, and miners have carried out their work in a way that has resulted in the country respecting them. Everyone—apart from Ministers—respects British Coal and the industry.

If the Government are to discharge their responsibilities in respect of energy policy they need to secure and enjoy public trust, the trust that springs from the belief that the Government are in full possession of the facts and are acting rationally. The events of the past week suggest neither. Our motion offers a way forward which will enjoy the support of those affected by colliery closures. It will enjoy the backing of the country and the agreement of the Labour party. I urge Conservative Members to join us in the Lobbies in support of the motion.

9.36 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): This has been a wide-ranging and comprehensive debate. We have heard 28 speeches and I, like some other Members, have not missed a word of them. I congratulate all who have contributed—especially the hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Godsiff) on his maiden speech. He spoke with great compassion and vigour. It was a good speech; we will hear many more from him. I note that he is a supporter of Charlton Athletic, who are second in the first division and unbeaten this season. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will score many goals for the Opposition in future speeches.

We heard at length from the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), but we did not hear an alternative policy from the Labour party. Indeed, the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) said at the end of the debate that there was little to choose between Labour and Conservative Governments when it came to who had closed most pits. He is wrong. I have the figures. The Government who closed most pits and put most people on the dole were the Labour Government between 1964 and 1970. It is about time we had the facts in this debate. Between 1967 and 1968 there were 59 colliery closures. I have a list of every year since 1946, and there have never been as many closures as that in one year since the war. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about today?"] I am answering the point made by the hon. Member for Clackmannan. It is no use the Labour party thinking it can get away with cheap points without reply. In 1968-69, 46,146 people in the coal industry were put on the dole—so the Labour Government clearly hold the record.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) asked a number of questions. He will know that I have always taken his points very seriously indeed. I have great respect for his expertise in this matter. He asked whether the Select Committee report, which has been quoted by several hon. Members, would be taken seriously. I assure him that it will, but I remind him that it said that no overseas experience is relevant to how the energy industry in England and Wales will develop. I have carefully read that important report which must be taken into account in the review.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet), who has always been noted for knowing a great deal about the energy industry, raised some important facts. Opposition Members who were not present during my Friend's speech should read it in *Hansard*. In it they will see some facts of which they were unaware, if one takes their speeches at face value.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) asked whether the review would be serious. The answer is yes. He also asked whether Liberal Democrat submissions would be accepted. Of course they will, if they are acceptable. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will do no other than to put to the Government all the facts that he and his colleagues wish to put.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey) *rose*——

Mr. Hunt: I shall not give way. I am replying to issues raised by the hon. Members who spoke in the debate.

The hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) has much experience of the National Union of Mineworkers and I respect his expertise on the coal industry. I respect also the expertise of the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) who for many years has represented NACODS. I ask both hon. Gentlemen to respect the expertise of my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) who said that we must consider not only coal communities but the jobs and communities which depend on power stations and gas exploration and the manufacturing industries in the United Kingdom that depend on cheap energy.

Mr. Barron *rose*——

Mr. Hunt: I shall give way in a moment, but I should first like to respond to the important issues that have been raised. I shall respond in writing to those that I am not able to deal with now.

I hope that people will pay attention to the speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison). It was an important statement by a Member who represents a large number of coal miners in one of the most productive collieries in the world. He said that we should look to the future. I have gone underground at the Selby pits which are now reaping the product of a £1,300 million investment by producing 12 million tonnes at a rate of 30 tonnes per man shift. That is quite remarkable. I refer the hon. Members for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) to the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby. They may well look back with some pride to the past—all hon. Members have a right to look back with pride at the coal mining industry—but we must not become rooted in the past. We must look to the future. We cannot shore up any pit, however uneconomic. On 29 January 1985 the right hon. Member for Chesterfield said:

> "There is not a single pit in Britain which is uneconomic."

He probably still holds that view. The greatest threat to the coal industry would be any attempt to average up the cost of economic low-cost pits to subsidise pits that can only be a burden on the economy in general and the coal industry in particular. Those were the words of a right hon. Member who was a Minister for power under a Labour Government.

Mr. Barron: The Secretary of State for Wales was in the Chamber when I spoke earlier. I said that I had no disagreement with the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) about the long-term future of British coal. The Secretary of State heard me say that there is a colliery in my constituency that has recently completed a £183 million investment programme. As a single pit, it has reserves that are better than any of the Selby pits. Last week, the 1,300 who work there—many of them sat in the same classroom as myself as children—were told that they were sacked because it had been decided that the mine would be mothballed. How is that looking after the nation's future?

Mr. Hunt: I shall reply directly to the hon. Gentleman—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] I shall answer. I still rely on my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby, who talked about looking to the future. I say to the hon. Gentleman that in the 1960s there were many pits that had large economic reserves of coal. Machinery was in those

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pits. They were closed so quickly by the then Labour Government that the machinery was lost. I say directly to the hon. Gentleman——

Mrs. Peacock *rose*——

Mr. Hunt: I shall give way to my hon. Friend in a moment. I shall reply to the hon. Member for Rother Valley and then I shall give way.

The hon. Member for Rother Valley knows that there have always been different views. I am sure that he has been present during review procedures. There are always differences of view about what is an economic pit.

Mrs. Peacock: Does my right hon. Friend agree that what the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) has just said—much information has been brought to some of us this week—is a good reason for including the 10 pits in the review? If my right hon. Friend can give the House the assurance that they will be included, he will persuade me not to vote against the Government this evening.

Mr. Hunt: I note that the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) is in his place. Taff Merthyr is one of the 10. I understand from the Taff Merthyr work force that the pit has serious problems. I know that the hon. Gentleman will disagree, but the closures of Taff Merthyr and Betws were announced on 20 August and not last week. They are part of the 10, but, as I have said, the closures were announced not last week but on 20 August. The men met and, as I understand it —regrettably for them—they had to accept that the pit did not have an economic future.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I intervene because the Secretary of State for Wales has referred specifically to Taff Merthyr. There is a sense of resignation because a good and reasonable plan was put forward but rejected—it was not listened to—by British Coal. We are asking only that that plan should be submitted to a new review procedure and not to the same people who turned it down. The plan should be reconsidered during the 90 days.

In the Taff Merthyr area nearly 25 per cent. of the men are out of work. There has been a loss of 4,000 jobs in manufacturing. Thorn has been closed. There is now the prospect of another 380 job losses, and three other pits are being closed. Is the right hon. Gentleman offering us more of the same?

Mr. Hunt: No, not at all.

I know that the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney will disagree with the miner whose words I am about to quote, but when asked about whether he would fight for the future of the pit on BBC Wales he replied:

"Why should we fight when we run out of reserves next year?"

I tell my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) that British Coal has told my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade that the 10 pits are currently loss making and that there is no prospect of viability in the foreseeable future.

Dr. Michael Clark: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the men employed in the 10 pits subject to the review procedure will be laid off work on full pay for three months whereas in the 21 pits that are subject to the moratorium the miners will be mining coal for three months and earning bonuses? The difference is that both sets of men will be paid while one set is mining no coal and the other set continue to mine. What sort of economic sense is that?

Mr. Hunt: Let me make matters absolutely clear about the 10 pits. British Coal is under a statutory duty to consult on those closures.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hunt: Just one moment.

It must be a genuine consultation. British Coal has given the criteria to show that those pits are currently loss making and have no prospect of viability in the foreseeable future. If there is any serious doubt about whether those criteria apply, British Coal will have to demonstrate that that doubt is removed and that the criteria have been met, because, under the legislation, it not only has to give reasons for closure, but it must prove that the consultation is a genuine one. That is absolutely clear.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): On the review, can my right hon. Friend say whether the best possible estimates can be given for all costs, whether direct or indirect, which would be incurred by all Government Departments for each option under review?

Mr. Hunt: I know how deeply my hon. Friend feels about this matter and I know that he has discussed it with my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. I want to be as helpful to him as possible because he has raised an important point. These are complex matters, as he knows, and I will arrange for my right hon. Friends and myself to explore his concerns with him and, if possible, to satisfy him that we have considered the issues properly.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that I have two large power stations in my constituency. He will be aware that we in Northern Ireland are dependent upon external fuel resources—we have to import all our needs. He will also be aware that we still await an interconnector to Scotland, a gas pipeline to the mainland and opportunity to develop our own lignite reserves. What assurances can he give me and my colleagues that, in any future strategy review, the particular needs of Northern Ireland will be given consideration?

Mr. Hunt: Without any qualification, I give the hon. Gentleman that assurance. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must settle down.

Mr. Hunt: There are still a number of points to which I wish to refer. My hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) quite rightly raised the whole issue of Euro-comparisons. During the debate we have heard a great deal about German coal. I have a copy of the German coal plan 2005 and I want to put the record straight. It states:

"Kohlekonzept 2005 lays the foundations for an efficient and viable German hard coal mining industry in the long term though on a lower level than today."

I cite from page 18 headed "Conclusion".

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): What about British coal?

Mr. Hunt: German coal was also debated tonight. That report states:

"Kohlekonzept 2005 has serious and far-reaching consequences for the mining companies and their employees. The number of mines will now decline from 26 to 17. Hard coal production must be reduced further. In the hard coal mining industry alone, as many as 40,000 workers will have now to be made redundant mainly in the areas with serious structural problems."

My hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley was therefore right.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) spoke about the overall economic situation, and he will have been heartened by the words of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister last night. My right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) emphasised the dangers of a one-industry town, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland).

My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) also contributed—and let no one say that there is no compassion on this side of the House. All my right hon. and hon. Friends care deeply about the coal industry. My hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) spoke at great length, and I take account of all his points. My hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen knows that I share her deep concern for mining communities.

Mr. Churchill: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the review will address aggressively the unlevel playing field against coal, and specifically the reduction from 65 million tonnes to 40 million tonnes?

Mr. Hunt: Without qualification.

Mr. Cash: My right hon. Friend and I worked together closely during the miners' strike and he knows what I am getting at. As there is some confusion, can he make one point clear? On the basis of his remarks today, is there any reasonable expectation—is it Government policy—that the 10 pits will be included in the review procedure set up by the Government? A clear answer please—yes or no.

Mr. Hunt: The 10 pits will of course be considered under the statutory consultation procedure, and British Coal must prove its case.

Mr. Illsley: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I apologise for raising one at this stage, but the House is in danger of inadvertently being misled. There is no 90-day statutory review procedure. The statutory procedure relates to redundancies, not closures.

Madam Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order but a debating point.

Mr. Hunt: I am talking about the 90-day statutory consultation procedure. I have been very open about that. It must be a genuine procedure, genuine consultation—that is, about the 10 pits.

Wales has seen a dramatic decline in the coal industry but we have looked to the future, not to the past. We have provided many new jobs in former coal-mining constituencies. When Labour closed pits, it left slag heaps. There was no enterprise company, people were thrown out of work, and valley communities were dispirited. Since this Government came to power, we have pursued a massive land clearance programme and brought new jobs and opportunities to Wales.

I give one other example. In one day we lost 8,000 jobs at Shotton steelworks. This Government created the Deeside industrial park, which now provides 10,000 jobs. The valleys of south Wales have new jobs and opportunities, and an environment that has been painstakingly restored to its former glory.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must contain herself: the Secretary of State is not giving way.

Mr. Hunt: Our case is unanswerable. I urge my right hon. and hon. Members to join me in throwing out the Opposition motion and accepting the Government amendment.

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 307, Noes 320.

Division No. 75] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John

Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum

McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*

Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith

Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Jack Thompson.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William

Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rucl'f)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*

Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom-Ewell)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments):—*

The House divided: Ayes 320, Noes 305.

Division No 76] **[10.17 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James

Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom-Ewell)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*

Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Speller, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Jack Thompson.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House recognises the difficult economic judgements the Government had to make in accepting British Coal's proposals to close 31 collieries; endorses the Government's conclusion that British Coal should introduce a moratorium on the closure of 21 of these pits unless the workforce agree otherwise; welcomes the speedy action of the Government in introducing special assistance measures for coal mining areas; and notes that the moratorium will enable the Government to take views and evidence on the future of the pits in question and to consider these in the context of the Government's energy policy, including the consequences of that policy for British Coal and the employment prospects for the industry, and allow the Trade and Industry Select Committee to consider the issues as it thinks fit, and the House to debate the issues that will be presented to it in the New Year before decisions are reached about future closures.

PETITION

Pit Closures

10.31 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I rise to present a petition. It says:

> **To the honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of the citizens of the United Kingdom—**

between 25,000 and 30,000 of them from Chesterfield and elsewhere—

> **showeth that the closure of more pits in Britain will cause terrible hardship and destroy many mining communities and tens of thousands of jobs in industry; that Britain's manufacturing strength was built upon coal; that coal**

[Mr. Tony Benn]

> reserves are available that would last for hundreds of years and are essential for our industrial renewal; and that British coal is the most suitable coal available for the generation of electricity.

The petition concludes with the traditional words:

> Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will instruct the Government to reverse the pit closure programme at once, to stop the importation of subsidised coal from abroad, to suspend opencast operations and adopt new policies that put people before profits and protect the environment and the quality of life that depends upon it. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Slaughterhouse Closures (South-West)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

10.32 pm

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for selecting this subject for debate, since it is of crucial importance to rural communities in the United Kingdom. It is instructive to see how the Labour Benches are emptying. Opposition Members were screaming about employment prospects for one group in the community earlier today and beating their breasts about the perils of unemployment, yet they do not see fit to stay to defend the jobs of the rural community which remain under threat from some of the resolutions which are before us today.

At the outset we must ask who directive 497 and some of the subsequent regulations have been made for. Have they been made for British consumers, who have not been subject to any particular disease processes in the food chain? Have they been made for British farmers, who might now find themselves disadvantaged? Have they been made for British animals, who might now find themselves transported over greater distances to slaughterhouses? Have they been made for the rural communities, which might now have to face higher unemployment and more hardship? Perhaps they have been made for fellow European farmers.

By studying the statistics, I have found that the answer to all those questions must be no. The only conclusion that I can draw is that the regulations are drawn up to suit the bureaucrats of Brussels and beyond.

I thank my fellow Conservative Members of Parliament, and not only those from the west country. I single out my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) and my hon. Friends the Members for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Robinson) and for Wansdyke (Mr. Aspinwall) for their tremendous support in this venture. I also thank the many Conservative Members who have been in touch with their local branches of the National Farmers Union and who have shown great sympathy in the issue, which affects the whole of the United Kingdom and not merely the south-west.

The issue is of particular importance to the south-west because of the number of small abattoirs there. The effect of directive 497 cannot be underestimated. The Federation of Fresh Meat Wholesalers has said that it will cost about £400,000 for the smaller slaughterhouses to reach the level of standards of structural change required by the directive, and an infinitely greater sum for some of the larger ones. That is unacceptable.

The most recent information supplied to the Commons Library by the Meat and Livestock Commission said that it expects the number of slaughterhouses to fall from 670 to possibly fewer than 350. That is extremely serious.

Why do we face that situation? Several factors are involved. First is the question of grants. Why is it that in Belgium, France and parts of Germany grants are available to small slaughterhouses to make the structural changes required by the directive, but the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has not made those grants available to small British abattoirs? I expect to hear a clear statement on that from the Minister this evening.

The second factor is derogation. Eighty derogations have been approved so far for the United Kingdom, and

512 have been applied for. I may be very simple, but it seems to me that the majority want to stay in business. The Government are asking for structural plans and for three-year business plans so that small abattoirs show that they want to stay in business for the full three years. In the present economic climate, what business in the United Kingdom can give an absolute guarantee that it will be in business in three years' time? Does not the Minister think that that is an unrealistic question in this year?

The third question is animal transport. I have had many submissions on that subject from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and other interested groups. If we lose small slaughterhouses, animals will have to be transported over ever greater distances to be slaughtered. That cannot be in the interests of animal welfare, which is extremely important to many of my constituents and to those of many of the hon. Members remaining in the Chamber.

An additional welfare question concerns casualty stock. At present, an animal can be taken to the closest abattoir. Under the changes, if small abattoirs go out of business, animals will either be transported over a greater distance or, if there is a spare vet—which will be unlikely—they could be shot on the spot and then taken. It is far more likely that they will be taken to the knacker's yard and used for pet food, with a subsequent loss of income to our hard-pressed farmers; that cannot be in the interests of the farming community.

On top of all that, there is the issue of competition. If there is a reduction in the number of small slaughterhouses, there will be far less competition in the sector and far more price fixing. Therefore, smaller farmers in the south-west will find it far more difficult to obtain the sort of economic deal that they require to make their businesses viable. Competition lies at the heart of the Government's policy, and we must be willing to maintain it at all costs.

What about those with small numbers of stock who wish to take three or four animals per week to slaughter? Will they be dealt with by the large slaughterhouses which have contracts with Tesco or Sainsbury? No, they will not—such slaughterhouses are designed for a steady throughput, and it would be uneconomic to put only a few animals through. Therefore, there will be more farmyard slaughter which will not improve animals' welfare or hygiene in the food chain. It will go against all the standards that we rightly set out to maintain.

Conservative Members are not complaining about the directive. We are not talking about the implications for public health or food hygiene—we are right behind all those aims, as every right-minded citizen should be. We want the Government to take a sympathetic attitude to the implementation of the directive.

As if all those problems were not enough to bear, new veterinary charges have been imposed on our small slaughterhouses. Having escaped the knife of Europe, it now seems that they are to be sacrificed on the high altar of domestic bureaucracy. They are being asked to stomach charges when vets come to make ante-mortem and post-mortem inspections in addition to the existing meat inspections, although meat inspectors have many years of experience and have never been shown to be inadequate. That creates a monopoly for vets whereby they can charge the small abattoirs not only £41 per hour as at present—in the poultry sector the charges are already £48 per hour or more—but a standing charge for appearing, unsocial hour charges and travel-to-work expenses.

Baker's slaughterhouse in Nailsea in my constituency has estimated that those charges alone, irrespective of the structural changes that it will have to make, will impose additional costs on it of £40,000 to £45,000 per year. That is inconsistent with the survival of many slaughterhouses in the south-west of this country.

Quite rightly, much anxiety has been expressed in the House today about the loss of jobs throughout the country—possibly 8,000, with the closure of 10 pits. In the south-west, there could be job losses of 1,000 to 1,500 from the closure of the small slaughterhouses alone. There is no beating of breasts about it; Opposition Members are not screaming about it. My small farmers who might go out of business are not being offered £37,000. I want to know why.

Today we are looking for flexibility. I accept that we need decent health and public hygiene regulations for our slaughterhouses, but will the Minister consider a possible compromise? While we accept that, for the sake of public confidence, we must maintain veterinary inspection in our small slaughterhouses, why does it have to be all day and every day that they are slaughtering? Why cannot there be—as for sheep dipping—regular inspections of which the houses are given warning so that they are encouraged to keep up their standards, without the penal levels of funding otherwise required?

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my hon. Friend emphasise a point that I think he has missed—that the slaughterhouse is essential for the community of the town? If it is taken away, one begins to destroy part of the agricultural base of many communities and towns in the south-west. It is imperative for my hon. Friend the Minister to understand that.

Dr. Fox: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that issue. All too often in the House we measure everything in pounds, shillings and pence—if I may say that in this communautaire age. We are talking about the quality of life in a rural community. People should be able to go to their local butcher and get the cuts of meat they want, and not have to go to the nearest Tesco or Sainsbury for it. The quality of life in rural areas is being put at risk by the attempt to impose, by means of a centralised European directive, a certain solution across the whole Community which takes no account of regional variations.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is disgraceful that the Opposition Front Bench is not manned for this debate and that only one Labour Member—and from an urban constituency—is here?

Does my hon. Friend further agree that, although we may implement the conditions of the regulations, we know full well that people on the other side of the channel, especially in Spain and France, will not do so? Is not that diabolical? If the far west of Cornwall loses its abattoirs, that will mean immeasurable suffering for animals and for rural communities.

Dr. Fox: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The only surprising aspect of his intervention was his surprise that no one is on the Opposition Front Bench. The Opposition have no interest in rural issues, yet they are the very people who make the biggest fuss about the environment and social issues. They have no interest in what happens outside towns. It is a symptom of the increasing

[Dr. Fox]

urbanisation of our politics that the Opposition show not the slightest interest in an issue that affects large parts of the United Kingdom.

What is happening in the rest of Europe is certainly important. My plea to the Minister is: whatever directives are implemented in the United Kingdom, will the Government ensure that they are equally implemented in the rest of Europe? The farming sector is sick and tired of being made to follow one set of directives in the United Kingdom, fully policed, while different practices are followed in the rest of the Community, inadequately policed. Surely it is not too much to ask for fairness.

This week I have received many letters from constituents on this issue. One of them said to me, "Please ask the Minister for fairness and flexibility. If we are not given them, there will be no slaughterhouses left in this constituency." Then the south-west will lose more than its small slaughterhouses; we will have lost part of our community and our quality of life—and that is too much for us to bear.

10.46 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox) on securing such an important debate about a matter dear to the heart of Ministers. It is, as my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) says, extraordinary that the Labour party should not even field a Front-Bench spokesman for so important a debate. And only one Labour Member, the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay), who has always taken a close interest in rural affairs, is present.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is seized of the real importance and difficulty of this matter and of the crucial importance that it represents to the farming communities of all my hon. Friends who have stayed behind tonight. My hon. Friends the Members for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), for Westbury (Mr. Faber), for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Robertson), for Wansdyke (Mr. Aspinwall), and for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson), and my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), have all drawn my attention to the important contribution which the slaughterhouse industry makes to the local economy and to the needs of farmers, and to the need to ensure that these necessary new regulations are introduced sensibly and sensitively.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): Will the Minister acknowledge that my colleagues from the south-west have also made representations to him? In the absence of an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, may I say that we welcome the determination of the Minister and his colleagues, while in the European Community driving seat, to ensure not only that the details of the regulations are fair but also their enforcement? We look for action and results by the end of the year.

Mr. Soames: I freely acknowledge the presence of a large number of Liberal Members who, representing rural seats, take a close interest in these matters. Many of them have written to me, and, I hope, have received prompt replies.

I shall set the new legislation in context. As my hon. Friend the Member for Woodspring has said, there has been a steady decline in slaughterhouse numbers in Great Britain over the past 20 years. In 1972, there were 1,890 red meat slaughterhouses. In 1982 there were only 1,062, already a substantial fall, and we now expect licence applications from just under 600 in 1992. They have closed as consumers have demanded better quality and more hygienically produced meat. That is because of consumers' growing preference for one-stop shopping, with all that that implies—many of them not necessarily for the better. Therefore, with or without these new rules, the number of slaughterhouses would continue to decline.

About half the meat produced in this country already comes from slaughterhouses which comply with European Community standards. In preparation for the single market, the Commission published in 1990 a package of proposals extending the scope of the long-standing EC hygiene directives to cover all meat production, and not just that intended for intra-Community trade. The new red meat directive has been implemented in Great Britain by the Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992 which were laid before the House on 10 September.

In drafting these rules, we had full and close consultation with the industry which, having suffered for years from the cumulative effects of various food scares and highly alarmist media coverage, recognised the need to make sure that the highest possible standards are operated at all stages of the production chain, from the farm, right through to the retail shop. The Government for their part took the view that implementation of the single market rules offered the opportunity to ensure that, against the background of the continuing rationalisation of the industry, those slaughterhouses which survived were the ones which were willing to invest in maintaining the best possible level of hygiene.

Consumers increasingly demand that the meat that they buy comes from animals which have been reared in accordance with good sound husbandry and welfare practices. My hon. Friends will appreciate that the brilliant characteristics of this country's husbandry will be an immense advantage to our farmers in securing further export markets.

Consumers wish to be sure that animals have been slaughtered humanely and in hygienic conditions.

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): Joseph Morris of South Kilworth in my constituency has the strong backing of innumerable consumers who enjoy his product and wish to continue to buy it. Unfortunately, he cannot afford to employ a vet full time. Could my hon. Friend the Minister look into that? Mr. Morris, who is a slaughterman, will be put out of business by the new regulations.

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing that case to my attention. If he writes to me, I shall look into the matter in detail. I shall speak about official vets later.

For the reasons that I have outlined, the Government have fully supported the principle of a common hygiene standard throughout the European Community. As my hon. Friends know, the public are now exposed to far more information than in the past—and unfortunately misinformation, as those of us who sat through the Opposition day motion on BSE before the summer recess know. We witnessed the serious damage that Labour's allegations caused to the beef industry in this country. Unfortunately, people are exposed to more misinformation by ill-informed sensation-seeking media about food and its risks and benefits than they were 10 or 20 years ago. As a result, they are much more interested in and critical of the practices involved in food production.

The time has come to do away with the distinction between meat produced for the EC export market and meat produced for home consumption. The new regulations replace nearly all existing British legislation on red meat hygiene. They come into operation on 1 January 1993 when all slaughterhouses, cutting premises and cold stores will need a current licence from the relevant territorial agricultural department.

Dr. Fox: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Soames: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not. I must get on.

The regulations should come as no surprise to anyone, in view of the high degree of consultation that has taken place. Last year we circulated more than 10,000 copies of an information pack describing exactly what was required post-1992. They made it plain that the fresh meat regulations apply to all slaughterhouses and to wholesale premises where red meat is cut up or stored. Premises that supply the final consumer directly—for example, butchers' shops—are exempt.

Dr. Fox: I follow my hon. Friend's argument about exporting meat, but what are the domestic reasons in terms of health hygiene? We have an excellent record of meat inspection. For example, many of our animals are inspected at livestock markets before going to slaughter. Why are our domestic farmers being penalised? I fail to understand why extra precautions are being introduced when there has not been a hygiene failure in the market.

Mr. Soames: I shall come to that, if my hon. Friend will allow me to develop my argument.

The hygiene requirements of the regulations merely reflect the good hygiene practices which have been embodied in our legislation for some time and which domestic slaughterhouses should have been following in any event. I am sure that my hon. Friend will accept, however, that there is, in some plants, clear and irrefutable evidence of a need to achieve real improvements in day-to-day hygiene if the plants are to remain in business.

There are some new structural requirements in the rules. They are all designed to ensure that meat is protected from contamination during the production process. However, we negotiated for extra time to be made available after 1992 for businesses that are committed to achieving the new structural standards but are unable to do so before the regulations come into force. Over 1,600 businesses in England and Wales, including over 500 slaughterhouses, have indicated that they wish to upgrade. Our field staff are working closely with them to agree what needs to be done.

We are being as flexible as we possibly can—I ask my hon. Friends to accept that that is the position—in the advice that we are giving. The local Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food veterinarian and the plant operators are working together to find the best solutions to problems within the context of the regulations. Where my hon. Friends find that there are problems in this context, I shall be grateful if they will get in touch with me. If they do so, I shall have the matter thoroughly investigated.

There are less onerous structural requirements for slaughterhouses which slaughter less than 12 livestock units a week for supply to the home market. There are no derogations from the hygiene requirements, and all premises, in order to be licensed, will need to comply with the requirements from 1 January 1993. We are conscious of the need to maintain a sense of balance where premises need extra time to make structural changes, and we are looking for sensible short-term expedients to protect hygiene that will not soak up the funds that are needed for major works.

I accept that, because of past under-investment, the regulations will require many red meat plants previously operating only in the domestic market to incur considerable expenditure on upgrading their premises. On the other hand, many operators have already invested considerable sums of their own money in bringing their premises up to European Community standards. They are understandably concerned that their competitors should also have to improve their premises. They are already aggrieved that those same competitors may be given up to three years after 1992 in which to do it.

The House would not expect me to go into any confidential details of the individual premises that we are intending to license. I can give the assurance, however, that, if any premises close as a result of the introduction of the fresh meat regulations, it will be because they cannot meet the required hygiene standards or they have made a commercial decision not to invest in the requisite structural upgrading.

Everyone in the industry recognises that there is over-capacity in the British slaughterhouse sector. I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that those who are prepared to achieve the best meat production and hygiene standards should be the ones that survive. In my view, that is only right and proper.

When we consulted publicly on the fresh meat regulations, it was clear from the responses that we received that there was considerable concern about the extension of veterinary supervision to the domestic meat market. I know that it is a matter that concerns many hon. Members who are now in their places. It is a controversial requirement in the United Kingdom, but in most other member states veterinary supervision of meat and animal products for public health purposes has always been the norm even for meat sold on the domestic market.

We fully support the principle of veterinary supervision at the slaughterhouse and, in particular, the requirement that an official veterinary surgeon should inspect every animal, ante-mortem, to detect animals which may be suffering from conditions liable to render the carcase of the animal unfit for human consumption. Veterinary surgeons receive training that uniquely equips them to detect these problems and to give expert assessment of animal welfare in the lairage.

We appreciated from the start that the directive's requirements on supervision would have significant implications for plant operators who will have to meet the increased costs of the inspection regime. We are aware that that was borne out by the responses to our public consultation exercise and by the letters that we have received from hon. Members.

[Mr. Soames]

In our guidance to local authorities on how to implement the regulations, we have sought to give them as much flexibility as we can. It will be for the local authorities to decide what the most cost-effective arrangements will be in their particular circumstances. We have drafted the guidance in such a way that, for example, a veterinarian based at a large slaughterhouse might also be able to supervise one or two smaller premises in the area. I would urge local authorities to take full advantage of the flexibility that we have made available to maximise the use of all available staff, including the meat inspectors who play a very valuable role in ensuring the safety of our food.

Local authorities should consider whether they can co-operate over the provision of official veterinary surgeon services and to see whether some change to the hours of slaughter in slaughterhouses in their area would help to make best use of OVS staff and minimise the cost to the operators. On this point, of course, the slaughterhouses themselves have a significant role to play.

What we cannot do is regulate the individual contracts between the OVS and the local authority. I know that there is some concern about these charges but they are a matter for local negotiation and will, inevitably, be subject to the operation of market forces.

I do not believe it would be in the interests of our meat industry to exclude any slaughterhouse from the requirement for veterinary supervision. That would be contrary both to the European legislation and to the interest of consumers. There is a real danger that other member states could challenge lax controls or use them as an excuse not to allow imports of our beef. Furthermore, they would introduce an element of distortion between slaughterhouses in the same area, and I think that my hon. Friends would agree that it is hardly likely that we will get a level playing field in Europe if we cannot even establish a level playing field in the United Kingdom.

In conclusion, I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Woodspring that we shall be sensible and flexible in our interpretation and application of the new regulations. I recognise that it is not easy for businesses to finance major structural improvements at present. We will do all that we can to be sensitive to firms that are genuinely committed to reaching the new standards, but we cannot and will not ignore bad hygiene practices.

My hon. Friend raised a number of other points in connection with the travelling of animals, grants and casualty slaughter and, because of the time constraints, I will, if I may, write to him in detail about those points.

If premises close, it will be either because they cannot or will not improve their hygiene standards or because they have taken the commercial decision not to invest in the future of their business. At the end of the day, I have no doubt that the British consumer will continue to enjoy the best meat in the world, prepared in premises that will be the equal of anything in Europe. I want to assure my hon. Friend that we take seriously the extremely important matter that he has raised tonight and we will ensure, to the best of our ability, that no one will be disadvantaged.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 22 October 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITY OF BRISTOL (PORTISHEAD DOCKS) BILL *[LORDS] (BY ORDER)*

Read a Second time, and committed.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords]*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (GREEN PARK) BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 29 October.

BANK OF CREDIT AND COMMERCE INTERNATIONAL

Ordered,

That there be laid before this House a Return of the Report of Lord Justice Bingham's inquiry into the supervision of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (excluding the appendices to the Report).—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime

2. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new initiatives police forces are being encouraged to take to meet public concern about car crime, street crime and vandalism.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): Police are playing a full part in car crime prevention year, the development of the safer cities programme and community-based initiatives designed to tackle local street crime.

Mr. Martin: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's reply. Will he assure me that he is fully aware of the deep public concern about lawlessness on the streets and of the continuing need for a visible and effective police presence in combating it? Can he give specific examples of action taken and proposed to be taken by Hampshire police to help meet these concerns, which are shared by me and many other residents of Portsmouth?

Mr. Wardle: I entirely understand the public concern that my hon. Friend describes. Hampshire police have taken a special unit to Portsmouth to run a vigorous campaign against street crime and drug-related crime. In the first six months of this year they achieved 167 arrests. They are also involved in the sold secure scheme and the secure car parks project, and with local schools they are fighting vandalism with the ACE detection scheme—A for accident prevention, C for crime prevention and E for environmental awareness.

Mr. Winnick: Is it not unfortunate, to say the least, that at a time of increasing crime we have the added worry of the latest terrorist outrages in London and elsewhere? Should it not be made clear by the entire House that no matter how much terrorism is perpetrated on the mainland and in Northern Ireland the people of Britain will not be intimidated by terror and the terrorists' campaign will certainly not succeed?

Mr. Wardle: I entirely share the hon. Gentleman's sentiments. I am sure that the whole House deplores the activities of the terrorists.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Is my hon. Friend aware of the strong support given by Norfolk police to the Crimestoppers initiative which is funded nationally by the Community Action Trust? Will the Government reaffirm their support for the initiative and encourage chief constables to provide further publicity and support for that good way of fighting crime?

Mr. Wardle: Yes, indeed; the Government adopt a comprehensive approach against crime—not only increased spending but strengthened powers for the courts, more neighbourhood watch schemes, more youth crime prevention panels. It is a partnership against crime involving the police, local authorities, voluntary agencies, business and the whole community.

Mr. Michael: Will the Minister accept that what people want is policemen on the street with the time to deal with the community and with crime? Does he acknowledge that the rising crime of recent years has left the police overstretched and looking for more support from the Government?

Mr. Wardle: What people want is that crime should be tackled most effectively by the police. It is worth bearing it in mind that while crime has been increasing steadily throughout the western world, in the United Kingdom there is far less risk of crimes of violence, although car crime has been on the increase. The hon. Gentleman will wish to recall that there are 16,000 more uniformed police officers than in 1979 and 12,500 more civilian staff working for the police.

3. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what support car crime prevention year has received from car manufacturers.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Michael Jack): Many car manufacturers have responded very positively to the message of car crime prevention year by contributing or promising support worth more than £3 million; in addition, many more new cars are now being fitted with security systems as standard equipment.

Mrs. Knight: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply, but is he aware that most thefts from cars take place when the cars are not locked properly or the windows have been left open? What further measures will the Government take to highlight that problem, to ensure that individuals take more care of and responsibility for their cars?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend will be aware that we have spent £5 million on car crime prevention year to raise awareness of the precise points that she has raised. The surveys that we have undertaken to see whether that awareness has registered with the public reveal a great appreciation of those issues. In addition, we have tackled the problem of theft from cars and of cars from car parks through our new secured car parks initiative. I am pleased to tell the House that the first awards for that initiative have already been made.

Mr. Corbett: I speak as someone with first-hand experience of car crime, having had one nicked on the way to a crime prevention conference during the general election campaign. Although I welcome the better interest that manufacturers now take in this problem, will the Minister try to persuade them to make it standard in every model now produced that the aerial should be built into the back window and the place where the radio goes is screened? We should try to knock back the temptation to steal because, as the hon. Gentleman is aware, there are people who know their way around security systems.

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman makes some practical points. I hope that he will visit the motor show, as he will find that there has been a considerable improvement in the specification of cars on offer. He may find, as I have done through my research, that nearly all new cars—certainly those manufactured in the United Kingdom—have built-in radio protection devices. The hon. Gentleman has raised vital points which I hope will be noted by manufacturers beyond the walls of the House.

4. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received from the police concerning the fight against crime.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I receive regular representations from chief officers and police authorities about a variety of issues relating to crime and policing.

Mr. French: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that in relation to certain crimes there is a public perception that the police have greater powers than they do? Will he try to take steps to ensure that the public fully understand the extent to which the police can investigate certain crimes and the extent to which they cannot?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. The public make ever-increasing demands on the police which often lie somewhat outside the realm of crime detection and crime prevention. There are some limitations on the powers of the police in dealing with crime, but we consistently try to extend those powers which are deficient. Modern aids which flow from the opening of the national criminal intelligence service and the potential introduction of computerised fingerprint matching will greatly improve the ability of the police to obtain more information about crime and to act effectively when investigating it.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Have the police also told the Secretary of State that in areas such as mine in inner-city Manchester a considerable proportion of crimes of violence against people and property are related to drug offences? I am not trying to score a political point, but is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that many people in such areas believe that there is no strategy whatever for dealing with the drug problem? I ask the Home Secretary to give the House some confidence that he views that problem with the seriousness that it demands.

Mr. Clarke: I shall be as helpful as I can as I share some of the hon. Gentleman's thoughts. A great deal is being done in this regard. We have 20 local drug abuse prevention teams and within the schools the National Curriculum Council has encouraged a cross-curricular theme in health education to give more information about drug abuse. Many agencies are involved in helping those who are victims of drug abuse as well as increasing awareness of the dangers. I share the hon. Gentleman's belief that there is a need for a better strategy to pull all those things together and I am looking at the very problem now.

Mr. Riddick: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that police officers seem to be spending far too much time doing paperwork inside police stations when they should be on the streets fighting crime? In particular, they seem to spend literally hours transcribing taped interviews with suspects. Has my right hon. and learned Friend any plans to tackle that serious problem?

Mr. Clarke: Again, I am sure that my hon. Friend has a valid point. We have to strike the balance between all the necessary safeguards that we introduce to ensure that the criminal justice system works properly and fairly—for example, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 was a great advance on that front, helping good policing and safeguarding suspects—and ensuring that we do not introduce procedures so elaborate that a great deal of time is taken up away from the beat and investigative work. Among other things, improvements in the arrangements between police forces and the Crown prosecution service and a better understanding of what paperwork and preparation are required are leading to some improvements, so that paperwork is kept to the necessary minimum.

Mr. Alton: Pursuing the reply that the Home Secretary gave a few moments ago, does he agree that the easy availability of heroin and Ecstacy is a powerful pressure for crime, especially in our urban and city areas? Does he agree that the sequestration of drug dealers' and pushers' assets is one of the most effective ways to show that drug pushing will not pay? Should not those assets be ploughed back into the communities that have been exploited by drug dealers?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to the hon. Member. As a country, we are always looking for ways to prevent criminality and to get to the causes of crime. The spread of drug abuse should be one of our main targets because many crimes are associated with drugs and with offenders who are abusing drugs. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we must tackle it in every way. Sequestering the proceeds of crime and dealing with the laundering of the proceeds of drug trafficking are important and this week we are introducing a Bill in another place to strengthen further our powers to deal with those matters.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that much of the increase in the crime figures is due to increased reporting of crime? In particular, does he agree that many more cases of domestic violence are reported because of the changed attitude of the police, who previously did not want to get involved but who now pursue batterers? They arrest and charge them and ensure that they are brought to justice, which encourages many battered wives to complain to the police.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. and learned Friend. The figures reflect the worrying trend in crime, of which we are all aware. One must bear it in mind that reported crime has been increasing for the past 40 years, but much crime is not reported and apparent increases in incidents arise either from the fact that domestic violence is now taken seriously or from the fact that more property owners are insured, which tends to lead to variations in the figures. In the near future my hon. Friend the Minister of State will be making an announcement about the British crime survey and shedding some more light on how we might achieve a more accurate picture of crime and better crime statistics.

Mrs. Ewing: While I welcome the Home Secretary's genuine comments about tackling drug-related offences, can he give a further sign of what he means by looking at that problem very seriously? Has a time scale been laid down by the Government for co-ordination between the various Departments involved—Customs and Excise, the Department for Education, the Scottish Office and a variety of other Departments? Is there a time scale whereby he will lay down a clear strategy, as the issue has consistently been raised with Members of Parliament by representatives of the police, who know that it is one of the greatest threats to society?

Mr. Clarke: I do not have a time scale for producing any statements, but the fact that two Members have shared my view that we need to tackle an overall strategy and to pull the various agencies together will give added urgency to the work that I have in hand. I hope to come back on that as soon as I can.

Mr. Shersby: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the considerable concern felt by the police about the amount of time taken up transcribing audio-taped interviews? Will he consider extending the excellent trials that have already commenced using video cameras, with a view to using that more modern technique for recording interviews?

Mr. Clarke: Personally, I greatly approve of the introduction of audio recordings of interviews and I am anxious for progress with video recordings. I have seen some of the results of the excellent trials that have been conducted so far. As the courts are not yet equipped to deal with video evidence, however, it is likely that any extension of video recording would still give rise to the need for transcripts. Some progress has been made in editing videos in a way that is acceptable to the Crown prosecution service and useful in the courts. I am sure that one day the courts will be able to see the relevant part of a video interview without any paperwork in between, but that depends as much on technology and on changes in court procedure as it does on progress on our front.

Mr. Blair: We know that a crime is committed every six seconds of every day and that crime has increased by more than 50 per cent. in the past few years. We also know that the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention has not met for almost two years. Is the Home Secretary aware that the country is not looking for complacent statements about the situation getting better when it is getting worse but that the country is looking to him, instead of trying to do the jobs of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the President of the Board of Trade, to do his own job as Secretary of State for the Home Department and reduce crime levels?

Mr. Clarke: I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his new post. I am glad to see him visible as shadow Home Secretary. I have no doubt that when he gets into the one job he will take an interest in the wider scene.

Nothing that I said was remotely complacent. I did not deny that there is a problem. I do not deny that we have a rising incidence of criminality, but I point to our record of putting resources and manpower into tackling that problem and of reforming the powers of the courts in an attempt to contain it. We all know that in the modern world most developed countries face the problem. It is my determination to press on with improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the police force and all the time to examine the powers of the courts to ensure that we can increase the protection of the public.

Mr. Knapman: Not all crime occurs in the inner cities. For example, there are far too many incidents of crime in the villages of rural Gloucestershire. Last year the county came out very badly in the allocation procedure. Will my right hon. and learned Friend bear that in mind when reaching any future decisions?

Mr. Clarke: Once a year all our police forces make bids through the Home Office for more resources. Overall, I believe that they have been extremely well treated over the past 13 years. Generally, law and order has received greater percentage increases in expenditure than almost any other area of public expenditure. Spending on the police service has increased by 74 per cent. in real terms—that is, over and above inflation. I shall await with interest the submissions of Gloucestershire this year. As for bids for manpower, I am heavily steered by the advice of Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary.

Urban Crime Fund

5. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether urban crime fund allocations will continue in 1992-93.

Mr. Jack: At the outset of this scheme, local authorities benefiting from the urban crime fund accepted the funding with the clear knowledge that the money available was for this financial year only. Future spending decisions will be determined once the outcome of the total for public Government expenditure for next year is known.

Mr. Cousins: Does the Minister realise how grimly that answer will be received in parts of the country such as Northumbria, where we all respect what the new chief constable and his force are doing in facing the highest number of reported crime incidents per officer in the country? Only the urban crime fund money has kept the police effectively on the streets this year. Without the promise of that money continuing into next year, we shall not have a credible police presence on our streets in Northumbria. Will the Minister give an assurance that, whether through the urban crime fund or otherwise, money will be found and effective policing will continue?

Mr. Jack: I think that I indicated clearly that matters concerning expenditure by all Government Departments will have to wait until we have the results of the autumn statement. I am disappointed that the hon. Gentleman did not pay more tribute to the work that has been done on Tyneside. I have received an excellent briefing from my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter). The hon. Gentleman will also know that my right hon. Friend Lord Ferrers, the Minister of State, visited Tyneside and learnt about the splendid work being done to tackle urban crime, including reducing burglaries, car thefts and criminal damage. I think that that is an excellent record.

Mr. John Greenway: Will my hon. Friend do all that he can to extend the areas for which the urban crime fund is available? In particular, will he bear in mind the position of some of the larger towns which are not even classed as urban areas in the police manpower allocation? York, Harrogate and Scarborough, for example, are regarded as rural areas. That cannot possibly be right.

Mr. Jack: I wish that the gift was in my power to respond to my hon. Friend's question. I must point him in the direction of the Department of the Environment, which determines urban programme areas. I am sure that it will have noted his representations on behalf of the country that he represents. There are many other good ways of tackling crime, such as the safer cities programme, and the lessons that they teach are applicable universally.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Minister agree that the very existence of the fund and the work that it has done demonstrates that a concentration of police on the streets cuts down burglary, car theft and so on in urban areas? Having realised that that is a benefit to the community, surely it should have a high bid place in the year ahead because if it is cut off all that will happen is that ghettos will return to ghettos?

Mr. Jack: I must take slight issue with the hon. Gentleman's point, because if he looks carefully at the programmes in Merseyside, West Yorkshire and Northumbria he will find that considerable amounts of those resources have not been directed solely at police manpower; much has gone towards promoting excellent community-based activity to resist crime, for example, new forms of street furniture in South Shields to deal with car crime, and the same is true in Merseyside. It is the combined effect of good community policing occasioned by the fund which has brought success.

Welsh Prisoners

6. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to provide accommodation within Wales for the 800 Welsh prisoners who are currently in prisons outside Wales.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): Plans for expenditure on new prison building in the next financial year and beyond are still under consideration, but I hope that we shall be able to increase the number of prison places in Wales.

Mr. Ainger: Is the Minister aware that the probation service, in particular, recognises that family links are an important part of rehabilitating prisoners and that his lack of commitment to a regional prison serving south and mid-Wales is not acceptable either to those families who currently have to travel great distances to visit prisoners or to the local probation service?

Mr. Lloyd: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's sentiment that prisoners should be housed as near as possible to their home areas so that family links can be maintained. That is important and it is the objective of our policy. However, I completely disagree with him when he says that we are not committed to that, because we are, and the 21 new prisons in our prison programme are designed to make that possible. We still have more places to provide in Wales and, as I have already said, I hope that we shall be able to do so.

Ms. Ruddock: Is the Minister aware that the crisis in the prison service in Wales, as in England, will have been heightened this week by the Home Secretary's rejection of his chief inspector's report on prison overcrowding? Why are prison resources being directed at market testing for privatisation rather than at implementing the Woolf recommendations for providing real work and education aimed at prisoner rehabilitation?

Mr. Lloyd: The Home Secretary does not reject the report; he comments on it. The whole process of privatisation of the management of prisons—not the prisons themselves—is to obtain better standards in those prisons. I welcome the hon. Lady to her position. When she has held it a little longer and has read the tender documents for the Wolds, which is in operation, for Blankenhurst, which has been issued, and for Manchester, which is to be issued shortly, she will see that at present that is the quickest way to obtain prisons with managements that will produce the Woolf standards.

Travellers

7. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress he has made with his review of the legislation concerning travellers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We are discussing with other Government Departments and the Association of Chief Police Officers what changes to the law may be needed to tackle the problems of large gatherings of travellers and ravers.

Mr. Shepherd: Will my hon. Friend keep the pressure on the review, as there is considerable anxiety among landowners and tenants that we shall move into the next travelling season without a set of adequate safeguards to protect them? It is felt that section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986 does not give adequate protection. While my hon. Friend is at it, will he also look carefully at the definition of gipsies, because the traditional nomadic habit type gipsies fear that travellers will move into their sites and displace them?

Mr. Wardle: I understand my hon. Friend's points. He will be aware that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has expressed unequivocal views about the selfishness and anti-social behaviour of travellers and ravers. Section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986 is being reviewed. Above all, we are seeking practical ways to combat the problem and proposals will be brought forward in due course.

Mr. Bennett: Will the Minister be careful before he and his colleagues commit the Government to confronting travellers? That could be extremely expensive. Would it not be better to provide sufficient local authority caravan sites throughout the country where proper charges are made, so that travellers make a proper contribution to the cost? Rather than confrontation, there should be an effective policy that enables people to pursue their traditional way of life.

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Gentleman's second point is a matter for the Department of the Environment. As he knows, a consultation paper on amending the Caravan Sites Act 1968 is being circulated. As to his first point, police have operational responsibility for enforcement. They make it clear that preventive tactics are their first priority but that when there are huge gatherings, containment is the order of the day.

Mr. Dunn: Is my hon. Friend aware that we on this side of the House take the view that new age travellers are no more than a bunch of unwashed, benefit-grabbing, socialist anarchists who deserve a good slap and a wash? There is a problem with bunches of travellers who continually return to green belt sites in urban areas, causing massive destruction and upsetting local people. Will my hon. Friend undertake to liaise with the Department of the Environment on that vexed issue?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend expresses his views vividly and forcefully. He will be aware of the initiatives taken by the Department of Social Security, and I emphasise that section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986 is being reviewed by the Home Office, and that proposals will be brought forward after further consultation.

Everton Football Supporters

8. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to his answer of 18 June, *Official Report*, column *645*, how many people gave evidence on behalf of the Everton football supporters arising out of their arrest and conviction.

Mr. Jack: Following the conviction of the Everton football supporters, eight persons made statements to the police during the course of inquiries in 1989. In addition, statements from eight other persons have been considered during the course of our reviews of this case.

Mr. Loyden: The Minister is aware of the strong representations made by hon. Members on both sides of the House, and since then further information from eye witnesses to the incident has been collated. It seems to those hon. Members who met the Minister that there has clearly been a miscarriage of justice. Will he look again at the evidence, to see whether he, too, becomes convinced that that is so?

Mr. Jack: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members on their assiduousness in continuing to make representations on an issue that I know is of sensitivity to them and to the persons whom they represent. However, all the further evidence and statements submitted to the Home Office have been meticulously studied. The hon. Gentleman knows that the case has already been before the Court of Appeal, which did not agree with those who feel that the convictions were unsafe. The criterion for any miscarriage of justice is the provision of new information not previously considered by the courts. So far, no such new evidence has been forthcoming. It is still open to those who feel aggrieved to submit a complaint to the Police Complaints Authority. They have not yet done so. If such action elicited new facts, I would of course consider the case again.

Mr. Barry Porter: I join the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) in asking the Home Office to consider again not only the quantity but the quality of the evidence that has become available. I do not blame the present Minister with responsibility for the matter for the reply that he has just given, but some difficulty arose in the form of a general election, which allowed the previous incumbent of his office to avoid making a decision. The quantity and quality of available evidence does not leave the matter in doubt but shows beyond peradventure that the convicted Everton people are innocent. What more do we need to do? Look again.

Mr. Jack: What more we need is new information. All cases involving miscarriages of justice are examined meticulously by the Home Office, but I must remind my hon. Friend of the base criterion: for any case to be reopened, we must have new evidence that has not been considered by the courts before. The answer that I have just given the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) will provide a way forward, if that way forward is chosen.

Electoral Registration

9. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement outlining his Department's contribution to an improvement in the accuracy of the electoral registration process for autumn 1992.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have run a nationwide advertising campaign again this year, with a budget of £617,000, designed to encourage people to complete and return their electoral registration forms. We continue to commission annual research into the working methods of electoral registration officers, and we provide updated guidance to assist them in compiling accurate registers.

Mr. Rooker: Bearing in mind the fact that that sum does not represent an extra amount, and bearing in mind the fortune that the Government have spent on delivering indescribable rubbish about the council tax to every household in the country, cannot the Home Office take its responsibilities more seriously? Its own research—which, as the Minister has said, it commissions regularly—identifies under-registration among unemployed people, inner-city dwellers, tenants of private landlords and tenants of multi-occupied properties. Why will the Home Office not take special action to ensure that under-registration ceases among that element of the population? If it does not take such action, on the basis of known evidence and research, there are those who will make the allegation that the Government have deliberately encouraged under-registration in certain areas in order to rig the parliamentary boundaries later.

Mr. Lloyd: Setting aside the adjectives used by the hon. Gentleman and the sentiments that he has expressed, I agree with his objective. That is why, when consulting local authorities and political parties after the election and reviewing the processes that it had involved, we set up a joint committee to examine five issues, one of which is electoral registration. The examination will take into account the particular circumstances mentioned by the hon. Gentleman, and I hope that it will provide the hard evidence, and the suggestions for change, for which he has asked.

Mr. Allen: Now that the general election is over, will the Minister admit to the House that one of the biggest acts of gerrymandering perpetrated in the past 13 or 14 years was the introduction of the poll tax, given the effect that it had on the electoral register? Will he now ensure that local authorities have enough money to put all the people concerned back on to the electoral register?

While the Minister is at it—in the light of the election that is currently under way on the other side of the water—will he examine the system of same-day registration that operates in a number of American states, enabling the people to vote there and then if they wish? Only if he does that will Opposition Members and people outside begin to take seriously the idea that he wants everyone in the country to enjoy the franchise.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman may be right in suggesting that some people did not register in order to avoid paying the community charge, and that others had to do so. He should also take into account, however, the fact that many electoral registration officers used the community charge lists to extend, improve and fill out the lists that they had. The community charge could work both ways in that regard. As for the question of rolling registrations, the sub-committee that I mentioned earlier will be examining it carefully.

Sunday Trading

10. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received about Sunday trading.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Since my reply on 18 June to a similar question from my hon. Friend, we have received—up to 21 October—some 4,433 further written representations broadly in favour of greater Sunday trading, and 190 against.

Mr. Marshall: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the present law is indefensible and illogical? Does he also agree that a law that is frequently broken and rarely enforced brings the whole rule of law into disrepute, and that early action must be taken to curb this nonsense?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Shops Act 1950 is not supported by any member of any wing of opinion in this country, from the most Sabbatarian to the most libertarian, and no one believes that the Act has got it right. At present, we do not even know whether it is valid law: we are waiting for a ruling from the European Court, which will come some time later in the year. We have already said that we will bring the matter back before the House, and I hope shortly to make a fuller statement to the House explaining exactly what process we intend eventually to suggest to resolve the matter.

Mr. Ray Powell: The Government have had six years since 1986 to introduce legislation to tidy up the Shops Act 1950. Surely it is high time that we had an Act that applied in particular to the large, Tory-backed retailers who trade illegally on Sunday and who, as a result, close down a lot of small shops. It is high time that the Government took action to ensure that they comply with the law. The Home Secretary boasts continually of the importance of law and order. Why, therefore, does he not ensure that the provisions of the Shop Act 1950 are implemented by his Tory friends—five big retailers who continually open illegally on Sunday?

Mr. Clarke: The Conservative Government gave the House ample opportunity to resolve this matter in the mid-1980s. We published the Auld committee report which was approved by a majority of hon. Members. We brought forward a Bill to reform the law, but, unfortunately, a majority of hon. Members, including the hon. Gentleman, voted against it and made it impossible for the Bill to proceed to its Committee stage, where we might have been able to thrash this matter out and resolve it. I hope that as soon as the Government have sufficient parliamentary time to adopt a similar procedure, people will not flatly turn it down so that we are left with the Shops Act 1950, which satisfies absolutely nobody, it seems to me, in the current climate.

Mr. Paice: Is not it the case that effectively we do not have any law on Sunday trading and that, therefore, we are deregulated? Those who are concerned about deregulation should realise that what they see is what they will get: that the current pattern would probably not be extended and that if sufficient worker protection provisions were attached to the legislation it would receive widespread support?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. There has never been any legislation on this matter in Scotland, so one can see there what happens on the ground. The current position has been fairly described by my hon. Friend as one where nobody knows what the law is, so no law at all is being applied. We see on the ground, therefore, what emerges in those circumstances. That will, no doubt, help to inform the debate when the Government are able to bring this matter before the House.

Crime

11. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had since 1 June on the subject of crime in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. and learned Friend has met the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on four occasions since becoming Home Secretary, and I have had discussions with the Inner London probation service and Lewisham Safer Cities. We continue to tackle crime by providing strong support to the police, giving the courts the powers they need, and fostering a growing range of partnership initiatives aimed at preventing crime.

Mr. Hughes: As the Member for Parliament for the London borough where crime has risen every month for two years, where we have the second highest level of recorded crime in every category and the seventh highest unemployment figures in the country, may I ask whether the Minister and the Home Secretary heard from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that his view is that there is a direct link between rising unemployment and rising crime? Given that it appears from this morning's "Today" programme that the Home Secretary is now in the economics team of Cabinet Ministers, can we have a clear understanding that to deal with rising crime in Britain the best remedy is to reduce unemployment? Can that be a commitment from all Government Ministers?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman may have a little weekend reading to do. I commend to him a piece of Home Office research by Dr. Simon Field which refutes the assertion that underlies, I believe, the hon. Gentleman's belief that individual unemployment is directly related to individual wrongdoing. If the hon. Gentleman had been a fly on the wall during the discussions between the Minister and the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis he would have heard of the excellent work that is going in Southwark on burglary, of the extension of Operation Bumblebee, of the car crime initiative Delta, and the sector policing developments, all of which are tackling crime in his constituency.

Mr. Bowis: Would my hon. Friend like to suggest to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) that he could do worse than visit Battersea police station with my hon. Friend to see the sector policing that has been in operation for some time there and the results, which have led to a lower rate of crime, increased enforcement rates and a much better relationship between the community and the local police force?

Mr. Jack: I am glad that my hon. Friend made that point. If the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) had looked at the crime figures for London, he would know how effective the police are being. The increase in crime rates in the capital is below the national average and sector policing is making its contribution to that important development.

Mrs. Roche: Is the Minister aware of alarming reports that cuts in police overtime in London have resulted in a dramatic reduction, by one third, of cases coming before some criminal courts in London?

Mr. Jack: Some people regard all reports that emanate from the police as dramatic. What I regard as dramatic is that there are 6,000 more police officers in London than in 1979.

Primary-Purpose Rule

12. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he proposes to take with regard to the primary-purpose rule.

Mr. Wardle: I have no plans to amend the primary-purpose rule.

Mr. Chisholm: The primary-purpose rule has always been unjust, arbitrary and morally indenfensible. As Europe has finally made a nonsense of it, will the Minister undertake to scrap it unconditionally—and not with the proviso that couples must stay together for a further four years at threat of deportation? That would be an outrageous attack on the rights of women who are treated intolerably by their husbands.

Mr. Wardle: I can only assume that the hon. Member is referring to the Surinder Singh case, which is still sub judice but which did not involve the primary-purpose rule. It has never been suggested that Mr. Singh's marriage was contracted with the primary purpose of seeking admission to the United Kingdom.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Moate:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 22 October.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Moate: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the fact that interest rates are significantly down and that car production figures and even retail sales figures are up? In welcoming the Government's renewed commitment to economic growth and job creation, may I ask my right hon. Friend to tell the House more about his strategy for recovery—*[Interruption.]* The Opposition are not interested in recovery—in particular, ways of stimulating new capital investment projects, especially private and public sector joint-funded projects such as the important new Swale project in my constituency?

The Prime Minister: I had the opportunity of learning about the Swale project when I visited my hon. Friend's constituency some months ago. I think that everyone will welcome the drop in interest rates and the other economic developments that were mentioned by my hon. Friend. When it is safe to make further reductions without imperilling our inflationary objectives, it would certainly be the Government's intention to do so. There is no doubt in any part of the House that across Europe and beyond Europe, economic circumstances have darkened and have become more difficult. That circumstance needs to be taken into account in our policy and in the policies of other countries as well. That means that in the months ahead there will be some difficult decisions. There will be tough decisions to be taken in the public expenditure round. It means that we must restrain expenditure where we can, but it also means that we must look with particular care at those elements of expenditure that have an employment and particularly growth potential, which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will do. We shall certainly look more carefully at ensuring that we seek to get the private sector working more effectively to assist in capital projects, which I believe the whole House will welcome.

Q2. **Mr. Heppell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 22 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave a few moments ago.

Mr. Heppell: Will the Prime Minister give a guarantee that the 10 pits that have been given a 90-day reprieve will be allowed to continue to mine coal during that period? The men want to work. Will he allow them to work?

The Prime Minister: No, I cannot give a guarantee that during the 90-day period coaling will continue in those 10 pits. It is necessary, and it will be the case, that those pits will be in a condition to resume coaling. If at the end of that period it is determined that that is the decision, they shall do so. But during that period, I can give no guarantee that there will be coaling.

Mr. Kynoch: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the tough new rules for GCSE examinations, which will ensure continuing pressure to improve and to achieve higher standards under this Government?

The Prime Minister: I most certainly will. The requirement to seek higher standards is felt by every pupil, and it is a demand sought by every teacher and every parent. It will certainly be the Government's policy to bring that about.

Mr. Hume: As the Member who represents the constituency with the highest unemployment, I ask the Prime Minister to tell the House whether the reports of the Government's intention to reduce contribution-based unemployment benefit are correct. Does he not believe that the Government would be better employed in applying their mind to reducing unemployment rather than to reducing unemployment benefit?

The Prime Minister: As I said to the House a moment ago, it is certainly our intention to pursue a strategy that will bring recovery, and with it growth, jobs and prosperity —I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will welcome that. It is essential that that moves right to the centre of thinking in each and every aspect of Government policy in the circumstances that now apply in this country, throughout western Europe and beyond. As I stated clearly a few moments ago, that is the Government's intention.

Sir Jim Spicer: In this statement on Tuesday my right hon. Friend stressed the crucial importance of an early completion of the GATT round. Now it seems that the talks have broken down. Can my right hon. Friend give us any idea why that happened, and will he do all that he can to get them started again?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly answer my hon. Friend's second question in the affirmative. This morning I saw the reported comments of the French Foreign Minister that there will be no serious GATT discussions for several months. Let me make it absolutely clear to the House that I could not disagree more strongly with that view. It is not shared by the British Government as holder of the presidency of the Community, nor by the Commissioner, nor by the majority of member states, which last week at Birmingham authorised the Commission to negotiate for a GATT settlement by the end of this year.

Over the past two weeks the narrowing of the gap between the Community and the United States has been very welcome. That gap can be bridged. What is needed is for both sides to stay at the negotiating table, and I shall do all that I can to bring that about.

Mr. John Smith: Given the daily changes in policy which we have all observed this week, what does the Prime Minister have in mind for his next U-turn?

The Prime Minister: I have to say to the right hon. and learned Gentleman that I think that that question falls rather below the level of events. It was his U-turn on tax policy which helped to lose Labour the election. It sank his predecessor, but the right hon. and learned Gentleman did not resign—he was made the leader.

Mr. Smith: Does not the Prime Minister realise that following the British Chambers of Commerce report which says that lack of confidence in the Government is causing many of our difficulties, confidence in him is drastically declining among the people of this country? They are not impressed by a Government blown about by events, and which has one simple rule—"A policy a day keeps Back Benchers at bay."

The Prime Minister: Only a few months ago all the people of this country had the choice to determine in whom they had confidence, and 14·5 million of them chose the Conservative party. That is why—because of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's tax policies, and because of a lack of confidence in his party—the right hon. and learned Gentleman is sitting on the Opposition Benches. That is where he will remain, for at least the next four-and-a-half years.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Notwithstanding the recent reactions we have heard from China, may I ask my right hon. Friend for his assurance that he will give his unequivocal support to the governor of Hong Kong in his recent announcement, which is good for the people of Hong Kong, good for Britain and entirely in accord with this country's agreement with the Chinese Government?

The Prime Minister: I can most certainly give that assurance. The governor's proposals set out recently in his speeches in Hong Kong received very wide support among all sorts of opinion in Hong Kong, and very wide support in this House and in public opinion in this country. His aim is to make the Hong Kong Government more effective and more accountable, and to broaden democracy in a way that will survive beyond 1997. That is the right future for Hong Kong, and the governor has the complete and total support of the Government and the whole House in that endeavour.

Q3. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 22 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Meale: To return to the subject of mining, will the Prime Minister give the House a guarantee that while the review period continues in the coal mining industry, he will place a moratorium on manpower and coal development underground? Without that, it is a meaningless exercise and many pits will face mass redundancies and closures. Yes or no?

The Prime Minister: I think that we have made clear to the hon. Gentleman what happens during the moratorium and the fact that the 21 pits, apart from the 10 where there are special circumstances, will continue in the fashion that was set out clearly yesterday. I cannot and will not give the hon. Gentleman detailed assertions about matters that lie within the day-to-day management responsibility of British Coal.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend's recent words on growth and sound investment are much to be welcomed. May we, as London Members, urge on my right hon. Friend the cause of the completion of the Jubilee line and the benefits that would flow from it?

The Prime Minister: I know how assiduous my hon. Friend is in the interests of London. I have noted most carefully what he said.

Q4. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 22 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wareing: It has been widely suggested that the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the President of the Board of Trade should resign. Will the Prime Minister tell the House what are his qualities and those of his colleagues which could justify their continuance in office?

The Prime Minister: The 14·5 million votes we got in the general election.

Mr. Barry Porter: I had the opportunity this morning of speaking on the electronic telephonic device to Sir Anthony Beaumont-Dark, who had one or two ideas. He seemed to think that it was not a bad idea to reduce interest rates in a gentle sort of fashion, taking into account what the deutschmark is doing, and that we should keep up a reasonable semblance of public expenditure in capital terms. I thought to myself at the time, "That is not a bad idea". Does the Prime Minister agree?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that my hon. Friend will not be at all surprised to know that Sir Anthony has mentioned those matters to me as well.

Q5. **Mr. Nigel Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 22 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jones: When the people of Cheltenham march, should not the Prime Minister ask himself what is going on? Does he not realise that they are angry about the way in which the economy is being run? The Prime Minister and his office say that there has been a change in economic policy; the Treasury says that there has not. Who is telling us the truth?

The Prime Minister: The Government always listen when people make comments of that sort and it was perfectly clear to the House from what I said a few moments ago precisely what objectives the Government have set themselves. Lest there be any doubt in the hon. Gentleman's mind, let me say that there has been no movement away from the inflation objective or from the belief that we need non-inflationary growth. There is no doubt, not even in the hon. Gentleman's mind, that outside this country as well as inside this country, there is a changed economic environment. In that changed economic environment, we have to consider what is in the interests of this country and shape our policies accordingly. That is what we have decided to do. That is the policy that we will continue with.

Mr. Hunter: In the light of the IRA's intensifying campaign of violence in several parts of the United Kingdom, is my right hon. Friend satisfied that sufficient powers and resources are available to those combating terrorism? Will he make it a priority to give fresh consideration to those matters?

The Prime Minister: We have always given very great priority to the fight against terrorism in Northern Ireland where the security forces face terrorism on a day-to-day basis and on the mainland where, increasingly in recent months, the terrorists have sought to intimidate with bombs. I must make the point to the terrorists again which will carry universal support in the House: they have no chance whatsoever of succeeding—not now, not tomorrow, not ever.

Q6. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 22 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Grocott: Does the Prime Minister remember that at the time of the Tory leadership election the reason given for why he beat his two rivals was that he was the one who was the particularly good economist? Will he therefore help the House and tell us whether the Government are pursuing the old economic policy or a new one? Will it be promoted by the old Chancellor or a new one?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman clearly is not listening. He spends too much time reading in the newspapers about what might have been said two years ago.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Yes, Madam. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 26 OCTOBER—Remaining stages of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill

TUESDAY 27 OCTOBER—Timetable motion on and conclusion of remaining stages of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill.

Motion to take note of EC Document No. 6132/92 relating to the fifth environmental action programme. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

WEDNESDAY 28 OCTOBER—Debate on a motion to take note of the outstanding reports of the Public Accounts Committee to which the Government have replied.

THURSDAY 29 OCTOBER—Debate on the White Paper on "New Opportunities for the Railways" on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 30 OCTOBER—Debate on sport on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 2 NOVEMBER—Second Reading of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill.

Madam Speaker, the House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee B will meet on Wednesday 28 October at 10.30 am to consider European Community Document No. 4327/92 relating to cultural goods.

I believe that it would also be of assistance to the House if I announced today some important future business that will shortly come before it. On Wednesday 4 November there will be a debate on a motion relating to the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. On 12 November my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will make his autumn statement to the House. We propose that that will be debated shortly thereafter in Government time.

[Tuesday 27 October
Floor of the House
Relevant European Community Document
6132/92 Community Action on the Environment
Relevant Reports of the European Legislation Committee
HC 79-i (1992-93)
Wednesday 28 October
European Standing Committee B
Relevant European Community Document
4327/92 Protection of National Treasures
Relevant Reports of the European Legislation Committee
HC 79-i (1992-93)
HC 79-vi (1992-93)]

Mrs. Beckett: I thank the Leader of the House for that statement. In the light of the fast deteriorating situation reported from around the world—from Kurdistan, the Ogaden, southern Africa and Sarajevo—and the certainty of a huge increase in the loss of life as winter approaches, will the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate so that hon. Members in all parts of the House can express their opposition to cuts in the overseas aid budget before the public expenditure programme is finalised?

As the autumn statement will cover the shape of that programme and should also shed light on whether we have a new economic policy as a No. 10 briefing implies, whether we are seeking a new economic policy as the Prime Minister has been saying, or whether, in the Chancellor's words yesterday, there has in no way been a change of policy, will the Leader of the House ensure that previous practice of a two-day debate—one on the autumn statement and a separate debate on the public expenditure programme—will be followed this year?

Will the Leader of the House further tell us whether there will be a proper early statement on the progress of GATT talks, first, because on Tuesday, at column 323 of *Hansard*, the Prime Minister said that it is not now possible for one member country to scupper those talks and, secondly, to save him from using Prime Minister's Question Time to make such statements?

Finally, I remind the Leader of the House that we are eagerly awaiting publication of the Government's response to the Jopling report. In the meantime, as requested by my predecessor, will he take the earliest possible opportunity to arrange for business to be announced to the House two weeks ahead?

Mr. Newton: On the last point, in one sense I have responded in part to one of the Jopling recommendations by some of the indications that I have given in my statement about business in the next few weeks. I hope that it is regarded as a positive and constructive move.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): More, please.

Mr. Newton: I am urged on ever further by the Leader of the Opposition. In the circumstances, I had better be a little cautious, but I hear what he says.

I welcome the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) to her new position and I hope shortly to be able to open discussions through the usual channels on the Jopling issues that she raised in her request today.

On GATT, I note the request that has been made. The hon. Lady will have heard what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said—and, indeed, the vigour with which he said it—during Prime Minister's Question Time. A debate might be further considered through the usual channels, but in the light of developments following what my right hon. Friend said I certainly cannot make an off-the-cuff commitment to a debate next week.

On the autumn statement, I have already indicated that it would be—unusually, as it happens—the Government's intention to provide for a debate very shortly after the statement has been made. Again, I will fall back on the "usual channels" response to what the hon. Lady said about, in effect, a two-day debate. We can have further consideration of that matter.

On overseas aid, I do no more than note the hon. Lady's point, but I observe in return that there will at least be some opportunity for those matters to be raised as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will answer questions next Wednesday.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): In view of the disappointing announcement that the Leader of the House has made about the business for 4 November, will he seriously consider the possible nonsense of wasting a great deal of parliamentary time before we find out whether the people of Denmark want to overturn their decision? Why should we waste parliamentary time when there is so much to do in Britain and so much to talk about? Why can we not wait until the Danes decide for themselves whether they want to say yes or no?

Mr. Newton: I hope that my hon. Friend will agree, although I know how strongly he feels about these matters, that the Danes have made considerable progress in discussing and indicating how they see the way forward. We think that in the light of that it is now appropriate to invite this House to consider, along the lines that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister indicated earlier in the year, the position of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I warmly welcome the advance notice that has been given by the Leader of the House. I hope that that will encourage him to make a full two-week statement in future. It is very welcome to have those two important dates in advance.

I underline the point made by the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) about GATT. It is not just the political circumstances, but the implications for the textile industries and agriculture. It is a changing situation, but we need a debate at the earliest possible time to clarify some of the implications of the potential breakdown of the talks.

Mr. Newton: I well understand, as I am sure that the whole House understands, the importance attached to this matter by all hon. Members, but I do not think that at this stage I can add to what I said to the hon. Lady a moment ago.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on the need for greater freedom in the skies, particularly for air travellers between regional airports in this country and the United States, so that we can get rid of all unnecessary restrictions?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend knows very well that the British Government have been pressing that point strongly in various discussions and negotiations in the European Community. I think that useful progress has been made, but I cannot promise an early debate on the matter.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): Will the Leader of the House find time in the near future for a debate on yesterday's announcement by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces? It will mean the deaths of many of my constituents, tourists, climbers and seafarers due to the reduction in cover by search and rescue helicopters. It is also of national significance that in the report following that announcement——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must simply put a question to the Leader of the House asking if he will change next week's business. That is the point of business questions.

Mr. Newton: I am obviously aware of the announcement to which the hon. Gentleman refers. Contrary to the implication of his remarks, the announcement was made on the basis that it would not significantly affect the Government's ability to provide an appropriate level of cover around the United Kingdom in respect of the issues which concern the hon. Gentleman. As I said to the hon. Member for Derby, South, there will be an opportunity to raise those matters again at Ministry of Defence questions next Tuesday.

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, I[illegible]n): Will the Leader of the House confirm whether the debate announced earlier on the European Community's environment programme will include a report on the decision reached this week on the import of toxic waste into this country? If it is to include that decision, will the right hon. Gentleman tell the Secretary of State for the Environment that many hon. Members will wish to hear a declaration that this country will use its powers under that agreement to ban the current import into this country of 44,000 tonnes of toxic waste a year, 20,000 tonnes of which come through the port of Southampton?

Mr. Newton: I would not attempt such a judgment. It is for the Chair to decide what might or might not be in order in the course of that debate, but I will ensure that my right hon. and learned Friend's attention is drawn to the concern that the hon. Gentleman has expressed.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): My right hon. Friend has suggested that we debate the European Communities (Amendment) Bill on 4 November. Would not 5 November be more appropriate? How can we possibly proceed with the Bill when so much of it relates to monetary union, which is totally impossible at present?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend knows very well that the British Government have approached the matter on the basis of the outcome of the negotiations at the turn of last year, which includes—as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has emphasised a number of times—the firm position that the British Government are in no way committed to a single currency.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): As two more of my schools move towards grant-maintained status, will my right hon. Friend bring forward the debate on grant-maintained schools, which may come with a second Bill? I ask the question so that my constituents may know whether the Labour party's policy is that proposed at the last election by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), which was broadly supportive of such schools, or the policy now expressed by the Labour party spokeswoman, which is wholly hostile and destructive?

Mr. Newton: I promise my hon. Friend that, although we have not yet published the Education Bill, we are publishing today two major Government Bills. I do not think that he will have to wait too much longer for the Education Bill which will, I think, be widely welcomed throughout the country when it is introduced.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The Leader of the House will know that the Select Committee on Members' Interests spent hundreds of hours working and conducting inquiries and discussions which led to our proposal for a new Register of Members' Interests. That should now come before the House as a matter of urgency. Can the Leader of the House give us time for a debate?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will recall that shortly before the summer recess I went to some length to provide time for debate on various reports which was interrelated with that subject. I know that the hon.

[Mr. Newton]

Gentleman wished us to go further and I have his request very much in mind, but I cannot give an undertaking on a specific time at present.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be in the Government's own interests to allow at least two days for an economic debate following the autumn statement? It is vital to the country that we clarify exactly where we stand and where we intend to go, and this would surely be the right opportunity to do that.

Mr. Newton: When I start to get requests not only from the usual channels but from some unusual ones as well, I give them even greater weight. I cannot make an absolute commitment, but I have said that we shall give some thought to the request.

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): Will the Leader of the House consider a debate centred on early-day motion 589?

[That this House welcomes the decision of the United States Congress to investigate arms sales to Iraq; notes the charges by former Israeli Military Intelligence agent Mr. Ari Ben-Menashe that a Texan-based company owned by Mr. Mark Thatcher was used to move equipment directly from Britain to Iraq, that Mark Thatcher introduced 'Supergun' designer Gerald Bull to South African Military Intelligence General Pieter Van der Westhuizen, who subsequently introduced Mr. Bull to the Iraqi Deputy Chief of Procurement who arranged payment for Mr. Bull's services via Cardoen Industries financial network and that Mark Thatcher introduced Mr. Bull to Mark Thatcher's Chilean associate Carlos Cardoen; notes that Mr. Ben-Menashe also charges that Mark Thatcher sold 48 Chieftain tanks to Chile and proclaimed his admiration for General Pinochet; and, in the light of these charges, hopes the Government will conduct its own investigation to determine the truth of these charges and, if proved true, bring criminal charges against any United Kingdom Government individuals who were aware of these activities.]

The motion draws attention to serious allegations by a former Israeli military intelligence officer that a Texas-based company run by Mark Thatcher was instrumental in arranging the sale of the supergun to Iraq, and its funding. Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for reports to be laid before the House from the heads of MI5 and MI6 stating whether they briefed the former Prime Minister about the activities of her son?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman knows that investigation and prosecution in a matter of this kind would require evidence of breaches of United Kingdom controls on arms exports to Iraq and Chile. If he or any other hon. Member has such evidence, he should first make it available to the relevant authorities.

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): As my right hon. Friend has announced the date for the Maastricht debate, he presumably knows the form of the motion that will be presented to the House. Will it be a substantive motion capable of amendment or a motion for the Adjournment? May I suggest that the latter would be preferable, given the varying circumstances and the almost weekly changes in relation to this matter? It would be far more sensible to allow all sections of the House to present their views on an Adjournment motion.

Mr. Newton: I note what my hon. Friend says, but I would expect it to be a substantive motion.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Can the Leader of the House confirm that the Secretary of State for Health will make a statement tomorrow on Professor Bernard Tomlinson's proposal to close some of London's major teaching hospitals? Is he aware that the hospitals have been told that the press will get this document at 8.30 am, that Professor Tomlinson will hold a press conference at 10 am—before the statement is made to the House—and that the hospitals concerned, the pitiful victims of the proposals, will not receive the document until 12.30 pm or even 2 pm? Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that there are no pre-releases of the document, no press conferences and no press releases until both this House and the hospitals concerned have had a chance to see the papers?

Mr. Newton: The answer to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question is yes, I can confirm that my right hon. Friend intends to make a statement tomorrow covering the publication of the report and how she proposes to carry forward consideration of it. I shall, of course, undertake to bring the hon. Gentleman's latter observations to her attention.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Do the Government intend that there should be an opportunity for a debate on the Bingham report, published today? Will they link that debate with a wide-ranging discussion of the future of our banking and financial services industry, on which so much of our economic future depends?

Mr. Newton: It is my intention that, at an appropriate time, there should be a debate on the matter. Perhaps I can reserve judgment on the precise extent and content of such a debate until my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has made his statement a little later this afternoon.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): There are a number of current scandals: pit closures, sterling and the fact that the House has been away for three months while those crises have been bumbling around. There is, however, another crisis that we should examine. It is outlined in early-day motion 601.

[That this House believes that thousands of people are in desperate circumstances due to massive failures in the operations of the Benefits Agency; and calls for the resignations of the Secretary of State for Social Security and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibilities for the Benefits Agency, together with the disbanding of the Benefits Agency and the return of its duties directly to the Department of Social Security where the operations of the benefits system can once more be opened to parliamentary scrutiny.]

The motion refers to the failure of the social security system. The disability living allowance unit is in a state of collapse, and the whole operation of the Benefits Agency is an utter disgrace. People have been cut off from benefits, and, despite having to go through a great deal of detail and time wasting, they cannot get their benefits back.

May we have a debate on the future of the Secretary of State for Social Security, the future of the Benefits Agency and the problem of our inability to ask questions in the House relating to that agency?

Mr. Newton: On the last point, the hon. Gentleman will know that I announced on Tuesday that chief executives' replies to hon. Members questions are to be published in the *Official Report*. I hope that that is welcome as it is something that a number of people have pressed for and, frankly, I think that it is a sensible decision.

On the hon. Gentleman's other observations, I am well aware that the introduction of substantially improved extended disability benefits was attended by some difficulty because of the level of demand for them. I am also well aware that those problems were vigorously tackled by the Benefits Agency but I will, of course, draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): Would my right hon. Friend consider having a debate about public expenditure before the autumn statement so that we do not have the unedifying spectacle of hon. Members trying to advise the Chancellor, after the event, what he should have been doing with public expenditure? I have particularly asked that question because I know that £300 million is due to be spent on moving the Procurement Executive to a central location north of Bristol with the loss of thousands of jobs in my constituency and others. It will take 14 years to pay back to the Exchequer the cost of that move. If we could highlight such wasteful uses of public expenditure, we might get somewhere in keeping our economy under control.

Mr. Newton: I am afraid that I cannot promise my hon. Friend a debate of quite the kind that he wishes, but it seems to me that he made effective use of his opportunity today to make a contribution to the debate. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will note what he said.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the Leader of the House acknowledge the strongest possible case for a debate next week on the crisis in the Scottish fishing industry? He may recall the words of Aneurin Bevan who said that Britain

"is almost made of coal and surrounded by fish."

Does he agree that the Scottish fishing communities are currently being treated with the same arrogance and insensitivity that the Government tried to dish out to the English mining communities?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman would not expect me to accept—nor do I accept—the suggestion that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland or any of his Ministers are treating any part of Scottish industry with arrogance and insensitivity, to repeat his words. I am aware that there are problems, but they are being addressed.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): All my constituents will welcome the fact that the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill has been announced for consideration on 2 November. However, could we have a debate next week on the pressures exerted on boroughs such as Ealing which are near to Heathrow? The pressures are different from those experienced in other constituencies because asylum seekers put great pressure on housing authorities and social services and we in Ealing already have enormous problems in meeting housing needs and the like.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome for the appearance of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill. I said in my statement earlier that I expect it to have its Second Reading on Monday week, and it would seem entirely appropriate—subject to you, Madam Speaker—for my hon. Friend to seek to make some of those points in the course of that debate.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Does the Leader of the House agree that it is totally wrong that Ministers are increasingly referring letters from hon. Members on policy issues to the chief executives of agencies, who cannot respond on those policy issues? As this is such a fundamental change affecting the rights of hon. Members' on both sides of the House, could we have a debate on the issues involved to ensure that procedures are correctly followed and policy issues are dealt with by the Ministers responsible for them?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will know that the basis of the current arrangement is that matters are referred to the chief executives when they concern, essentially, the delivery of the services with which they are charged. Therefore, if the hon. Gentleman has particular examples where he believes that what should have properly been treated as a matter of policy has been passed to chief executives, I should like to bring them to the attention of my right hon. Friends or other hon. Friends concerned.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): In the light of the Prime Minister's remarks at the Conservative party conference in Brighton, does my right hon. Friend have it in mind to allow the House to debate the subject of regulatory overkill, which threatens the competitive position of so many sections of British industry with absolutely no perceptible benefit to the customer?

Mr. Newton: I am not sure that I can promise an early debate on those matters, but my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear in his remarks on economic policy earlier in the week that continued attention to what is called the deregulation initiative is part and parcel of our approach to seeking to build growth on the basis of low inflation.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does the Leader of the House accept that if he allows the Jopling proposals to sink out of sight it would be widely accepted on both sides of the House?

Can he give time for a debate next week, or at the earliest opportunity, on the Home Office statement on the decision not to grant Derek Bentley a posthumous pardon? Many people consider that there was an outrageous injustice in the first place and it has been compounded by the Home Secretary turning a blind eye to the evidence submitted which justifies such a pardon for the innocent Derek Bentley. As the statement was made when the House was not sitting and no Member had the chance to question the Minister, surely we should have time for a debate.

Mr. Newton: On the issue of Jopling, I shall not attempt to add to what I told the hon. Member for Derby, South. I will leave her to discuss with the hon. Gentleman the variation in their attitudes to that matter.

[Mr. Newton]

On the latter question, I ought to say that, knowing my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary as I do, I cannot accept the description that the hon. Gentleman gave of the long and careful consideration which I know that he gave to the Bentley case. I cannot promise an early opportunity for a debate on that.

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the majority of people in this country do not want to become European citizens and do not want a common defence policy or a single currency, that they will regard it as an irrelevance to debate Maastricht on 4 November, and that they will feel that we are fiddling while Rome burns?

Mr. Newton: I advert to what I said earlier about the British Government's clear opposition to the notion of a federal Europe, and the absence of any commitment on the single currency having been agreed at Maastricht. My hon. Friend will be well aware of those points. I do not think that the people of this country will regard as irrelevant further consideration of the relationship between this country and others in the Community in circumstances in which it is overwhelmingly accepted that our future lies in the Community and that our trade with it, and influence in it, are matters of crucial British interest—not French or German interest, but British interest.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Before next Wednesday's Public Accounts Committee debate, will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House or have one of his colleagues tell us whether it is correct that, at a time of impending public expenditure cuts, it is proposed to spend £2 million to £3 million on the refurbishment of Old Palace yard, from which hon. Members of this House and their secretaries are to be evicted, to provide accommodation for four ex-Prime Ministers who are in another place, three of whom have expressed no interest in such accommodation, which means that that money is being spent to provide accommodation for the Prime Minister in exile —the noble Lady Baroness Thatcher?

Mr. Newton: The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that there have been discussions between the two Houses, which have resulted in an agreement that the Lords would give up the third floor of 7 Milbank in exchange for the transfer back to them of 6 and 7 Old Palace yard. It is recognised that no such change could be made without inconvenience, but the relevant Committees of both Houses—in the case of this House, that is the Accommodation and Works Committee—have accepted that that change has major benefits for all concerned.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): The Leader of the House will be interested to hear that I had a long telephone conversation this morning with a card-carrying Conservative, who informed me that the way in which the budgets of the 10 condemned pits have been shown as making a loss was false accountancy. He has clear proof of that. Will the Leader of the House therefore provide time next week for us to consider that matter urgently, after a statement by his right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, so that we can assure ourselves that those 10 pits work at a considerable profit?

Mr. Newton: It might surprise the hon. Gentleman a little if I were to promise another debate next week of the sort that we had yesterday.

Mr. Enright: No, it would not.

Mr. Newton: Even if it would not surprise the hon. Gentleman, I can assure him that I am not planning to give him such an assurance. It would seem that the statutory 90-day period on which we have embarked provides an opportunity for him and others to raise the point that he has made.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May I press the Leader of the House to allow time for a statement on overseas aid as a matter of urgency? Is he aware that the hon. Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) and I have recently returned from a visit to Lithuania and Latvia? Apart from the misery of a pilgrimage to mass graves, we now know just how cold those countries are, how poor they are, and how difficult it will be for them to preserve their democracies in a winter of probable cold and hunger. Does the right hon. Gentleman appreciate the importance of providing time now for the Government to give an undertaking not to reduce aid to such countries so that the Government will not have to say, after those countries have returned to misery and extremism, "We should have helped them more"?

Mr. Newton: I note what the hon. and learned Gentleman says and I appreciate the reason why he felt it right to raise the issue again. I cannot add to what I said earlier to his Front-Bench colleague, the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett).

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): As it would appear that it is genuinely the Government's intention to continue with the legislation on the Queen as a citizen of the union of Europe, perhaps we could have a debate on the constitutional consequences of the sovereign authority of this country being the Queen in Parliament and the effects on that of the Queen now being reduced to the status of citizen.

Mr. Newton: As my hon. Friend will know, I do not accept the interpretation that he places on these matters. There will be an opportunity to make those points when we have the debate to which I have referred.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Is the Leader of the House aware that there will be widespread dismay that the Government are reintroducing asylum legislation and extending it to abolish rights of appeal against immigration decisions? Does he understand that many will suspect that that legislation is being brought forward to divert and distract public attention from the Government's disarray and economic incompetence?

Will the right hon. Gentleman make the necessary arrangements for the members of the Standing Committee —I hope to be one of them—to be able to make visits, including visits to Heathrow, to see the disgraceful conditions in which those fleeing war and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia are treated, and enable those with professional expertise and experience in these matters to present evidence direct to the Committee?

Mr. Newton: I think that the hon. Gentleman will find that, rather than taking the attitude that he has suggested, the country will regard the Government's proposals as entirely in line with our long-standing commitment to firm but fair control of immigration and related matters. That is the purpose of the Bill, and that is what I believe it will secure. As for the rest of the hon. Gentleman's observations, they, too, are matters that he might legitimately raise if he is fortunate enough to catch your eye, Madam Speaker, during the debate that will take place in 10 days' time.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is it not clear from the replies of the Leader of the House to his hon. Friends about the debate on Maastricht that the Government intend not to assess the opinion of the House but to force a majority vote—no doubt the same way as yesterday—by means of arm twisting? Are the Government generally, and especially the right hon. Gentleman, aware that since the summer recess there has undoubtedly been a substantial increase in the number of people who are opposed to Maastricht? In my opinion, an overwhelming majority of the British people—this could be tested by a referendum—do not want the treaty. Why are the Government going ahead, particularly at a time of acute economic crisis?

Mr. Newton: My assessment is rather different. I believe that it has become much clearer during the past three months that there is widespread support around Europe for the approach that the Government adopted to negotiations on Maastricht and the emphasis that we placed on developments through co-operation between Governments rather than centralised Community institutions and through the key concept of subsidiarity.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: We now move on to the statement from the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

BCCI (Bingham Report)

4.4 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): The collapse of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International was a severe blow to many thousands of depositors all over the world. It was the result of a fraud unparalled both in scale and cunning. Many hon. Members have seen the problems that it has caused and is still causing to businesses and individuals alike.

It was against that background that I decided, with the Governor of the Bank of England, to ask Lord Justice Bingham to carry out a full and rigorous inquiry into the conduct of the authorities that supervised BCCI.

Lord Justice Bingham had access to all the material that he needed from the Government and the Bank. Nothing was withheld. Much of the evidence was confidential and the inquiry was held in private to avoid any prejudice to criminal proceedings and to encourage witnesses to give evidence.

Since receiving the report, I have had to weigh carefully the public interest in maintaining that confidentiality against the public interest in disclosure. After taking legal advice, I have concluded that the balance lies firmly in favour of publishing Lord Justice Bingham's report unamended and in full but without the supporting appendices.

Once hon. Members have had the opportunity to digest the report, there will be a debate in Government time in the House on the matter.

Lord Justice Bingham's terms of reference were:

> "To enquire into the supervision of BCCI under the Banking Acts: to consider whether the action taken by all the United Kingdom authorities was appropriate and timely; and to make recommendations."

Accordingly, Lord Justice Bingham's report does not attempt to describe the full story of BCCI's activities, nor does it seek to judge how overseas authorities, the directors of the companies, or the auditors, carried out their duties. What the report does provide is a clear and thorough account of the role of every official United Kingdom authority which had any involvement in the affairs of BCCI.

Lord Justice Bingham concluded that the conduct of Treasury Ministers and officials was not, in his view,

> "open to criticism in any respect".

However, the main focus of the report is banking supervision. With the Banking Acts of 1979 and 1987, Parliament placed that responsibility on the Bank of England. So the bulk of the report deals with the way the Bank discharged its responsibilities from 1972, when BCCI opened its first branch in London, to its closure last year. It may be helpful to the House if I summarise briefly the report's main conclusions.

First, I should make it clear that the closure of BCCI was instigated by the Bank after it had received a report last June from the auditors which revealed the largest fraud in banking history. Responsibility for that fraud and the consequent losses rests squarely with those criminals who devised and carried it out. They are being pursued by the authorities in a number of countries.

Secondly, BCCI's opaque structure was established before there was a statutory system of banking supervision in this country. The report accepts that a bank established today

[Mr. Norman Lamont]

"could scarcely hope to assume the form it did or last so long".

But Lord Justice Bingham is critical of a number of judgments made by the Bank over the years. He argues that the Bank was slow to impose on BCCI an appropriate supervisory regime, and concludes that the Bank continued for too long to rely on the Luxembourg authorities to play the leading role.

Next, the report concludes that communication between supervisors, auditors, and shareholders was not as good as it should have been. The Bank did not grasp the scale of the fraud that the majority shareholders and auditors had uncovered until it received Price Waterhouse's report in June last year. The report came as a surprise to the Bank, but Lord Justice Bingham argues that it should not have done.

He concludes that it would not have come as a surprise had Price Waterhouse more plainly and comprehensively brought the various elements of the fraud to the notice of the Bank as they emerged, or had the majority shareholders made a full and timely disclosure of all the facts known to them. But Lord Justice Bingham also concludes that the Bank itself should have been more alive to the significance of those messages it did receive and that it should have pursued more vigorously the leads it was given.

Turning to the summer of 1991, he concludes that the Bank's action in closing BCCI was an appropriate course of action, as it was its decision not to give effective advance notice to the majority shareholders. In his view, all the options were unattractive and the Bank had to act on its judgment of what was in the interests of depositors.

In the last 18 months, some wild allegations have been made—both in this country and abroad—about the Bank's role in the affair. Lord Justice Bingham's report shows that there was no duplicity or bad faith; that the Bank was party to no conspiracy or cover-up.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): It is a whitewash and a cover-up.

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman is mistaken. Those allegations were made.

None the less, Lord Justice Bingham concludes that mistakes were made and that in certain respects the Bank's supervision was deficient. That is a matter of very serious concern and I am determined that all the lessons from this case should be learnt.

It is to the key question of how to make the supervisory system more effective in the future that Lord Justice Bingham turns in the final chapter of his report. He does not call for any radical recasting either of United Kingdom legislation or of the international framework developed by the G10 group of countries. Nor does he find any substantial flaws in the new regime for banks within the European Community that comes into effect next year. He believes that the Bank of England's traditional supervisory techniques have generally served the community well, and he does not recommend any change in its responsibility for supervision. None the less, he makes a number of recommendations for strengthening our current arrangements. The Government and the Bank accept them all.

First, we must ensure transparency of structure. Lord Justice Bingham says that the most important lesson of the affair is that

"banking group structures which deny supervisors a clear view of how business is conducted should be outlawed."

To put the position in the United Kingdom beyond doubt, I will introduce legislation to give the Bank explicit powers to refuse or to revoke authorisation of banks whose supervision is obstructed by a complex structure or by undue secrecy in the financial centres in which they operate.

In Europe, I will urge our Community partners to agree that similar powers should be taken by all banking supervisors, and we will press for the adoption of similar standards more widely.

Next, we need better communication and co-operation between supervisors internationally. Few substantial banks now operate only in one country, or even on one continent. It is vital that all the supervisors concerned with a single group should communicate openly, co-ordinate their efforts, and impose similar standards.

The latest Basle concordat is an important step forward, as is the European Community consolidated supervision directive, but we need to go further in strengthening the arrangements for exchange of information internationally. We will ask our European partners to look again at the confidentiality provisions of the banking directives to ensure that they do not impede the exchange of information between supervisors and other authorities.

We will also propose a system for reviewing supervisory standards within the Community and more widely.

But it is not just a matter of co-operating internationally. An increasing number of banks form parts of wider financial conglomerates. Fraud is by no means confined to banks, so we must also ensure that all the different authorities at home that are responsible for deterring, investigating, and prosecuting fraud co-operate to the greatest effect. I am therefore establishing new machinery within the United Kingdom to strengthen communications and co-operation between supervisors and all the other relevant authorities.

Fourth, BCCI has emphasised how vital it is that auditors should speak plainly and freely to the Bank. Hitherto, their duties have been laid down in professional guidance. Lord Justice Bingham has concluded—as, indeed, did the Treasury Select Committee—that it would be better for the duty to be statutory. I accept that conclusion. I have decided that a similar approach would be appropriate for financial services and building societies, and the President of the Board of Trade considers that it should also be extended to insurance companies. The necessary consultation with the professional auditing bodies and others on the formulation of such a duty and its enforcement will be taken forward urgently.

Finally, Lord Justice Bingham concludes that it would be a mistake to respond to BCCI by intensifying supervision of all banks. The overriding need is to ensure that the supervisors' attention is concentrated on suspect banks, and that, where appropriate, vigorous action is taken. The Governor and I take very seriously the criticisms that have been made of the Bank; so the Governor is announcing today important organisational changes and a strengthening of his supervisory team. A special investigations unit and a legal unit are being set up. As recommended by the Select Committee, the Bank's capacity for on-site examination is being strengthened. Greater use will also be made of the Board of Banking

Supervision, which brings outside expertise to bear on the Bank's work, and training for supervisors is being enhanced.

An effective system of banking supervision is essential to any advanced economy. It cannot eliminate risk, but it can make bank failures less likely and frauds more difficult. In that way it sustains the confidence on which sound banking, and the economy more generally, depend. BCCI was not typical in any respect, but its failure has caused great damage and distress. It was important to review the United Kingdom authorities' role in the affair dispassionately and thoroughly.

I am sure that the House will join me in thanking Lord Justice Bingham for producing a masterly account of a complex subject. He has not hesitated to make criticisms where he considers them appropriate, but he has been constructive in his recommendations for the future.

The Government are determined to learn all the lessons from this unhappy affair. As I have said, we accept all the Bingham report's recommendations, and we intend to pursue them vigorously.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): We are dealing with the biggest banking fraud in history. Because of criminal activity, thousands of hard-pressed depositors lost millions of pounds and were left stranded; £78 million was lost to local authorities alone; and there was also the human cost—14,000 people worldwide lost their jobs. Lord Justice Bingham has concluded that the supervisory approach of the regulatory authorities was deficient. He has also said that they failed to take strong and resolute action, and that they did not pursue the truth about BCCI with the rigour that BCCI's market reputation justified.

Given all that, will the Chancellor answer the central question of this affair: who is going to accept responsibility for the regulatory mistakes and misjudgments that Lord Bingham has uncovered?

Is it not the case that BCCI, approved and authorised by the Bank of England, was involved not just for months but for years in fraud, the laundering of money, bribery connected with terrorism, arms trafficking and income tax evasion? Is it not the case that the Bank of England knew in 1988 of the charge of laundering billions of pounds of drugs money; knew in March 1990 that terrorists held bank accounts in the United Kingdom at BCCI; knew from Price Waterhouse in April 1990 that statements and transactions by the bank were "either false or deceitful"; knew in October 1990 of detailed inappropriate transactions, including hundreds of millions of pounds of insider loans, and prima facie evidence of fraudulent documentation; and knew also that the minimum criteria for authorisation were being breached under schedule 3 to the Banking Act 1987? Yet the bank continued to be allowed to trade right up until July 1991.

Does the Chancellor agree that, after being advised that there were serious irregularities worthy of further investigation in 1988, 1989 and 1990, the Governor of the Bank of England's statement in April 1991 that the bank was "in pretty good shape" was something of a misjudgment, as was the judgment to allow BCCI to remove, by charter plane, the records and evidence of its misdeeds to the middle east, out of the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom authorities?

Given what has been uncovered by Lord Bingham, does the Chancellor consider it right, in the light of this catalogue of mistakes, that junior officials in the Bank of England should alone shoulder the blame? Will he not confirm that ultimate responsibility in the Bank of England rests with the Governor? Will the Chancellor tell us whether he has asked for the resignation of the Governor of the Bank of England?

When, throughout, the Prime Minister and the Treasury have continually sought to distance themselves from both the Bank of England and their responsibility for the regulation, when the Treasury witnesses and the Chancellor did not tell us, but told Bingham, that there was no need for the Treasury to be informed, yet when Bingham reports in paragraph 2.513:

> "I would find this view more persuasive if the Bank had chosen to tell the Treasury nothing about BCCI . . . But it was not the line which the Bank took",

and when Bingham also says:

> "Particularly after the Tampa arrest"—

that is, three years before the bank was closed—

> "BCCI was a fairly regular subject of report"

to the Treasury, is not the correct position that, far from the Treasury and the Prime Minister, when Chancellor, being uninformed—as has been claimed—and therefore blameless, the Treasury and its Ministers knew full well that there was a problem but chose to do nothing more? For this the Prime Minister must accept a share of the blame.

Was it right for the Prime Minister to tell the House on 18 January 1990, when so many problems were already obvious, that he was satisfied with the supervision of the bank? Was it right, after being told in April 1990 of drug laundering and in May 1990 of the seriousness of the problems, that he, by his own admission, despite having been put on notice, took no further action in the matter for 16 months, as problems accumulated, until he was told that the bank was to be closed the next day?

Is not the position this: that the Prime Minister and the Treasury say that they relied on the Bank, that the Bank says that it relied on Price Waterhouse, that Price Waterhouse says that it relied on information from BCCI and that, therefore, no one is accepting responsibility for misjudgment and mistakes in regulation? Everyone, as usual, as happens under this Government, is blaming someone else.

In these circumstances, will the Chancellor tell us when he replies why the Prime Minister, who gave the House an undertaking on 22 July 1991 that he would personally publish the report and answer for it, has singularly failed to honour that promise by coming to the House today?

Does this sorry episode not show that, while Ministers paid lip service to regulation, their ideological attachment to crude free market dogma meant that effective and tough regulation was never taken sufficiently seriously, with the result that the Bank of England's so-called "light hand" made it a soft touch for a crooked bank? Are we not paying a heavy price for the free-for-all of the 1980s which denied regulation its proper place in the management of our financial institutions?

Will the Chancellor now tell us that he will hold a full debate on the report and on the Bingham recommendations? Will he explain which sections of the appendices have been deleted and whether any of the deletions refer to the Government and the Bank of England's role in this affair? I welcome the fact that auditors will be obliged to report fraud, something that we have been urging upon this Government for some time.

[Mr. Gordon Brown]

Will the Chancellor tell us what new arrangements he will propose to review the compensation scheme, whether he will consider putting it on the same footing as institutions regulated by the Securities and Investments Board and whether he will speed up compensation for the many small businesses that went out of business and for the individuals who entrusted their life savings to BCCI in the belief that the Bank of England would protect their interests, as did the local authorities which relied upon the Bank of England's approval and which would have been penalised, surcharged, or debarred from office if they had been guilty of the regulatory failures, now the responsibility of the Bank of England? Will he therefore reform the approved list for local authorities borrowing from banks?

As this is the latest in a series of failures in the Government's free-for-all approach to the regulation and management of the economy, for which others are again apparently shouldering the blame and paying the price, is not it time for a separate wholesale review and overhaul of the regulation of banks and our financial institutions, and will the Chancellor agree to the proposal for an inquiry now?

Mr. Lamont: I answered some of the hon. Gentleman's questions in my statement. I said that we shall provide a debate in Government time. I further said that we fully accept the recommendations of the report. I appreciate that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) has had only a couple of hours to glance at the conclusions.

Mr. Gordon Brown *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Lamont: It is the first conclusion. The conclusion of the report is that Lord Justice Bingham does not recommend a radical recasting of the legal structure of banking supervision. Our conclusion, therefore, is that it would not be appropriate to take such action. I have explained that we accept every one of his recommendations, that we are strengthening the legislation, where necessary, to ensure more co-operation between supervisors internationally and within the United Kingdom and that we are implementing what Lord Justice Bingham says is the single most important lesson of the affair—that where a bank's structure is opaque and difficult to supervise, the authorities should be able to refuse it authorisation. I have made it clear that we accept that.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East mentioned the appendices. I have published the report in full. I explained to the hon. Gentleman that I have had to bear in mind the risk of prejudicing prosecutions and the fact that much evidence and information is given confidentially to ensure the supervision of banks. I have accepted legal advice on that point. I am sure that, when the hon. Gentleman has time to read the report, he will see that it is an extremely full and detailed examination of the role of supervisors, of the Bank and of the Government.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East seemed not to be aware that Parliament has quite unequivocally laid down that responsibility for the supervision of banks lies with the Bank of England. Lord Justice Bingham says that he believes that that is right and that it should continue. Obviously, the Bank of England accepts responsibility for the supervision of individual banks: that is its job.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East has been extremely critical of the Governor. It is true that the report makes some telling criticisms of the supervision of the bank over many years, but I point out that it existed in 73 countries, had 400 branches and $20 billion-worth of deposits. It goes right back to the early 1970s. When the Bank of England took the lead and closed it down, it was still operating in 60 countries. It was still operating in New York and California.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East referred to the Tampa prosecutions, money laundering and the drug incidents. But even after those the bank continued to be allowed to operate in the United States because the view taken there, as here, was that this had been something confined to local management. That was the view taken at the time.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East should recognise that Lord Justice Bingham says that the Bank of England's general approach to supervision has served the country well, and he commends the supervision of the United Kingdom branch. However, as the hon. Gentleman has rightly emphasised, the report makes some strong and telling criticisms of what happened at particular moments of time, when information was made available on which, at it turned out, wrong judgments were made.

Surely the key point is the recommendation of the report. Lord Justice Bingham has said what he thinks ought to be done, and we have wholly accepted that those are the appropriate responses. I do not believe that it would be right to call for the resignation of the Governor of the Bank of England.

The hon. Gentleman made some legitimate points, which did not greatly surprise me, but what he said about my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister fell below the level of events, and astonished me. It was absolutely disgraceful. The report makes it quite clear that the conduct of Treasury Ministers, including the Prime Minister, is not open to criticism in any respect. The hon. Gentleman has attempted to resurrect the allegations made by the former Leader of the Opposition, who in July 1991 said:

> "It . . . is a matter of regret that 200,000 people continued to trade with the BCCI . . . when . . . the then Chancellor of the Exchequer"—

he was referring to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—

> "knew about serious irregularities in that bank, but did nothing to warn anyone."—[*Official Report*, 23 July 1991; Vol. 195, c. 1028-9.]

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East has repeated those allegations.

Lord Justice Bingham makes it clear that the Prime Minister read the report over the weekend of 29 and 30 June, and that that was the first that my right hon. Friend had heard of the fraud, either as Prime Minister or in his previous office as Chancellor of the Exchequer. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East and his party should withdraw their disgraceful allegations.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The House will understand that I cannot allow this to develop into a debate, which I fear it may be likely to do. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has made a statement, and I am looking for short questions and short answers. I have to keep in mind and safeguard the remainder of the day's business. I hope that I shall have the co-operation of all hon. Members on those matters.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): I welcome my right hon. Friend's decision to publish the report in full and to implement all its recommendations. In view of the importance of the transparency of structure, which is central to Bingham's recommendations and to those made by the Treasury Select Committee in the previous Parliament, will my right hon. Friend tell the House how quickly he intends to introduce legislation to strengthen the Bank of England's power to refuse or revoke authorisation where the structure of a bank is designed to make supervision difficult?

In view of the European dimension, will my right hon. Friend make it a priority of the British presidency to ensure that similar legislation is enacted throughout the European Community so that we do not face the prospect of a bank inadequately regulated in another Community country, such as Luxembourg, being able to operate here under the passporting procedures?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend has put his finger on what Lord Justice Bingham says is the most important issue arising from the affair—that we should be able to supervise banks which have opaque structures. We shall introduce legislation to deal with that as quickly as we can. Some such measures have already been enacted under European legislation but have not yet come into force. The second consolidated supervision directive, which comes into operation next year, will help greatly.

My hon. Friend's second point was made in the context of the European Community, but it also applies more widely. The standards of supervision everywhere should reach the same high level—and we intend to pursue that goal through the supplement to the Basle concordat. We also intend to press for machinery within the EC to ensure that that is precisely what happens. That is most important and, as my hon. Friend said, it will become especially so when the passport system comes into existence.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Is it not clear that at least some of those who suffered misery and ruin as a result of the fraud would not have done so if the banking supervision side of the Bank of England had not been slow, irresolute, dilatory, incompetent and naive, and if it had not had, as the report says,

"a deep-rooted reluctance to believe ill of BCCI"?

Does the Chancellor remember that the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee suggested that, if the Bank of England had failed in its supervisory duties, there would be a case for compensation, and that he said that, if the conclusion was that blame applied to the authorities, the Government's view of compensation would have to be reconsidered? Is it now being reconsidered?

Mr. Lamont: The report does make criticisms, as I have acknowledged, of particular incidents and of particular individuals. The right hon. Gentleman quotes a sentence relating to a particular official in the Bank of England. We already have a system of compensation through the bank deposit protection scheme. Through the scheme, £50 million has been paid out to almost 9,000 people. Up to £85 million could be paid out under the scheme.

I have, of course, considered the matter, but I do not believe that we should have a system of 100 per cent. compensation. That carries great dangers, as the experience in the United States demonstrates.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): The Chancellor will be aware that the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee report went wider than Bingham and, after deep investigation into the matter, made a number of recommendations. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that he proposes to accept all the main recommendations of the Select Committee as well as those of Bingham, although Bingham duplicates some of them?

As the main danger now is that, as a result of the second banking directive and, perhaps, the Uruguay round, our market will now be opened up far more widely than it was, is it not essential to have someone to regulate the regulators? Do we not especially need some arrangement whereby not only the G10 countries and the European countries but all countries are covered? Will my right hon. Friend bear that point in mind ahead of the debate?

Mr. Lamont: We have published today our response to the Select Committee, and our reply goes a long way towards meeting its recommendations. There is an overlap between some of the Committee's recommendations and some of the recommendations in Lord Justice Bingham's report.

I agree with my right hon. Friend's second point. It is extremely important that we have a proper regime for the supervisors—the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts). The matter goes wider than the European Community and wider than the G10 countries, because there are many offshore financial centres which may branch out into other countries. That is why we have said that we will take legislative action to ensure that we are capable of supervising banks if their structure is impenetrable and opaque.

Another point, which was made in the Select Committee's report, is that we should have the right—not necessarily the obligation—to insist on incorporation for non-European Community countries' banks rather than branches simply being established.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): The Chancellor may not know that one of the largest single depositors in BCCI lives in Kingston, Surrey, in his constituency.

Will the Chancellor stand by the statement he made to the House on 19 July 1991 at column 722, when he said that, if blame or negligence attached to the Bank of England, he would consider the case for compensation in exactly the same way as the compensation given to those who suffered in the Barlow Clowes affair?

Paragraphs 2.480 and 2.484 are scathing attacks on the credibility of the Governor of the Bank of England. Taken with the report of Senator Kerry, the credibility of the Governor of the Bank of England is no more. It is not a question of calling for his resignation. I believe that he should apologise to the victims of BCCI for what has happened, and that the Chancellor should sack him.

Mr. Lamont: I do not accept that. That comment goes beyond what is justified by the report.

I do not accept the findings of Senator Kerry's report. He did not have access to the documents to which Lord

[Mr. Lamont]

Justice Bingham had access and he did not take evidence from the Bank of England. I believe that some wild and incorrect allegations were made in that report.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman seeks to draw an analogy with Barlow Clowes. However, there is a considerable difference.

Mr. Vaz: Has the Chancellor reflected on that?

Mr. Lamont: I have reflected on the point and I am answering the hon. Gentleman. I freely acknowledge and respect the hon. Gentleman's great interest and the great energy that he has shown in pursuing the matter. By the way, I did know that one of the largest depositors lived in my constituency. There are several of them.

It seems to me that there are very significant differences with Barlow Clowes. First, in the Barlow Clowes case, no compensation scheme existed. There is a scheme to protect depositors in banks. Secondly, that was something which was specifically recommended by the Parliamentary Commissioner when he inquired into what had happened with the handling of Barlow Clowes. That was not one of the recommendations of the Bingham report.

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Since my right hon. Friend referred to the quite disgraceful slur against the honour of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, which was repeated from the Opposition Front Bench this afternoon, has he any knowledge that the Opposition wish to make a statement to the House to apologise for the incorrect slur on my right hon. Friend and clear the matter up once and for all? It is quite wrong for the matter to be left as it is.

Mr. Lamont: I made it clear that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) surprised me——

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): It is in the report.

Mr. Lamont: It is not in the report. The report makes it quite clear that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister did not know of the contents of the section 41 report and the fraud in the United Kingdom until he received a report from me at the end of June. I must tell the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East that, when one has made one scandalous allegation, one should not make another.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): The Chancellor will be aware that some people believe that the Bank only moved against BCCI in the end because it was well aware that the New York authorities under Mr. Morgenthau were about to unveil the results of their investigation which would have reflected very badly on the dilatory and incompetent supervision that the Bank had given BCCI. However, with regard to the auditors, this is not the first instance when big City accountants have proved to be unable to recognise fraud when it is being practised under their noses. Hon. Members will recall the Maxwell pension fund and the role that auditors played in that.

It seems that Price Waterhouse had a particular problem in the BCCI affair. On the one hand, it was supposed to be BCCI's auditor, while on the other hand it was earning huge fees from other parts of BCCI as management consultants. Will the Government take a further look at the role of auditors and perhaps take steps to ensure that auditors are not faced with potential conflicts of interest in future?

Mr. Lamont: On the last point, Lord Justice Bingham considered the issue that the hon. Lady has raised, and he concludes that the so-called conflict of interest is not something that he believes action should be taken upon. However, as I have told the House, we intend to impose a duty on auditors in future to report to the supervisory authorities when they have good reason to believe that fraud is taking place.

The hon. Lady referred to Price Waterhouse, and there is a criticism of Price Waterhouse in the report. However, in fairness to Price Waterhouse, it should also be stressed that on other occasions—for example, in April and October 1992—when the firm had made its audit report to the directors of BCCI, it ensured that some information was passed on to the Bank of England. Lord Justice Bingham concluded that perhaps that could have been done more fully, but a careful reading of the report discloses that on several occasions that is precisely what Price Waterhouse did.

The hon. Lady's first point was that the Bank of England acted only because of what the district attorney in New York was about to reveal. That is not correct. What finally triggered the action of the Bank of England, which Lord Justice Bingham concludes was appropriate, was the Price Waterhouse report. I stress that BCCI continued to operate in New York and California when it was closed by the Bank of England. That ought to be seen in the context of the fact that the bank operated worldwide in 60 countries with 400 branches. I do not believe that it is correct to pin it all on the Bank of England just like that.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): Does my right hon. Friend agree that many Conservative Members welcome the immediate response of the Bank of England and would feel that it was in everyone's interest that the Governor should be able to introduce the reforms suggested in the Bingham report? Does he also agree that depositors will always lose money when a bank closes down in such unfortunate circumstances? A difference in the timing only means a difference in who loses their money. Does he also agree that people who deposit money in overseas banks can never expect them to be 100 per cent. risk-free?

Mr. Lamont: I agree with my hon. Friend, but I do not wish to cast slurs on overseas banks in comparison to any other banks. Obviously it is very important that people should take a view about banks with which they deposit money as they should take a view about any financial institution to which they entrust their capital. However, I very much agree with the general thrust of my hon. Friend's comments.

It is important that depositors and savers should have some responsibility. No system of supervision can guarantee safety or eliminate fraud. There will always be a risk of that. We have an example of a gigantic fraud which had gone on for well over a decade and throughout the world. I entirely accept what my hon. Friend said about the need to press ahead with the legislative changes and accept the implementation of the Bingham report.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the Chancellor recall that, when this fraud was becoming apparent around 1984-85, some other money in a bank was being transferred from Luxembourg and various other banks from the National Union of Mineworkers? Somehow or other, they managed to trace that genuine, real money—not fraudulent money—which the NUM was trying to save for the miners. The bankers represented by the Government managed to find that money when they could not find the fraud in BCCI. I find it very strange that there is a gang of people on the Government Front Bench, most of whom come from the belly of the banking establishment, who cannot detect fraud over a period of eight or nine years.

It is very odd that the Government can supervise the 400 local authorities and check every penny they spend, but they cannot supervise or look into massive fraud. I do not think that it is just a question of the boss of the Bank of England resigning—the whole lot on the Treasury Bench should get out of the way.

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman expressed something like that view yesterday. He thinks that every debate is about the miners. This one is not.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): Before we debate this unhappy subject, will my right hon. Friend give further careful thought to whether he is quite sure that the Bingham recommendation is correct in advising that we should make no change in the institutional method of bank supervision bearing in mind that the Bundesbank does not have responsibility for such supervision? I have held the view for a long time that, with the deregulation of financial institutions and the complete internationalisation of money markets, bank supervision is an extraordinarily difficult task. While I am certainly not one of those who are in favour of making the Bank of England independent, I am very strongly in favour of its prestige being maintained as strongly as possible——

Madam Speaker: Order. We are now getting into an Adjournment debate. I have asked hon. Members to ask questions.

Sir Peter Tapsell: Therefore, may we not continually put the Bank in a position which is likely to recur, that of in being involved in such scandals because of its supervisory role?

Mr. Lamont: I note what my hon. Friend says, although in many countries the central bank has responsibility for supervision. That point has been examined in detail by Lord Justice Bingham. He has come to the conclusion that there is no reason to change the existing arrangements. I have announced that I am accepting those changes that he thinks should be made, but obviously I will reflect on what my hon. Friend, who has very considerable experience of these matters, has said. I note what my hon. Friend says about the Bundesbank, because he was not so friendly about it a few weeks ago.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): The report recommends that attention should be concentrated on suspect banks. That is a very elementary proposition. We must ask why on earth suspect banks were not supervised properly from the beginnning—right from 1979. I myself was asking others why the conditions of the Banking Act 1979 were not applied to BCCI. It was a highly disreputable operation and there was great concern about it. The powers to approve and authorise should have been used against that bank right from the beginning. What concerns me most is that the Bank of England has failed miserably in this matter, and its reputation must concern us all.

Mr. Lamont: Because I have had to reply to some rather extreme points that have been made by the Opposition, I do not wish in any way to deny that very serious criticisms have been made. I do not wish to give that impression.

The right hon. Gentleman asks, "Is it not rather obvious that resources should be concentrated on suspect banks?" The point that Lord Justice Bingham is making is that he feels that there is not a great deal of point in intensifying supervision generally. Supervision has to deal not just with fraud but with matters such as capital adequacy and the resources that shareholders put into banks. He is saying that, when it comes to fraud, there is room for being even more selective and for having machinery that responds more rapidly and more sensitively than has happened in the past to some of the receipt of information that has occurred.

Mrs. Judith Chaplin (Newbury): My right hon. Friend has said that the supervisors should be more flexible and discriminating. What will the Bank of England do to ensure that that happens?

Mr. Lamont: The Bank of England intends to increase the resources devoted to supervision. It also intends—this is the point that I was making to the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon)—to set up a special unit to deal with allegations that are made against particular suspect banks. It is also increasing the staff and setting up a legal unit within the Bank. In addition, it is going to take the initiative in making sure that we have a lead supervisor when banks are spread across several countries. That is one of the key points that come out of the report. It is extremely important to have a lead supervisor in all cases.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): As regards the Chancellor's intention to give the Bank of England the power to revoke or refuse authorisation when the structure of a bank is opaque, does not Lord Bingham, in paragraph 3.1.5, say that it already has that power and that it simply refused to exercise it? Given that that is the case, it is not a lack of power that caused this debacle but a failure to exercise that power. Is not there a moral obligation on the Chancellor to come forward with a scheme of compensation for all those who have lost money in this disaster?

Mr. Lamont: What Lord Justice Bingham says—[HON. MEMBERS: "Lord Bingham."]—Lord Bingham, the Master of the Rolls, Sir Thomas Bingham now—is that it is his legal opinion that that power exists but that, if there is any ambiguity, the Government should consider action. We have considered it. We think that there is some ambiguity and that therefore we should take the legislation to make the situation absolutely crystal clear. I hope that that answers the hon. Gentleman's point. I do not think that the conclusion that he drew about compensation follows from what the hon. Gentleman has said.

I deeply regret that so many people have lost as a result of what has happened, but let the House be absolutely clear—I wish hon. Members would just occasionally say it —that responsibility for what has happened lies with the criminals and those who perpetrated the fraud. Not one

[Mr. Lamont]

Opposition Member has made that point. They just seek to get whatever miserable political advantage that they can out of the situation.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Will my right hon. Friend the Chancellor confirm that what is unusual about this fraud is not that it was massive or that it was international but that it involved the collaboration of a large number of individuals on an international scale? How did that happen in such a way that no authority in the world managed to discover it? Therefore, is it not logical that the British Government should lead in bringing together a number of regulatory authorities in the world so that we will have a better international regulatory system? What will the British Government be doing about that?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is right, and that is why we propose to take such an initiative within the European Community. That is why we also intend to use the supplement to the Basle concordat to ensure, as I have said, that there is always a lead supervisor.

One of the most powerful points in the report is that for a long time there was no lead supervisor. One of the criticisms that Lord Bingham makes is that the Bank of England was unwilling to assume the role of lead supervisor and relied too long on Luxembourg. We must ensure that there are arrangements that make it absolutely certain that in all cases in future there is a lead supervisor, and we will be doing precisely that.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Bearing in mind that, years before the Governor of the Bank of England tried to close down BCCI, he had been told that the management was incompetent, that the directors were hopeless, that the accounting methods were so dreadful that one firm of accountants, Ernst and Whinney, had simply given up and that there had been serious fraud in the treasury department of BCCI in 1985 and further serious fraud through Capcom Financial Services, would it not be seemly if the Governor of the Bank of England were to give way to someone else who is better able to enforce not only the decencies and proprieties of public life but the provisions of the Banking Act 1987—or does the Governor stand outside the laws of England?

Mr. Lamont: I have explained why I believe that it is absolutely right that the Governor, while he assumes responsibility for this matter, should remain the Governor, and I have every confidence in him.

The hon. Gentleman makes a point that is made repeatedly by hon. Members, which is that, at various times in a decade and a half, information has entered the public domain of wrongdoing in BCCI in different parts of the world. There were the arrests over the Tampa incident and treasury frauds in 1985. Hon. Members have made that point repeatedly and then asked why then something was not done about it.

What they have omitted to mention, which in fairness should be mentioned, is that, on several occasions in the long history of that bank since 1972, there have been changes in the management and changes in the shareholder. There have been attempts to reconstruct the bank. On each occasion, the Bank of England faced the dilemma of either closing it down or attempting remedial action and reconstruction. It attempted that reconstruction of the bank on several occasions, even though we knew—the hon. Gentleman knew; everybody knew—that there had been some wrongdoing in the bank in different parts of the world.

The fact that things went wrong in this case should be placed against the fact that, in the past five years, there have been about 34 occasions on which the Bank has actually succeeded in reconstructing banks or bringing about remedial action, which has saved depositors and worked to the advantage of everybody. That was the motive of the Bank of England. It is very easily condemned with the advantage of hindsight.

Mr. Tim Renton (Mid-Sussex): It was obviously right to publish Lord Bingham's report, and I congratulate and respect my right hon. Friend on his frankness and openness in doing so. Clearly, the supervision of the Bank of England has been lax, but does my right hon. Friend not agree that the difficulty for the central supervisory authority where there is an international bank with what he described as an opaque structure is for the central bank to know the precise moment at which it is right to step in and close branches? If that step is taken too early, for whatever reason, it can lead to far greater loss for creditors and depositors than would otherwise be the case. I noticed in Beirut last week that BCCI was still operating freely and openly because the authorities, depositors and creditors did not wish to close it.

Mr. Lamont: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, especially for his opening remarks. He makes a powerful point, which is similar to that which I made about the dilemma facing the Bank. It has been well illustrated that Opposition Members have, at various times, criticised the Bank either for closing BCCI or for not closing it—they have made both criticisms together.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Will the Chancellor address himself to paragraph 2.512 and the following paragraph of the report dealing with responsibility of both the Treasury and the Bank? Does he accept that no Opposition Member or anybody else is suggesting that the Prime Minister knew of the alleged fraud until very near the time when the bank closed. No one is impugning his conduct or that of any other Minister. The point that Lord Bingham is making is that the Bank, the Treasury and its Ministers knew for a considerable time before the bank was closed that there was a problem. Does the Chancellor not accept that the responsibility of the Treasury and its Ministers is an important matter for both this case and the future, and for the issue of compensation? Many people think that it is high time that those who take decisions stand up and accept responsibility when things go wrong.

Mr. Lamont: The report clearly says that the conduct of Treasury Ministers

"is not in my view open to criticism in any respect."

The hon. Gentleman says that nobody is alleging that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister knew about the fraud until a very late date, but that is not what the former Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), said on 23 July 1991, when he repeatedly accused my right hon. Friend of covering up and knowing about the position. The right hon. Gentleman said:

> "The Prime Minister has already misled the House once today by saying that he referred to the irregularities, when it is in the recall of this House that he did not say a word . . . Despite what he knew as Chancellor of the Exchequer, he did nothing to warn innocent people of the trap into which they were moving and of a bank that was near bankruptcy,"—[*Official Report*, 23 July 1991; Vol. 195, c. 1029.]

My right hon. Friend knew nothing about that, and the report makes that crystal clear.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. We must now move on. I have given the matter quite a long run, and Ministers have already made it clear that we are to have a debate on it.

Points of Order

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Some 14 hours after last night's vote on the coal industry, 900 miners at Vane Tempest colliery were informed that the colliery would cease production on Friday. Those 900 men were sacked last week, were reinstated this week and are to be mothballed next week. Like the President of the Board of Trade, those 900 men do not know whether they are coming or going.

Should we not invite the President of the Board of Trade back to the Chamber now to explain in unequivocal terms precisely what his intentions are for Vane Tempest colliery, which is inextricably linked with Easington colliery because of shared pumping costs? It is important that the matter should be clarified as quickly as possible.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. The President of the Board of Trade gave assurances yesterday—repeated by the Secretary of State for Wales late last night—that the 10 pits would be treated to the same degree of consultation as the other 21. It seems incredible that consultation on the fate of the 900 men at Vane Tempest could have taken place within 14 hours.

In view of the confidence trick played on those hon. Members who were intending to vote with the Opposition, the President of the Board of Trade should be brought here to give a statement to make it clear that British Coal should not be allowed to get away with sacking 900 men at Vane Tempest.

Madam Speaker: As both hon. Members are aware, those are not points of order with which the Chair can deal. I have received no information from the Government that they wish to make a further statement on the issue.

BILLS PRESENTED

HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Secretary Howard, supported by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Heseltine, Mr. Secretary MacGregor, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. Secretary Lang, Sir George Young, Mr. John Redwood and Mr. Tony Baldry, presented a Bill to confer rights to collective enfranchisement and lease renewal on tenants of flats; to extend the right to enfranchisement of tenants of houses; to make provision for auditing the management, by landlords or other persons, of residential property and for the approval of codes of practice relating thereto; to amend Part III of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987; to confer jurisdiction on leasehold valuation tribunals as respects Crown land; to amend Parts II, IV and V of the Housing Act 1985, Schedule 2 to the Housing Associations Act 1985, Parts I and III and section 248 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 and Schedule 4 to the Local Government and Housing Act 1989; to alter the basis of certain contributions by the Secretary of State under section 569 of the Housing Act 1985; to establish and confer functions on a body to replace the English Industrial Estates Corporation and to be known as the Urban Regeneration Agency; to provide for the designation of certain urban and other areas and to make provision as to the effect of such designation; to amend section 98 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 and section 27 of the Housing and Planning Act 1986; to make further provision with respect to urban development corporations and urban development areas;

and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 67].

ASYLUM AND IMMIGRATION APPEALS

Mr. Secretary Clarke, support by Mr. Secretary Hurd, Mr. Secretary Howard, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. Secretary Lilley, Mr. Secretary Lang, Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew and Mr. Charles Wardle, presented a Bill to make provision about persons who claim asylum in the United Kingdom and their dependants; to restrict certain rights of appeal under the Immigration Act 1971; and to extend the provisions of the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 to transit passengers: And the same was read the First time and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 69].

The Health of the Nation

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

5.7 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): This is the first opportunity that the House has had to debate health in detail since the general election. I want to begin with the significance to the national health service—and to the health of the nation—of the outcome of that election.

Before that, however, it is a pleasant duty for me to welcome the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) to his place on the Opposition Front Bench. With community care much on our minds, I am sure that the House will benefit from the experience of local government that he will bring to our debates. If there is one regret about the hon. Gentleman's appointment, it is that our deliberations will in future be without the often unique insights of his predecessor. We remember the predictions of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). He predicted that the targets under the GP contract were "so heroic" that no GP would ever reach them.

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the right hon. Lady. It was remiss of me not to say at the outset that I have had so many requests from hon. Members wishing to speak today in this debate that I have had to limit speeches to 10 minutes between 7 pm and 9 pm. I am sorry to have interrupted the right hon. Lady, but I thought that the House should be told right away of the depth of interest in the debate.

Mrs. Bottomley: I am delighted to hear that there is such an interest in this debate. I was only worried that you, Madam Speaker, were going to try to confine my remarks to 10 minutes, which would have been difficult.

I was referring nostalgically to the predecessor of the hon. Member for Brightside who predicted that the targets were "so heroic" that no GP would ever reach them. He once likened the idea of an NHS trust to a "bicycle with a flat tyre" that would never get anywhere. He predicted that the true test of the trusts would be whether they treated more patients. The GPs are meeting and beating the targets. NHS trusts have become an unstoppable movement, and they are treating more patients. Among the hon. Member's more famous sayings was that the general election would be a referendum on the future of the NHS. I do not think that he predicted the right outcome in that case either.

However, the hon. Member was correct in one important way. The general election was crucial to the future of the national health service. The Labour party fought the election with a socialist plan to turn the clock back 40 years—to the days of central planning, command systems of control, when the Minister was expected to know whenever a bedpan was dropped in a ward. Anyone who knows anything about running a £36 billion organisation knows that such ideas just will not wash. While such policies were being hastily dismantled in Leningrad and Leipzig, they were all the rage in Livingston.

Had it won the general election, the Labour party would presumably be putting those ideas into practice now. One can imagine the resulting chaos and vandalism.

My hon. Friends will be only too aware that 156 trusts would be told to stop innovating on behalf of patients and report to Whitehall immediately. More than 3,000 GP fund holders would have had their budgets snatched away; they would have had no more power to pioneer for patients, and all the efforts of their staff and all the progress, hard work and achievements of reform would have been dumped in a dash for socialism.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The Secretary of State will be aware that the trusts are anxious that they should not be responsible to her—they do not like that idea. If there are increasing numbers of trusts and if they continue to use taxpayers' money, will she be kind enough to tell us to whom they should be responsible?

Mrs. Bottomley: The trusts are unequivocally accountable to me, as Secretary of State, and there are effective mechanisms for monitoring their work. They have been singularly successful, they have treated many more patients and they have provided an excellent working environment for their staff. They have achieved much in the NHS, and I am sure that the rest of the service could learn from their record. The hon. Lady's remarks are a sign of what the trusts might have had to face in the miserable event of the Labour party winning the general election.

It is a very different NHS under this Government—it is a good service and an improving service. The Conservative victory in the general election has given new confidence and a reinforced sense of direction. The consensus grows day by day that the health reforms are the right answer to a series of management problems that have built up over 40 years.

Two weeks ago, I announced a further 128 trusts, and more are waiting in the wings. Family doctors are queueing to take control over their own budgets. Health authorities are discovering the immense potential of their new role as commissioners and purchasers of health care. The GP contract is delivering better health care and better health, and public confidence in the health service is growing—*[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Brightside may laugh. I wonder whether he knows about the recent survey that showed that 95 per cent. of the patients who had used his local NHS trust were satisfied with the service that they received.

The true significance of these achievements was well summed up recently by the *British Medical Journal*. Referring to the Government's three White Papers, "Promoting Better Health", "Working for Patients", and "The Health of the Nation", it said:

> "Taken together, the White Papers are unusual because they represent a continuum in Government policy . . . as a conceptual feat it can rarely have been equalled in the realm of public administration".

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): During the summer I was asked to intervene by one of my constituents whose mother was about to be discharged from a Bristol hospital. Her daughter was told that she could not be discharged until she and her daughter had paid a fee of £600 to Avon ambulance trust. Is that the type of outcome that the right hon. Lady intended when she created trusts? Did she expect me, as a Member of Parliament, to have to phone half a dozen health administrators in Bristol to explain to them that it would be more costly if my constituent blocked a bed in her hospital than if the NHS paid for her ambulance transport to the nursing home to which she was going?

Mrs. Bottomley: Had the hon. Gentleman wanted a serious answer to his question, he would have been in touch with my office with the details. I have consistently and unequivocally been committed to an NHS available to all and free at the point of delivery. The hon. Gentleman can easily give me the details and I will look into the case immediately. I should very much like to know what lies behind the circumstances that he has described. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The Secretary of State is doing her best to answer, and I do not expect a whole lot of seated interventions.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: Certainly.

Mr. Grant: I was pleased to hear the Secretary of State say that the NHS trusts are directly responsible to her and that mechanisms have been set up to monitor their progress. Can she tell me, a poor working Member of Parliament who is not quite au fait with bureaucracy, whom I should go to if a mistake has been made in the tendering procedure between the health authority and the trust? Who can rectify that?

Mrs. Bottomley: I should like to know more of the details, but the system is clear. The district health authority places a contract with the NHS trust in which it specifies the quality and nature of the service to be delivered. That never happened in the past. It was never possible to place such contracts or to identify improvements needed in the quality of care that the health authority sought. In the first instance, the hon. Gentleman should therefore go to the district health authority.

It is also clear who has responsibility in the NHS trust. The position of trust chairman has clarified the structure in a new way. It is therefore easier to know what is being provided, what standards are being adhered to and what plans there are for the future.

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): I want to raise a matter that the right hon. Lady knows about. She says that trusts are accountable to her, as Secretary of State. Are regional health authorities also so accountable? If so, why are she and her Department colluding in the suppression of a report commissioned by the West Midlands regional health authority into the causes of a multi-million pound cash crisis in South Birmingham health authority which is threatening to close two hospitals, to transfer services from a third hospital, to cut community services by about £300,000 and to cut services for the mentally ill by about £200,000? If she believes that public confidence in the trust is so high, why will she not publish this report?

Mrs. Bottomley: Like so many other Labour Members, the hon. Gentleman is trying to denigrate the achievements of the NHS in his area. That is an insult to all the people who work in the NHS. The hon. Gentleman may be aware that I have asked the deputy chairman of the policy board, Sir Roy Griffiths, to advise on some of the systems of the West Midlands and to report to me.

[Mrs. Bottomley]

The establishment of the trusts, the fact that health authorities can assess health needs, and the placing of contracts mean that we are in a position to develop a health strategy that we would not have been able to develop without the reforms. As purchasers, health authorities can now respond strategically to the health needs of the populations they serve. Through their contracts with hospitals and other providers, they can write prevention firmly into the structure of the NHS. The GP contract, another key element of the reforms opposed by the Labour party, made health promotion a priority. Among other things, it made a real success of our childhood immunisation programme. The 90 per cent. targets have been exceeded, setting us on course for the 95 per cent. target set out in the White Paper.

When I used to work in the health service when the Labour party was in power, figures of this sort would have been inconceivable and unattainable. Building on an already sound base, the White Paper has set a new target for childhood immunisation—95 per cent. coverage by 1995. I am pleased to be able to report that one NHS region, East Anglia, has already reached that level for all seven immunisations. Three other regions, Oxford, South Western and Wessex, have reached 95 per cent. for all diseases except whooping cough. At the end of last month, we announced that the new HIB vaccine against childhood meningitis has been added to the routine immunisation programme.

Thanks to these changes, which the general election secured, we can now lift our sights about the structural issues which have preoccupied the national health service for over 40 years. Never have we been in a better position to secure the most important founding goal of the national health service: better health for the people of our country.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): The right hon. Lady said that we have got over the structural difficulties now. She also said that we should not denigrate the health service—we should pay tribute to its work. Would she care to pay tribute to the work of St. Bartholomew's, St. Thomas's, Charing Cross, Middlesex and University College London, and then tell the House why she will make a statement tomorrow suggesting that four of them be closed?

Mrs. Bottomley: I have read with some interest the correspondence between the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) and the person I had taken to be the Opposition spokesman on this matter. I am interested to know who it is who speaks most accurately for the situation in London.

Mr. Sedgemore: Will the right hon. Lady pay tribute to those hospitals?

Mrs. Bottomley: I pay a warm tribute to much of the excellence achieved by the health service in London. However, no one who has even half focused on the situation in London could fail to know that for many years we have been over-dominated by institutions and under-provided for in terms of community services. The need for the reform of the health service in London is supported by the British Medical Association, the nurses' organisations and virtually every even half-enlightened Member of Parliament, as well as by the public.

I should like to remind the House, if I have not already done so, that the Labour party opposed every turn and every measure that has made better health a realistic goal. While we were working through the logical progression towards better health, the Labour party shouted, "Go back" at every point. This debate would not have taken place if the Opposition had had their way. The purpose of the Opposition is to exploit the NHS for their party-political aims. The public are heartily sick of them using the health service as a political battering ram.

The new mood is to lose politics and to gain health. The White Paper "The Health of the Nation" has been a handsome investment to that end. The Labour party should come clean and acknowledge that. That White Paper and the strategy it sets out received a warm and enthusiastic welcome. The World Health Organisation described it as a model for other countries to follow. The *British Medical Journal* said that it was

"a huge step forward for Britain's health policy".

A distinguished former president of the Royal College of Physicians called it a "mighty initiative". Those remarks illustrate how the strategy has captured both the hearts and the minds of everyone concerned with health.

No one should underestimate the significance of the White Paper. It has provided the first-ever coherent strategy in this country for securing real improvements in health and the first-ever national targets for reducing death and disability. It is the first time that we have ever had a Cabinet committee concerned with health. Most important of all, the White Paper has made us one of the first countries to specify action to achieve those targets. Most other strategies simply set targets, but our White Paper is not just an index of destinations; it is the road map as well.

One hundred years ago the average life expectancy was 44 years. Today I am pleased to tell my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) that it is 73 years for men and 79 for women. The step-change a century ago was achieved not by doctors, pharmacists or physicians, but by plumbers. Clean water and better sanitation revolutionised our health prospects. If we want to see a further step-change in the fight against disability and disease today, it will be achieved by prevention and by the strategy that we have set out in the White Paper.

The five priority areas, the 25 national targets and the action to meet them are of direct relevance to everyone and every group in this country. The areas on which we have focused are the ones where the public want action.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): One item of public health that is not included in those key areas is asthma. My right hon. Friend is aware that I have raised this matter on a number of occasions and she will know that 2·5 million people and 700,000 young people suffer from asthma. It is one of the few preventable diseases for which mortality rates are increasing.

Some work has been done at East Birmingham hospital on the relationship between the increased incidence of asthma and environmental pollution, in particular the effects of greenhouse gases and the depletion of the ozone layer. Can my right hon. Friend tell me whether the Medical Research Council might be persuaded to study the important relationship between environmental pollution and the incidence of that disease?

Mrs. Bottomley: I welcome my hon. Friend's comments on this important problem, which affects a great number of people. Our health strategy must be informed by research and by the ability to specify a target that can be delivered effectively. Asthma is one of those areas where we hope to be able to set a target. A great deal of work is under way through chronic disease management and with GPs. The director of research and development at the NHS has set asthma as a priority area. He will conduct research, much of it with the MRC, to see whether it will be possible to set a target in precisely the area that my hon. Friend has requested.

Ms. Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: I have given way to many Opposition Members and I should like to proceed and perhaps be more even-handed with some of my hon. Friends.

Targets provide a stimulus for action. They give a yardstick against which we can measure progress and they are an end point at which to aim. They are challenging targets—achievable but tough. Our job now is to see that they are achieved, but we must harness that great reservoir of good will that the White Paper has generated. We must use it so that health promotion becomes a cause to unite us all. Given the incentives and the right information, people will take action, individually or collectively, to improve their own health.

Some people say that it is no business of a Government to dictate how people run their lives. I believe in individual freedom as deeply as those who make that argument. I believe in the freedom to avoid the dangers of excessive alcohol consumption. I believe in the freedom to avoid needless accidents. I believe in the freedom to avoid the causes and consequences of mental illness, but the process must be one of encouragement and education, not coercion. There are some steps that we simply cannot take.

I reject, for example, a coercive approach to immunisation or to those who are HIV positive. That is a dangerous path wholly inimical to the positive and co-operative approach set out in the White Paper. There is an enormous willingness and readiness among individuals to take action to help themselves to a healthier life. We must work with that grain.

The Government's chief medical officer recently said:

> "Increasingly, lifestyle is seen to be a factor of great importance in improving health. Cigarette smoking, excessive alcohol consumption and drug misuse are three areas of particular concern".

He went on to emphasise the importance of individual responsibility for health.

Individual responsibility is as important as individual freedom. The individual has a responsibility to his family and to the community. The Government have a duty to educate, encourage and inform. Today, I cannot talk separately about each of the areas in the White Paper, especially in view of the 10-minute rule and the fact that so many hon. Members want to participate in the debate. They are all important, but I should like to identify a number of them.

Earlier I mentioned the impact of mental illness and the toll that it takes. My previous training and work made me particularly conscious of the dreadful impact that that all too often forgotten disease can have on individuals and their families. Mental illness is as common as heart disease and three times as common as cancer. It represents a vast cost to our health service and our economy and it is a tragic cost to individuals and their families. By making mental health one of the key target areas in the White Paper we have sent a strong signal that we are taking it seriously.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): The right hon. Lady will know that, in January, I introduced a Bill about health benefits and making them available to people who receive means-tested benefits. Many people with mental illness live in the community, but they are only able to do so because they have access to the kind of drugs that control their illness. Will the right hon. Lady tell us whether she has considered making the prescriptions for those people free if they are in receipt of any means-tested benefit? Why is there no mention of that in the White Paper? A review of health benefits was set up so long ago that I have almost forgotten when that happened. When will the findings of that review be produced?

Mrs. Bottomley: On prescription charges, a mere one item in five carries a charge. When the Opposition were in power it was a much higher figure, as the hon. Lady will be well aware. There has been great progress in the percentage of prescriptions without a charge. There are benefits—no pensioner and no one on a low income pays the prescription charge. I hope that I can come back to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) at a later date about the timing of the review that she mentioned—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] I have answered the hon. Lady clearly. It is free for pensioners and for those on low incomes and only one item in five carries a charge. To me, that is a convincing case.

By making mental health one of the key target areas of the White Paper we have sent a strong signal that it is vital. One of the other challenges facing us is the newest—that of HIV and AIDS. It is a disease for which there is no known cure. Our response must rest on prevention. Our record of response is second to none. It continues to be a model for others, acclaimed both here and abroad.

Our early recognition of the problems, and the actions which followed, may in part explain why we have a lower incidence of AIDS in our population compared to some other parts of the world, including many European countries.

The inclusion of HIV, AIDS and sexual health as a priority area in the health strategy provides a framework for Government, for the health service, for local authorities and for the voluntary sector, to develop policies and services to sustain that achievement.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): In the light of my right hon. Friend's encouraging remarks, will she ignore some of the hysterical comments in the tabloid newspapers and warn young heterosexual people that they are still at risk? Will she continue her excellent campaign of informing people, because many young heterosexuals are dying through ignorance?

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank my hon. Friend for reinforcing the argument so effectively. HIV and AIDS is a disease for which there is no known cure and young people need to know the fatal facts of HIV infection. Above all, they need to know about the high-risk behaviours likely to lead to such infection. We need to continue to develop services for people with HIV, which are rooted in the mainstream of health care.

Smoking remains one of the biggest single causes of preventable disease and premature death in this country.

[Mrs. Bottomley]

Action to reduce smoking is central to achieving targets in two of the five key areas in the White Paper and we are determined to build on a record of solid achievement. The United Kingdom's record in reducing smoking in recent years is, after the Netherlands, the best in Europe. There has been a fall in smoking from 45 to 30 per cent. Our target is to be the best and to reduce it to 20 per cent.

Like us, the Dutch—who also have a good record—maintain voluntary controls over tobacco advertising. Like us, they are opposed to an EC directive on advertising. We regard that as unnecessary interference from Brussels and unnecessary to the completion of the single market.

I should be more impressed by the arguments if any of the countries urging us to go further on advertising had a record on reducing smoking which was as good as ours. Those who grow tobacco—and many do, with handsome subsidies to the tune of £1 billion under the common agricultural policy—have little to tell us. The majority of those who grow their own tobacco apparently support an advertising ban. I am also reluctant to take lessons on the subject from those countries with nationalised tobacco industries. They all support a ban on advertising. It does not take a great deal to detect the mixed motivation in that.

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): Does my right hon. Friend think there are any inconsistencies, as I do, in the treatment of smoking and drinking as regards advertising? When one thinks of the number of passive deaths caused by drinking, and of the deaths and injuries to children and others on the roads, which must equate with the passive effects of smoking, why do not people press strongly to ban drink advertising when they are so keen to ban tobacco advertising?

Mrs. Bottomley: As ever, my hon. Friend has identified an excellent issue. People who believe in banning advertising see it as the beginning of a slippery slope towards a ban on advertising all sorts of items and an ever-growing inhibition on commercial freedom of speech. My hon. Friend is right. We should create the climate of opinion which we achieved so successfully with drinking and driving, when we made it unacceptable. My commitment and crusade is to ensure that young people take smoking as seriously as they take the dangers of drinking and driving. That success was achieved not through an advertising ban or random breath tests, but by changing the culture and reinforcing the seriousness of the message—and in no small measure by the excellent work of my noble Friend, the former Member for Wallasey, Lady Chalker, and of the splendid hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley).

On price, I wish that no European country sold cigarettes as cheaply as 41p a packet. Spain supports a ban on advertising, but its cigarettes are one sixth the price that they are here. We shall bring pressure to bear on our neighbours to rectify those deficiencies. That seems to be an area where they should be looking to the lead that we have shown in reducing smoking, and not the other way round.

My predecessor commissioned a study into the impact of advertising on tobacco consumption. I am pleased to inform the House that I have asked for its publication to be speeded up. It will be published next Thursday.

The Health Select Committee is conducting an important investigation into tobacco advertising. I am sure that the House will agree that that is the right time and place to discuss those complex issues in the detail that they demand. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne and to the members of the Committee for tackling that important subject.

There is no doubt that tobacco advertising can affect consumption or attitudes towards consumption. That is why we maintain one of the most advanced, long-standing, comprehensive and effective systems of voluntary controls over tobacco advertising in Europe. That is why the White Paper undertakes to keep that position under review. I shall tell the Select Committee next week how we can honour that commitment.

Of course, I am aware of the public health arguments. But there are others as well. I know that arguments about freedom mean nothing to the Opposition, but I remind the House that proper consideration has to be given to the principle of commercial freedom of speech, as I told my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin).

We have to proceed cautiously. What we do must be justified in terms of further substantial reductions in smoking, in the context of the existing, tough controls, and weighed against the impact of other measures, such as a further increase in price. Frankly, it is the Labour party's position which is illogical and inconsistent and the reason is that it owes far more to public politics than to public health.

The public health issue is how to achieve the tough targets for reducing smoking that we have set out in the White Paper. We need to tackle that issue—it is the end and not the means—with a sense of proportion and judgment that are wholly lacking from the Labour party's knee-jerk analysis of the problem.

Meeting and beating those targets will require even more dramatic reductions in smoking than we have achieved in recent years. But they will be met and beaten and the White Paper has set out the way forward.

The strategy must involve better public education. I have drawn to the attention of the House a recent survey carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in 1990 among secondary school children, which showed that children whose parents both smoked were two and a half times as likely to be regular smokers as those where neither parent smoked.

I have already mentioned price. The evidence is that a 10 per cent. price increase can lead to a 3 to 6 per cent. fall in tobacco consumption. Even the Labour party may be interested to know that the real retail price of tobacco has risen by 43 per cent. It may be less anxious to recognise that between 1974 and 1979 the price increased by under 1 per cent. in real terms. For the first time ever, we have given the commitment at least to maintain the real level of taxes on tobacco products. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is in no doubt—the House should be in no doubt—that price is a central factor in affecting smoking behaviour.

I turn to another issue that has been mentioned in mutterings by Labour Members. It is said that we have overlooked health variations. Those who make that assertion either have not read the White Paper or have not grasped the significance of the cross-government approach that it sets out.

Every country has variations in health. Some may be associated with low incomes, but, in contrast, some, like breast cancer, can be linked to increasing affluence. Let us be clear. Since the Government came to power, the health of the whole population has improved. Infant mortality, for example, has now fallen to its lowest ever level. Last year, fewer women died in childbirth than in any previous year. There have been dramatic and welcome reductions across every social class. Similarly, life expectancy has increased across the board. In certain areas—for example, general practitioner deprivation payments, which, as they are part of the new contract, the knee-jerk party, the Labour party, inevitably opposed vehemently—we have taken specific action to improve access to health care and health in the most deprived areas. The White Paper specifically calls for action to address variations in each of the priority areas. We must ensure that the rest do as well as the best.

Locally and nationally, we shall identify the variations that occur in particular health problems in order to concentrate efforts on those at particular risk. Different strategies will be appropriate for different groups. The chief medical officer's recent report highlighted some of the special patterns of health that are experienced particularly by black and ethnic minority communities, such as coronary heart disease, hypertension and mental illness for different groups. Our strategy explicity states:

"the needs of people from black and ethnic groups must be considered."

I have asked my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State to take special responsibility for following up these particular health issues. She will be holding regular meetings with different groups to ensure that we plan for and analyse what more needs to be done.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Before my right hon. Friend leaves the subject of priority or key areas, I wish to thank her and my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), the Under-Secretary of State, for the great interest that they have been taking in back pain, which has been identified in the White Paper as one of the next five strongest candidates for key area status. Back pain is a scourge for millions of our fellow citizens and it must be given high priority.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend, as in all subjects that he captures, is a vigorous and robust champion of this topic. I am pleased that the clinical standards advisory group is to undertake a study into back pain. I hope that as a result of that work and other work that is under way it will be possible to set a specific target and programme of action so that back pain is an area in which we can make progress.

That leads me to the next theme that I wish to identify, which is action within the NHS. Back pain and the way in which it affects nurses are matters with which we are all familiar. The NHS must lead by example. As an organisation of 1 million people, it needs to be a model employer in being a health employer. Recently we launched a health at work in the NHS initiative to ensure that sensible drinking, healthy eating and smoke-free policies are carried forward within the organisation. We hope that that will be an example to other employers and that they will take sensible and responsible steps to encourage well-being within the work force.

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): In this context it is interesting to look round the Palace of Westminster to see what this particular employer is doing. Anyone who visits the eating places, meeting places and bars will find that there is no effective non-smoking policy. I know that we are supposed to favour the politics of smoke-filled rooms, but it seems that the Mother of Parliaments has become the ashtray of the nation. Would the right hon. Lady like to comment on that?

Mrs. Bottomley: I think that the hon. Gentleman has made an excellent point. I suggest that he develops an alliance with my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). Of all those who have been Ministers in the Department in which I work, I think that my hon. Friend did the most to ensure that all reasonable steps were taken by managements to become "healthy" employers. I look forward to hearing from the hon. Gentleman, together with my hon. Friend, about the progress that they have been able to make in this area.

Dr. Wright *rose*——

Mrs. Bottomley: Much as I enjoy interventions from Opposition Members, I do not think that I should take a second intervention from individual Members. If the Opposition initiate a debate on health in their own name, it may be possible to take further some of these issues.

We have a responsibility to thank those who work in the NHS to provide a healthy workplace, but more important is the health care that the NHS gives and the priority that it places on prevention. That is what will make the strategy work. It is our goal to provide the highest-quality health services, and it is an issue which we have taken forward in the patients charter. The Government's health strategy is more than the words of the White Paper. It is alive and is happening now because of the work of family doctors and nurses and all who work with and for the health service.

This has been described as the most significant development in public health since the founding of the NHS. The targets that we have set are challenging, but they are realistic and can be reached. Prevention saves lives and money and it can never start at too early an age. Good progress has already been made since the White Paper was published. The House may wish to know that I have today placed in the Vote Office copies of a summary of the progress to date. We are already achieving action, for two reasons: first, because of the commitment of the health service, its staff and many others working in the health field, as it were, beyond the NHS to make the strategy work. Secondly, it springs from the Government's determination to make it work and the clear lead that has been shown.

No Government in our history have been so determined to improve the health of the nation. The health of the nation has captured the high ground of health. The Labour party wanted to turn the clock back, but we have turned it forward. The health strategy is truly a great leap ahead. In 1948, better health was the good and honest intention. In 1992, we are at last turning that intention into

[Mrs. Bottomley]

action. The health of the nation strategy has made a vital contribution to that transformation and it deserves the warmest support of the House.

5.48 pm

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): First, I pay tribute to all those who have argued for and contributed to "The Health of the Nation". I believe that over the years people throughout the country from health authorities, family health service authorities, the academic world and elsewhere have persuaded and cajoled the Government to take action. Today we have a golden opportunity to remove the smokescreen of benign and cherub-like innocence from the Secretary of State and to test the philosophies and values of the two main political parties.

On what does the Secretary of State insist? The answer is a debate without a Division. That is the new commitment and the new health service. That is the vigour and enthusiasm that we shall get from the right hon. Lady. We have a debate on a motion for the Adjournment of the House, a motion which cannot be amended or voted upon —what a staggering indication of the right hon. Lady's new commitment and of her confidence in her policies.

The health of the nation is not safe in Tory hands, and nor is much else. The health of our industry and our economy is not safe in their hands. Yet the health of our people and the health of our economy are intrinsically linked. The greater the fairness and equity in the distribution of wealth and the provision of public services, the greater the equality in health and, interestingly, the greater becomes the health of the economy as well.

Japan is an example of that, as was Britain during the war. In 1970 the Japanese had a distribution of wealth much the same as we have today. They have improved dramatically on the gap between the rich and the poor, and the health of their nation has improved in sequence with that.

The work of academics such as Alesina and Rodrik —they are professors in Washington, not ex-commissars from eastern Europe—shows that greater equality of income brings not only improved national health but also improved economic growth. In 24 democracies that they studied, they found that a 0·3 per cent. growth rate increase was achieved when a 10 per cent. reduction was obtained in the income of the top 20 per cent. of earners and distributed to the rest of the population.

Yet in Britain such discussions have been suppressed. The first Black report in the early 1980s had to be photocopied because the Government would not publish it. The latest edition published by Penguin provides plenty of ammunition to show why the Government have always shied away from a full debate on the original findings of scandalous decline and deterioration—which have worsened, not improved, in recent years.

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): As the hon. Gentleman has pointed out that this is a debate without a vote, will he comment on the fact that during the entire Queen's Speech at the beginning of this Session of Parliament, an agenda chosen by the Opposition, he did not choose to debate health at all? Perhaps that is an indication of the Opposition's priorities.

Mr. Blunkett: I shall certainly take responsibility from here on in about when we press for debates on health and for ensuring that we vote on motions on health at every opportunity, but the hon. Gentleman cannot divert me so easily from the substance of what is, after all, the health of the nation: equality and provision, the way we distribute our resources, and the prevention of ill health.

The Secretary of State talked about improvements in infant mortality. In five regions of Britain, infant mortality worsened last year. That is a fact. The truth of the matter is that while in the nation as a whole some people have done a great deal better, and have done better out of health promotion clinics, many others have done worse. The health divide has worsened in the thirteen and a half years of Conservative government, and it is still worsening.

There is no strategy for the health of the nation. The word strategy is mentioned on the cover of the White Paper, but there is no co-ordinated approach to the needs of the British people. Here we have a White Paper which purports to deal with the nation's ills but does not mention poverty once; nor does it mention inequality, and nor did the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State waffled on about trusts and GP fund holding, about how wonderful the new NHS was and how tremendously it has improved. My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) rightly asked the Secretary of State why, in that case, we are to receive a statement tomorrow about how badly the health service in London is run and what she intends to do about it.

The White Paper mentions unemployment—but only once, in the section entitled "Healthy homes", which says:

> "Good housing is important to good health, although the interdependence between factors such as occupational class, income, unemployment, housing and lifestyle makes it difficult to assess why health effects are specifically attributable to it."

Then—this would be funny if it was not so serious—the White Paper says:

> "The Government's objective is to ensure that decent housing is within the reach of all families."

Perhaps someone should tell that to the Secretary of State's husband, the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), who slept on the steps of Greenwich town hall earlier this week to draw attention to homelessness. Perhaps he should have a word with a Cabinet Minister. Perhaps the new approach could be explained to him. Perhaps he could be told that the Government really do have an intention on this, even though they believe that it is muddled up with other inconveniences such as social class, unemployment and inequality.

The existence of the White Paper should be applauded. It has taken long enough to arrive, and it is at least some recognition that, even if the Secretary of State did not spend all that much time on it, the British people are willing to debate the real health causes and ill health causes in Britain—the integration of economic and social action which she did not mention. There is no real understanding of the targets of the World Health Organisation set out in 1978. In fact, the Secretary of State did not refer to them —equality between nations, regions and socio-economic groups.

The Secretary of State mentioned that there was a Cabinet Committee, where I understand that she has a little local difficulty with one of her predecessors who had a finger in everything and a voice on the radio about everyone else's Department except his own. Whenever she tries to move a policy on, apparently he blocks it. What does that Cabinet Committee do? Did it consider the pit closures? Did it meet to consider the impact of unemployment? What did the Secretary of State have to say at the Cabinet meeting? Perhaps she will tell us whether it met to consider the redundancies at the pits and in the rest of Britain. I will give way to her so that she can tell the House what it had to say. If the Secretary of State is not willing to get up and tell us, perhaps she would just nod if the Cabinet Committee did consider the pit closures. No, she is not nodding—the Secretary of State is comatose. Is there a doctor in the House?

Mr. Michael Trend (Windsor and Maidenhead): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blunkett: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has any medical expertise, but I am happy to give way to him.

Mr. Trend: Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that working down mines is good for one's health?

Mr. Blunkett: What I am saying is that losing one's job certainly is not.

The Secretary of State may care to comment on the following:

> "There are well documented effects of unemployment and poverty on health. These effects are particularly clear in the areas of psychological and mental health but there are also less clearly researched links with increased mortality and morbidity from physical illness.
>
> The large-scale loss of jobs in Rotherham (2,000 directly involved in the pits which are closing and many more in associated businesses) will affect the incidence of mental health with higher rates of depression, anxiety and, probably, suicides."

It goes on to say:

> "It is particularly inappropriate that all this will happen at a time when we are attempting to implement the Government's 'Health of the Nation' report".

That was not a comment from a Labour supporter, a miner's wife or a Labour Member of Parliament. It was Anthony Baker, the Conservative-appointed chairman of Rotherham district health authority writing to his local Members of Parliament, the man who replaced the previous Labour chairman, Vernon Thorns, in the wide sweep of Government hegemony in appointments throughout the health service—jobs for the girls and the boys.

The Government have no understanding of the link between the responsibility of the individual, which we accept, and that of the wider community and nation. There is no acknowledgement of it by the Chancellor, the Secretary of State for the Environment, or the Secretary of State for Employment, who have as big a part to play in the nation's good health as the Secretary of State for Health has. The Government's attempt to take the politics out of health has failed, despite the efforts of the Secretary of State's friends in the media. The health service is one of the most highly political elements in our democracy, and the inter-relationship between one Department and another and one decision and another becomes daily more apparent.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government's hypocrisy goes even further? The Secretary of State talks about the need to minimise low back pain among nurses but fails to mention the Government's lack of provision of the right equipment, which would overcome that problem far quicker than any leaflet or lecture.

Mr. Blunkett: I could not agree more.

What is to happen in the autumn statement on 12 November? Will the Cabinet Committee or the Cabinet itself acknowledge that the nation's health will depend on the resources allocated to—or rather, cut from—housing, transport, local government, and education? What will the Secretary of State, a former worker for the Child Poverty Action Group, say about income support and family credit to the Secretary of State for Social Security, who not only has the job of cutting and cutting again the benefits paid to those who can least afford to lose them but has moved away from the policy of ensuring that people are supported and helped to fend for themselves, to which the Secretary of State referred in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) when the White Paper was first introduced to the House?

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to tell the House that record sums of money are now being spent on the national health service?

Mr. Blunkett: I am certainly not the hon. Gentleman's "hon. Friend" and I will not give way on any such statistic. I am clear that the opposite is true in respect of the income of the poor. The number living on less than half national average earnings doubled in the 1980s.

Mr. Evans: What about the national health service?

Mr. Blunkett: People survive on the national health service. It is all about good health, affording a decent diet, heating homes, and otherwise living decently. It is about the environment, being able to afford to use transport, and enjoying a decent education. One in five of our children live in poverty—twice as many as in 1978. The Secretary of State smiles beguilingly, revealing a sparkling set of white teeth untouched by the accelerating collapse of NHS dental practice.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have remained unprovoked until now, but if the hon. Gentleman would like to visit my NHS dentist, I shall be glad to take him. [HON. MEMBERS: "Apologise."]

Mr. Blunkett: I should be delighted to accompany the Secretary of State anywhere—to her dentist or not. However, I never said that she had withdrawn from using an NHS dental practice. If the right hon. Lady will read *Hansard*, she will find that I suggested only that NHS dental practice is collapsing. The consequential threat to preventive health is something of which we are all aware, and we receive letters on that topic day in and day out.

The Secretary of State's predecessor, the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), in a press release dated 9 October 1990, gave a clear indication that the report was to be about NHS changes. It is strange that the right hon. Lady indicated at the beginning of her speech that it is NHS changes that matter, not the nation's health.

It is 50 years since the Beveridge report was published. The key principles on which the health of the nation should be judged that that report set out included the elimination of want and idleness. That was seen as a prerequisite in creating the kind of society that post-war

[Mr. Blunkett]

Britain came to take for granted. Unfortunately, that sensible and civilised society has started to disintegrate under us, as it did in the pre-war years.

At least the Green Paper recorded the target of a 25 per cent. reduction in inequalities before the year 2000, but the White Paper does not. Unlike Australia's integrated and comprehensive approach to health, Britain is making a belated stab at achieving targets—14 years after the World Health Organisation's declaration, 12 years after the United States introduced targets, and seven years after the European regional initiative.

In a statement on 8 July, the Secretary of State said:

> "To be respected, however, targets have to be tough. To be credible, they have to be realistic. It would be folly to set a target so out of reach that we would never get there, or one which is simply an extrapolation of existing trends."—[*Official Report*, 8 July 1992; Vol. 211, c. 336.]

In truth, the bulk of the White Paper's targets are little more than figures suggested by existing trends. Where they are not, they will be unattainable because of Government policies. Government action will make the tough targets unachievable—and where the targets are easy, the Government will have to do nothing to achieve them.

The target of a 15 per cent. reduction in breast cancer deaths by the year 2000 is welcome, but it applies only to a target group of 50 to 64-year-olds, who are subject to screening. Women below 50, who account for 20 per cent. of the incidence of breast cancer, are also crucial in treating a preventable death-inducing illness.

The Government's targets and the analysis of Government statements by the Comptroller and Auditor General in his report last year are contradictory. He stated:

> "The Department of Health do not expect significant changes in the death rates until around the year 2000, because of the time it takes for these cancers to develop."

I was unaware of that, and I will be grateful if the Secretary of State or the Minister who winds up will explain why the advice given to the Comptroller and Auditor General was different.

This country's record of treating breast cancer is so poor that immediate action is vital. Ours is the worst death rate, as a proportion of the population, in the world. Comparative figures for survival in the five-year period following diagnosis show it to be staggeringly bad. In the United Kingdom, only 58 per cent. survive, but the figure is 68 per cent. in Norway, 72 per cent. in the United States, and 73 per cent. in France. In the case of prostate cancer, the United Kingdom survival rate is only 36 per cent., compared with 52 per cent. in Norway and 65 per cent. in the United States. I do not apologise for giving those figures because it is crucial to identify not only targets but causes. What will be done about that state of affairs?

In the case of heart disease, we know that smoking is a critical factor. It is no good saying, "Ban alcohol advertising; it is just as dangerous." That showed a degree of ignorance that I found appalling. The Secretary of State confirmed that she would publish the Smee report next Thursday. Can she, or her Minister of State, also confirm that—rather than being speeded up—the report was sent back for rewriting so that it would contain a lower, more acceptable figure than the 8 per cent. drop in smoking that, according to the original report, would be achieved by a tobacco advertising ban? Opposition Members want to hear no more of this nonsense about reports being "speeded up" when, in fact, they have been sent back to be rewritten. *[Interruption.]* The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health has just made a cheap remark about my speech being sent back for rewriting. He is welcome to examine what the Secretary of State said about the White Paper and about improving health, and what I have said: I have tried to address the issues in hand, rather than coming out with irrelevancies.

I understand that the Government are to take a more long-term look at HIV, AIDS and what is increasingly being called "sexual health", and to decide how the current position can be improved. What about ring-fencing the existing funding, which I understand is to be reintegrated into the general health service budget? What about the special grants to provide advisory teachers, which are being cut and, in some cases, removed altogether? What use are targets relating to teenage pregnancies if family planning is being cut and teaching in schools jeopardised? What part has the national curriculum to play? Why are the Government concentrating on science rather than humanities? What action is being taken to prevent the rundown of schools provision through the local management of schools initiative, and the appointment of governing bodies which do not give a high priority to such provision?

What about health education, and teaching about love and relationships? Why is the school nursing service being cut, and why is pregnancy advice being reduced? The abortion statistics relating to under-16s are appalling. The statistics for Britain in general are appalling. In Camberwell district, 38 per cent. of all known conceptions are aborted, while in Britain as a whole the proportion is one in five. That scandal would be avoidable if we were willing to invest in proper education and advice. What is needed is a combination of the individual responsibility to which the Secretary of State rightly referred with our responsibility as a nation to invest to ensure that change takes place.

The same is true of accident prevention. The targets are a long way short of the current rate at which the number of accidents is falling. If the Secretary of State set tough targets, she would have to acknowledge the relationship between socio-economic factors and the incidence of accidents. Children in social class 5 are six times as likely to be burned or knocked down as those in social class 1. The reason is self-evident: those who live in overcrowded conditions in slums or high-rise flats, or are forced to suffer the congestion and fumes of the inner city, are clearly in a less advantageous position than those in social class 1. The study of the civil service that is currently being undertaken did not need a great deal of money to prove that the health of clerks is worse than that of people at and above under-secretary level. No one needs to be a genius to know that living in squalid conditions worsens health.

Mrs. Bottomley: I have degrees from Essex university and the London School of Economics, I have worked for the Child Poverty Action Group, and I have lived with the defeatist talk that we are hearing from the hon. Gentleman. Of course he is right to say that there is an association between health and all the factors that he has mentioned. That is why such health variations are part and parcel of the health of the nation strategy, and that is why the Cabinet Committee is so important, involving Ministers from the various Departments.

What the hon. Gentleman has failed to identify is how, in the context of many adverse social, economic and employment factors, we can reach out and provide a decent health service. That is what the GP contract did, what the immunisation targets have done, what the cervical cancer screening services have done and what the deprivation payments have done. That is what we seek to do, rather than adopting a defeatist attitude to the delivery of health care. We must ask how we can ensure that the health service reaches ever higher targets in areas of great social difficulty.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House —and that includes the Secretary of State—that interventions, by their nature, should be short.

Mr. Blunkett: I am delighted to find that the Secretary of State is, after all, traumatised rather than comatose.

The truth is that a Secretary of State whose White Paper does not once mention poverty or inequality, and mentions unemployment only in passing—dismissing it as part of the section dealing with housing—cannot give Opposition Members any lectures about the university that she attended or the studies that she undertook. Deprivation and inequality in incomes are worsening the ill health of those at the bottom of the pile.

Let me take on the Secretary of State in regard to the subject of mental health, on which she has a well-deserved reputation. The section on mental health in the White Paper mentions suicide. The incidence of suicide is twice as high among unemployed men as it is among those in work, and premature deaths are one third higher. The Secretary of State can give me no lectures about her belief in equality or fairness.

What, then, would Labour do? Economic action is vital. We need greater equality, full employment and a new commitment to decent housing, adequate public transport and good education. Unlike the Conservative party, we are committed to health promotion and to primary health care in its widest sense. We are committed to investing in community care, so that we can support people at home rather than in private residential institutions.

We are committed to investing in our communities—investing in integrated community and hospital services, and in the reintegration of purchasing to ensure that coherent priorities are met. We are committed to unified district health authorities and family health service authorities; to abolishing GP fund holding, which has distorted purchasing priorities; to supporting and expanding the healthy cities initiative, which the Secretary of State did not mention; and to linking economic and social policies for the real health of the nation. We are committed to the development of GP contracts which actually deal with ill health where it matters most—rather than health promotion clinics to make more middle-class people even healthier in south-west Surrey—and to directing resources towards improving the mortality rate.

In the past year, 42,000 people would not have died if social class 5 had been able to enjoy the income, conditions and well being enjoyed by social class 1. It is not just a matter of politics; it is a matter of life and death for 42,000 people a year, 3,000 of them children.

We need a strategy for health, with a clear inter-departmental approach to the health of the nation. We need policies which are in the interest of the people, not in the interest of those who pay the Tory party. I refer, of course, to the state of Virginia, and what a state it is: the state from which the most predominantly used tobacco in Britain is obtained. A well-known brand is called Golden Virginia. We would ban tobacco advertising and introduce clear warnings. We would protect people from passive smoking and act against those subsidised European tobacco growers to whom the Secretary of State referred. Tobacco is the biggest killer in this country apart from poverty. That is why we would act against it. That is why 800 doctors put their money into and their names to the advertisement in *The Independent* today. That is why the Secretary of State should not have pre-empted the publication and recommendations of the Smee report by dismissing them before they even appeared.

We shall put the health of the nation first. We shall put people before party. We shall be willing to put our policies to the vote.

6.20 pm

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): I am grateful for this opportunity to speak in the first health debate of this parliamentary Session—the first since I became Chairman of the Select Committee on Health. I am very proud and privileged to serve on such an important Committee. It has awesome responsibilities, as all who are involved in health care know so well. We shall certainly look forward to welcoming next week my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to give evidence to our inquiry into tobacco advertising.

I pay tribute to my predecessor and to former members of the Committee who steered it so ably for 15 months. I am particularly grateful to the last Chairman. As part of his legacy, he has left me an excellent and acclaimed report on maternity services, about which I shall say more later.

Unlike the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), I pay tribute to the Secretary of State for bringing forward publication of the White Paper "The Health of the Nation". There can be little controversy about the essence of the policy: to make people more aware of the need to be healthy.

When the hon. Member for Brightside complains about the Government's policies concerning poor housing and homelessness and their effect on health, I remind him, first, of the enormous sums of money that are being poured into the estate action programmes to revitalise derelict housing estates and, secondly, of the fact that the Labour party bitterly opposed housing action trusts, the purpose of which was to bring back into use thousands of empty homes, owned by Labour-controlled councils, that are in disrepair through neglect and bad management. So much for the Labour party's concern over homelessness.

The Select Committee on Health will shortly start an inquiry into NHS dental services, an inquiry which I hope the hon. Member for Brightside welcomes.

It is entirely sensible that the Government should concern themselves not just with being able to cope with ill health, and all that that brings with it, but with doing all that they can to prevent the onset of illness. Ill health is a tragedy, in terms not just of the waste of a country's resources but of the human cost—a matter of much greater concern to us all. It leads to the loss of the breadwinner, the awfulness of seeing a child suffer and the strain of long-term nursing or of coping with a relative who is severely disabled. All these things can bring with them untold human misery.

[Mrs. Marion Roe]

It is good to see the Government taking the initiative and, once again, being proactive rather than reactive. The health service reforms, for which successive Conservative Governments are responsible, are shaping a health service that is better able to meet the huge demands upon it. That is a subject for the nation's gratitude and pride. Millions more patients are receiving the treatment they require, and millions more are being treated for ailments that even 10 years ago could not be treated. Let us, however, be in no doubt that demand and public expectation will continue to put heavy pressure on our health services. That is why I welcome this initiative.

It is important that those of us who can do something to protect ourselves against ill health should do so, in order that the people who need treatment can receive it as quickly as possible. As a Conservative, I put great store by the responsibility of individuals to look after their own health, but that responsibility must be grounded in informed choice and a sharing of common objectives. We cannot legislate to stop people drinking, smoking, or even having sex, but we can and should inform them of the consequences of their actions.

Moreover, I believe that greater understanding of what is good and bad for us will lead to greater willingness of people to work together. For example, it is a pity that, when a family adopts a healthy diet at home, there is little encouragement, in schools or the staff canteen, for people to eat sensibly. Therefore, I am pleased that the White Paper places emphasis on health alliances between different agencies, groups and organisations. I hope that the Government will ensure that they all work together to produce common and easily understandable messages.

I congratulate the Government also on moving the health debate forward. As we have heard, much has been achieved already. Anybody who has seen a child with whooping cough or struck down with measles knows how sensible it is for children to be immunised. Similarly, any woman who has been saved from the horrors of cancer by timely screening is aware of the value of preventive medicine.

It is right that the goalposts should be widened, new targets set and our sights raised higher. While I applaud the Government on publishing the White Paper, I am concerned that the impetus that led to its publication should not be lost. When I read the White Paper, I was struck by the myriad good intentions. It speaks of targets to be attained, by means of strategies and schemes to be developed, of reports to be made and of action groups to be set up.

A great deal of activity is promised. Although a Cabinet Committee will oversee the implementation of the ov[illegible] strategy—which I welcome as a positive sign of the Government's commitment, as well as their promise of periodic reports—would the Secretary of State contemplate issuing an annual report so that achievements could be recognised and unsatisfactory trends acted upon quickly? Such a report could be on the same lines as the chief medical officer's annual report on the state of public health. This one, however, should concentrate on the specific key areas and targets mentioned in the White Paper.

The White Paper contains many matters of enormous interest. My Committee will look at them, in particular at those which relate to pregnancy and childbirth. The Select Committee on Health has done an exceptional amount of hard work on the maternity services and has produced a report that has been well received by the Government and professionals alike. The importance of good maternity services for the welfare of the mother and the well being of the child cannot be emphasised enough. That is at the centre of the Committee's report. It places emphasis on the provision of continuity of care for the mother throughout pregnancy and childbirth.

There are many other recommendations, most of which are designed to promote the health care of both mother and baby so as to avoid complications or unnecessary illness—aims that are entirely compatible with those in the White Paper. Some of the recommendations, especially those at local level, are being acted on and others are being studied. At the last count, three committees were considering the different points that the Select Committee had raised. Midwives and I hope that the committees will report as soon as possible so that the Select Committee's recommendations can be acted on quickly.

I should like to take the debate on maternity services and the welfare of the mother one step further. Few people are aware that as many as 10 per cent. of all recently delivered women develop post-natal depression. In some cases, depression may be so severe that women need out-patient psychiatric help, and many need drug therapy. In view of its common occurrence, it is surprising that so little attention is given to it. Many books on pregnancy and childbirth hardly mention it, if at all, and it is not usually discussed in ante-natal classes.

Many mothers who are at risk could be picked up. Mothers who are most at risk are those who have had a history of mental illness or a tendency to it within the family, those who have experienced fertility problems and who experienced a difficult birth with their child—who may have experienced a lot of intervention—or those who experienced the trauma of a child being taken into special care.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State rightly pinpointed tackling mental illness as one of her key tasks. Mental illness is a double curse, because it is so destructive of a person's confidence and of his or her ability to help themselves. In that context, post-natal depression is doubly vindictive, because a mother becomes frightened for herself and particularly frightened about her ability to look after her baby. More could be done to recognise the dangers of this affliction. I urge my right hon. Friend to consider this matter as appropriate for inclusion in the overall objective of reducing the incidence of ill health caused by mental illness.

6.32 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) and for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) on their elevation to the Front Bench. We have a new team, who I think will do a first-class job for the party. I was impressed by the opening remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Brightside.

I should declare my education. I did a degree at Bradford university and spent 11 years working in the national health service, which may explain the different approach of myself and the Secretary of State. The White Paper is an attractive publication, and if I were giving the

Government marks out of 10 on how it looks they would be reasonably high. If I were giving marks for its content, they would be fairly low, because it is fairly lightweight and skirts around many of the issues that we believe to be important.

What is not included in the document is vital to the health of the nation. My hon. Friend the Member for Brightside mentioned Beveridge. Fifty years ago, in 1942, when Beveridge drew up the famous plan that gave birth to the national health service, he outlined what he saw as the five giant evils of the day—want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness. The NHS was to be part of the attack on those evils, particularly on disease. However, he made it clear in his report that they were all linked. He knew that one could not attack disease without attacking how people spent their lives, what they ate, how they were educated and how they fed, housed and clothed themselves.

On publication day in 1942, a mile-long queue formed outside the Government bookshop in central London and around 70,000 copies were sold within hours. Three weeks after publication, a Gallup poll found that 19 out of 20 adults had heard of the Beveridge report and that most approved of its recommendations. It touched the heart of the nation, which awoke to the content of the report like a slumbering giant. People stirred and voted for a Labour Government, who introduced the national health service, and we should never forget that.

We are witnessing a similar phenomenon today with the Government's callous and inhumane treatment of the miners. Yesterday, we saw the Government's hatred of anything collectivist or anything to do with communities. The Government should be fearful of the mood that is abroad, which we witnessed yesterday. Since they announced the pit closures, we have seen what I, as an old trade unionist, would call a massive failure to agree between the people of this country and the Government. The British people will put the national interest first, whereas the Government will put first their idol—the market.

The report is a wasted opportunity. How can any document on the health of the nation fail to address such issues as poverty, low income, bad housing, homelessness and unemployment? Page 26 of the document mentions

> "healthy cities, healthy schools, healthy hospitals, healthy workplaces and healthy homes",

but fails to offer any solution to the housing crisis, so it is worth nothing. It does not acknowledge that the housing crisis is the worst since after the war. Halifax is not the poorest town in the country by any means, but almost 7,000 people are waiting to be housed by the council. An average of 100 families are made homeless every week, and young people sleep rough or on somebody's settee.

The White Paper could have begun research into homelessness to find out exactly how many people are suffering from it, but it chose not to do so. It could have considered the inner cities and how many unemployed people experience bad health because of the stress of unemployment. It could have undertaken research into the inadequacy of the benefit system.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does the hon. Member agree that the greatest number of empty council houses are under the control of Labour authorities as opposed to Conservative authorities?

Mrs. Mahon: I absolutely disagree with that. The statistics support my argument, but I do not want to go into them.

Page 28 of the White Paper says that the

> "Government will continue to pursue its policy to promote choice and quality in housing, having regard to health and other benefits."

Those are empty words; the White Paper offers absolutely no help. If the Government want to help, the Minister and her colleagues could contact their friends in the Department of the Environment and ask why they will not allow councils to spend their capital receipts on building affordable housing to enable people to move out of squalor and into decent homes. Why did not health Ministers object to the enactment of the Housing Act 1988, the new rules of which made tenants so insecure and caused much more stress? Why do they not do something about what is happening to housing associations, which were to plan for special-needs categories such as elderly people? Housing associations now have to find the money to repair and maintain their properties, whereas previously they received grants. That repair and maintenance bill is being met by tenants and pensioners, who can ill afford it.

Report after report has highlighted the state of our crumbling schools. The White Paper talks about our schools being healthy places. Health Ministers should get in touch with the Department for Education and also ask the Prime Minister what he will do to tackle the backlog of maintenance in some of our schools.

The Government poll-tax cap the poorest councils in the country, so they can do nothing about housing.

What upsets me most about the document is the way in which it refers to nutrition and to advising people to make healthy alliances between different agencies, without ever mentioning schools meals, which have played an important role in the nutrition of children, especially children from poor families in this country for nearly 100 years.

In 1906 an Act of Parliament enabled councils to raise money on the rates to provide school meals, and the Education Act 1944 made it compulsory for every local authority to provide a school meal for any child whose parents so wished. Children's health is clearly related to the food that they eat, yet the schools meals service has been under constant attack from the Government since 1979.

The Black report, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Brightside has already referred, valued schools meals so highly that it recommended that they be provided free, yet in the same year the former Prime Minister, now Lady Thatcher, abolished local authorities' obligation to provide meals, except for children entitled to free school meals—yet she was the one who talked about letting children grow tall. Unfortunately, she meant only those children whose parents had healthy bank balances. Since the Education Act 1980, school dinners are no longer required to meet nutritional standards. The Secretary of State should at least have included that fact in her document.

In 1988, 400,000 children lost their entitlement to free school meals following changes to the Social Security Act, and compulsory competitive tendering threatens the very existence of that valuable, indeed vital, service.

As a member of the Select Committee on Health, I tried to get the Committee to recommend that school meals should be provided for all children at an affordable price

[Mrs. Mahon]

or free for people on very low incomes, and that national nutritional guidelines should be restored. That was when we drew up the report on pre-conceptual care, which preceded the maternity services report. The first of those reports emphasised the need for a healthy diet, so that healthy parents would produce healthy children. That seemed like common sense; it did not seem revolutionary, but something which we should all encourage. Alas, another golden opportunity was missed, because Conservative Members have voting habits which in our opinion harm the health of the nation time and again.

Another key area identified in the report is that of HIV infection, sexual health and drug abuse, especially involving young children. The report's treatment of that area is light weight. Why are the Government not funding the health education co-ordinators' post from March 1993? Health education co-ordinators have been praised by everyone including Her Majesty's inspectorate from the Department for Education. They do a valuable job to combat a scourge which we all deplore—young people getting involved with drugs. Yet the Government will not fund them. Clearly councils cannot afford to do so. If the Secretary of State really believes that she can attain her targets and reduce such abuse she must rethink the approach to that problem.

The White Paper identifies mental illness as a problem. In an earlier intervention, I tried to question the Secretary of State about prescriptions and health benefits. If people with a mental illness live in the community and are hard up they still have to pay for their prescriptions—many people in benefits have to do so. Often those prescriptions are not renewed, the person regresses and ends up back in hospital. It is a false economy not to ensure that such people get their medication.

The Secretary of State should be able to answer a question from a Back Bencher about whether the review on health benefits is anywhere near complete.

I am conscious of the time, so I shall make only a couple more points. The Select Committee's report on maternity services expressed horror that the DSS could not comment with authority on the adequacy of income support rates for providing a balanced diet for pregnant women because the research was not available—some members of the Committee had already known that, but some had not. Any document that does not deal with that problem has singularly failed in its duty to pregnant women. The omission is disgraceful.

We concluded, too, that there should be no discrimination in benefits for pregnant women. Why should women under 25 get less in benefits than older women? There is nothing in the document to support the recommendation in the Select Committee's excellent report.

I understand that today the Government launched their Winter Warmth telephone line, which is intended to do something about elderly people and fuel poverty. Any elderly or sick person who believes that he or she will receive help with fuel bills or insulation costs will be bitterly disappointed. The scheme, like the document before us, is a candy-floss scheme, pretty on the outside, but with little substance inside. I should like the Secretary of State to go back to the drawing board and bring back to the House a report that really attempts to slay the five giant evils identified by Beveridge. Goodness knows, there have been enough victims of Conservative health policies over the past 13 years to make that a priority.

6.45 pm

Mr. Sebastian Coe (Falmouth and Camborne): I am grateful to have the opportunity to address the House this evening. Hon. Members may recall that the last time I was due to deliver my maiden speech an altogether different delivery overtook me—the birth of my daughter, a week before the House rose for the summer recess. I link that comment with my great thanks to Epsom general hospital for what they did not only that evening, but throughout the week that my wife spent there.

First, I must pay tribute to my predecessor for his deep commitment and personal involvement with the Falmouth and Camborne constituency, with whose stewardship I am both privileged and proud to have been entrusted for the foreseeable future. I pay tribute to his predecessors, too —from both sides of the House—who ably served my constituents during the long and proud history of the Falmouth and Camborne division. I also thank the people of my constituency for giving me the opportunity to serve their interests in this place.

The Falmouth and Camborne constituency is unique and vibrant and so are its people. They come from a breed that has long learnt to eke out a difficult living against hostile elements—at sea, on land, or under the ground. It was in view of the rich and strong tradition of tin mining, and because of the generations of miners who sought their livelihood in that industry, that my decision on the vote last night was so marginal. I greatly welcome the review of the mining industry announced by the Government.

Since the loss of the tin mining industry, my constituency has never fully recovered either as a community or as an economic area. That may change now, and we have to encourage a level of industry and other economic activity which I hope will continue. Certainly this constituency's current Member of Parliament will press at every available opportunity the needs, desires and hopes of his constituents.

As an apprentice and a newcomer to the team, I thank many hon. Members for the support and guidance that I have received in the past few months—and, of course, I offer my thanks for the invaluable advice that is always available from the Whips Office.

In my previous life, I had advice, and guidance usually given after the event, from coaches, from team managers and from trainers. Sport has never been noted for its 20/20 foresight.

There is a far more important and serious issue that I wish to address today. The nation's health and fitness is an issue in which effective advice and guidance can literally be a life saver. The single most important factor in the future success of the United Kingdom, either as an economic or as a cultural force, is the health and well-being of its citizens. The provision of an effective and efficient national health service, free to all, is fundamental to the future prosperity of this country. No hon. Members here today would dissent from that view.

What we can argue about is the way in which the service is delivered and resourced, and what its priorities should be. The Government have unequivocally pledged the continuation and development of a national health service free at the point of delivery. That overriding principle must for ever be upheld and constantly repeated. It is the one non-negotiable, fundamental principle in my book.

The aim must be to continue to improve a free national health service, but a free national health service does not preclude the demolition of a number of apparently sacred cows, nor does it preclude the re-ordering of priorities within the system, provided of course that that re-ordering is based on solid reasoning, produces tangible benefits for patients and other users, and is fully explained to national health service employees and users alike.

Those who believe that the structure and organisation of the national health service should remain inviolate in the face of medical advances and demographic changes, the sole requirement being simply more funding, do not reside in the real world, nor do they have any genuine regard for the effective use of public finance or resources.

The national health service is Europe's single largest employer, with more than 1 million people and a budget of more than £36 billion, in itself an increase in real terms of 48 per cent. since 1978-79. Those figures are impressive, but as politicians we must recognise that they are Monopoly figures, literally too large for many people to grasp.

In truth, we must also realise that £36 billion matters not a jot when a person's sole concern is whether there is an ambulance, a doctor, a waiting room, a surgery, a hospital bed or a nurse immediately available when needed. As over the years the national health service has come to be perceived as available on demand, such concern is understandable.

Of course the reforms were overdue and hugely welcome, but within them there are still a few issues which need teasing out. One crucial issue, which I believe receives far too little attention and resourcing, is health promotion and education. The best way to help the national health service is to ensure that people do not become ill in the first place. While we go about our duties in the House next week, 455 people will die from coronary heart disease. As we go about our duties in this place next year, 40 million days will be lost through that disease. When we link that to the simple statistic that £2 billion-worth of production will also be lost, we know that those statistics should lie heavily on every Government departmental desk.

The deaths and losses will not be spread evenly throughout the country. The poorest sections of our community in the inner cities and the rural areas will shoulder more than their fair share of that burden. For towns such as Redruth and Camborne, which are an amalgam of the two, that burden will be noticeable.

The real crime of the figures is that they are preventable because the causes are preventable. We have heard about some of those causes today: being overweight, too little exercise, high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels and smoking. Yet while the national health service will spend £500 million next year on the treatment of coronary heart disease, it will spend barely one fiftieth of that on prevention of the same disease.

Tobacco, alcohol and confectionery manufacturers will spend about £700 million next year on advertising their wares—20 times the budget currently going into health education. Strikingly, the Government will also take £12 billion in excise duty and tax from alcohol and tobacco. I find those figures difficult to reconcile, just as I continue to find the sponsorship of sport by tobacco companies irreconcilable.

It is abundantly clear that there must be more resources and that a higher priority must be given to health education, properly targeted at the section of the population who are most in need. There have been a few tentative though welcome bites at that particular cherry. The White Paper "The Health of the Nation" places health promotion high on the agenda with preventive campaigns targeting particular diseases, such as breast cancer, cervical cancer and AIDS, and unhealthy practices such as drug abuse. That is welcome, as are the significant role and efforts of the voluntary sector and the whole raft of charities operating in this arena.

One issue which must be addressed is the complete separateness of health promotion, and sport and recreational departments at national and local level. There is a wide recognition in the White Paper that moderate and careful exercise is a crucial ingredient in every individual's good health and well-being, yet the public fund two organisations—the Health Education Authority and the Sports Council—with their attendant administrations, broadly to undertake health and fitness promotion. I had the unique experience of serving on the boards of both organisations. It is clear that they will have to work far more closely together to avoid the inevitable waste of precious resources and the duplication of time, effort and funding. Their co-operation with the Department of Health in the national fitness survey is welcome, as is the Department's inclusion of the physical activity policy development group, which is a further welcome move along that road.

Part of the work of the group is to consider the feasibility of setting targets in physical activity and how they might be achieved. However, I find it a little disconcerting that in the 20 years since the inception of the Sports Council and in the 10 or so years since the inception of the Health Education Authority's predecessor, the Health Education Council, we are only now turning to physical activity targets and the prioritisation. At the end of the day we cannot force people to adopt active, healthy living patterns. What we can and should do is to ensure that as wide a range of information, advice and guidance is freely and readily available to everyone. The final choice will be for the individual, but that choice must be an informed one.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. No fewer than 20 hon. Members wish to catch my eye during the debate. It would appear that some of them may be unsuccessful. It would be helpful if hon. Members would bear that in mind and be as brief as possible.

6.59 pm

Ms. Liz Lynne (Rochdale): I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) on his excellent maiden speech.

The White Paper states that there are significant variations in ill health in England and other countries. Why are there variations? What will the Government do to rectify them? I have concluded that the health of the nation depends on the wealth of the nation. There are areas of England which are obviously less prosperous than others. Some members of the Government at last seem to be

[Ms. Liz Lynne]

admitting that wealth is a factor in health. We need more job opportunities and better housing. Those two factors alone have an enormous impact on health.

I am glad that the Government have at last recognised that. However, instead of simply recognising it, they should act. They should be providing more jobs, not fewer. The Government should announce today that they will allow councils to spend the money raised from selling council houses so that people can have decent, healthy homes in which to live. If one lives in rundown, damp housing, one is more likely to suffer from bronchial conditions. Everyone knows that poor income and poor health education lead to poor diet, which in turn leads to heart disease, diabetes and so on.

The Government have raised many hopes with their White Paper, in the same way that they raised many expectations when they originally announced their community care reforms. The White Paper states that it is

> "important to maintain the quality of care and support provided for chronically sick people, elderly people, mentally ill and handicapped people."

However, many people who work in community care doubt whether, come April 1993, those good sentiments will become a reality. Similarly, there are fears that all the fine words in the White Paper are just that and have no substance.

The White Paper admits that the success of the strategy will depend on the commitment and skills of the health professionals within the NHS. I hope that the Government will now value and properly reward those professionals who carry so much of the burden of introducing those reforms.

I am pleased that the Government now accept that smoking is an addiction and will encourage people to stop smoking and prevent children from starting. However, I am disappointed that no extra money has been pledged for anti-smoking campaigns. I am appalled that the Government have failed to enforce a tobacco advertising ban, when evidence from New Zealand and Norway shows how effective a ban can be, particularly with children.

As has already been said, more than 700 British scientists and clinicians have paid for an advertisement in today's *Independent* stating that there is now strong evidence that tobacco advertising encourages children to smoke. The Government should listen to those who know. I hope that Hanson and Rothmans, who each gave £100,000 to the Conservative party in the latest year for which figures are available, are not affecting the Government's policies.

According to a Health Education Authority report, one in five people in my constituency die every year as a result of smoking. An estimated 599 residents were admitted to an NHS hospital because they had an illness caused by smoking. Those figures come not from a tinpot organisation, but from a book published by the Health Education Authority. However, the Government have still not banned tobacco advertising. What stupidity, cynicism and short-sightedness.

The White Paper targets four types of cancer for reduction. I welcome the inclusion of breast cancer in that list, but note that the 25 per cent. reduction applies only to "those invited for screening". The Government concentrate on the 50 to 64 age group. There is no guidance for general practitioners to screen women over the age of 40 in families with a history of breast cancer.

Cancerlink is disappointed that no targets are given for treatment and support. The quality of life of cancer patients has been left out of the White Paper. The inadequacy of resources available for personal and family counselling must be tackled.

With regard to mental health, there is no mention of the fact that there may be a link between mental health, homelessness and redundancy. What sort of health problems have the Government caused the miners and their families over the past few days? The way in which the pit closures were announced was callous in the extreme.

However, more than that, as a consultant psychologist has said, the sudden shock of the announcement of such a speedy and savage cut is equivalent to a sudden bereavement, road accident or terrorist bombing. Some people may never recover from the way in which the announcement was made. However much the Government might change their mind, the immediate shock was real; the stress has been caused and the damage has been done.

The White Paper contains no specific targets for the reduction in the incidence of mental illness or for the promotion of mental health. The Alzheimer's Disease Society is especially disappointed that the Government have not set targets. There should be targets for support and accommodation for those leaving long-stay psychiatric hospitals.

The continuing squeeze on local authority budgets and reduced funding for the voluntary sector is completely ignored. Anyone who believes that that is not important should see the number of homeless people sleeping rough in London. People are also sleeping rough in Manchester and every other city in the country. A number of those people suffer from mental illness.

I welcome the fact that accidents feature in the White Paper. However, like the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, I wonder why non-fatal injuries are excluded. Non-fatal injuries cost a lot more in total than fatal injuries and many injuries lead to medium and long-term disabilities.

Alcohol targets are dealt with under heart disease and accidents. That is disappointing, because alcohol is related to a wide range of medical conditions and deserves its own heading. I would also like the Government to give a commitment on complementary medicine. The full benefits of that type of health care are not yet fully understood.

All in all, I welcome certain aspects of the White Paper —at least it is better than nothing. At last we have some sort of strategy for health, but it does not go far enough. What good are those fine words if the money is not there?

I ask the Minister to make a commitment today that the health budget will not suffer when the public spending cuts are announced and to announce that there will be a real, substantial increase to meet the health needs of the people of this country. Anything less than that commitment makes a mockery of the White Paper.

7.8 pm

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) on his maiden speech. He has shown his dedication, ability and achievements in other fields and I am quite confident that, whatever distance he chooses here, he will be as successful. We look forward to hearing more from him. I am aware in particular of his interest in the ghastly problem of the misuse of drugs in sport and we look forward to hearing him pursuing that line as well.

After my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health made her debut in the health conference in Brighton, my wife said to me, "Doesn't she look pretty?" I countered by saying, "Didn't she make a good speech?" I should make it clear to my right hon. Friend, in her temporary absence, that those compliments are not mutually exclusive.

"The Health of the Nation" has been considered very widely in its Green and White forms over the past 16 months. I urge the House to make certain that we maintain the momentum and achieve another target—its implementation by April next year.

Never has the phrase "prevention is better than cure" been more appropriate. I talk, I believe, as the only practising physician or surgeon in the House. I have been involved in preventive medicine for 20 years, in the Army and on behalf of many companies ranging from mining and engineering to the service industries. I was also proud to serve on the medical advisory committee of the Industrial Society. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has more than a passing acquaintance with that society through her father's outstanding leadership of it.

However, there is still widespread ignorance of the issues addressed in the White Paper, not least because the emphasis on medicine, that unique blend of science and art, has historically and naturally concentrated on curing illness. The advent of screening medicine to detect conditions in the early stages and to be able to make a pre-symptomatic diagnosis, linked with advice on how to avoid other afflictions, is a relatively new concept. It has largely been pioneered in this country by the private sector, but the national health service has played an important part. Perhaps we are seeing an acceleration of the trend of having a health service rather than a sickness service, with the ultimate aim being the physical and mental welfare of everyone in this country.

I have often noted over the years that if one says that one is involved in occupational medicine it is a conversation stopper. That branch of medicine, catering as it does for the effects of a job on a patient's health and vice versa, might be an important aspect of the evolution of health care in this country. In France, many—perhaps most—employees are entitled not only to a pre-employment medical but to a retirement medical and, often, annual medicals which might or might not be funded wholly or partly by the state. The context of a schedule for screening will obviously vary widely in depth and quality, but the legitimacy of various tests is constantly being reassessed. I agree with the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) that one should re-examine the age limits for breast screening for women.

"The Health of the Nation" also addresses a rather more parochial issue—health in the workplace. We should be doing ourselves a disservice if we did not start to consider our own lifestyle in this place. In my written evidence to the Select Committee on Sittings of the House published in February, I said:

> "As a practising physician I have to see colleagues, and in particular Ministers, being forced to live a lifestyle which is incompatible with their general well-being, and I am convinced these factors militate against their making properly considered decisions. In particular, the necessity for Ministers to come to the House at bizarre times of the night and early morning is indefensible."

The Jopling Committee has also made a recommendation. It is interesting for the House to note the opinion of the 1959 Procedure Committee. I say this in the context of the numbers game that we had to play before last night's Division. The 1959 Procedure Committee stated:

> "Members who are seriously ill should never again be required to attend to record their votes".

I very much hope that Madam Speaker will soon organise the conference to address that matter.

Perhaps an agreeable spin-off from the publication tomorrow of the Tomlinson report will be consultants taking redundancy and redeploying their skills in the development of preventive and occupational medicine. Those matters cannot be wholly funded by the NHS, and ample opportunities exist for co-operation between the NHS and the private sector. Only a few weeks ago I attended the opening of a magnetic resonance imaging screening unit in the grounds of Atkinson Morley's hospital in my constituency. That hospital pioneered CAT scanning about 20 years ago. The equipment for that is extremely expensive. It is owned by a private company which has a lease on the area, and Atkinson Morley's hospital provides the patients and the medical, surgical and, most important of all, radiological back-up.

Such sophisticated equipment obviously costs a great deal of money. Of the 90 units of MRI equipment in this country, about one third are privately owned, one third are owned by charities or by charities in combination with the NHS and one third are owned by the NHS itself. It is the most startling equipment and it will have an exciting future. I recommend that all my colleagues share the fascination of being able to look directly for the first time at organs and structures of the body. It is the most extraordinary thing to come on the scene since I qualified as a doctor, which I suppose marks my age rather than anything else.

On a more basic level, how will we ensure that vital —I mean "vital" in the proper sense of that word— preventive measures are carried out by GPs? The answer clearly lies in the new contract, which was very painfully negotiated, and the advent of the increasingly popular GP fund holders. The House will remember the outcry that we had to face from doctors who, having been trained in an NHS ethos and knowing no other, were initially horrified to have to take more administrative and commercial decisions in their practices. Opposition Members, on wholly outdated ideological grounds, also whipped up discontent and, more important, alarm in the general public about fund holding and NHS trusts. That was done under the entirely false argument that the trusts were "opting out" of the NHS. Only today I visited St. Helier's national health service trust which serves much of my constituency. It is enthusiastically planning targeting for the implementation of "The Health of the Nation" in next year's budget.

I do not know whether it has sunk into Opposition Members' minds that another intellectual conversion has occurred in their party and, incidentally, within the British Medical Association, my trade union, which swayed from militancy to guarded warmness about the proposals, but which is still being mealy-mouthed about them. I wonder whether Opposition Members understand the changes that

[Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes]

are taking place. I should not have thought so, judging by the speech of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett). Only a month ago we read in *The Times* that the shadow Health Secretary, in the form of the hon. Member for Brightside, would abandon the Labour party's policy of abolishing NHS trusts and GP fund holding and drop the campaign to restore so-called underfunding in the NHS. I read the article in *The Times* and I heard the hon. Gentleman today. He owes it to the House to clarify his exact position and to say whether he carries the rest of his party with him. GPs running their own budgets will be able to achieve much more at the primary care level and thus take pressures off hospitals and give themselves more clinical satisfaction.

All the admirable proposals in "The Health of the Nation" can be carried out without creating a nanny state. When I have a recalcitrant patient——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: May I just finish my sentence?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I call Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody.

7.18 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Targets are all very well if they are realisable and sensible. The fairgrounds of my youth had vast numbers of machines that people were required to hit with an enormous hammer and a bullet then shot up and rang a bell. Very few people managed to do that because the machines were deliberately rigged. The similarities between the rigged bells and the targets of the White Paper seem very clear indeed.

I have strong views on the prevention of ill health. It is something for which I have pleaded for a long time. It is utter hypocrisy to suggest that we need proper health targets and then refuse to make the direct connection between the provision of funds and the provision of services that would allow us to hit those targets. That has probably been the worst con trick that the Government have tried on the British public for many years.

When talking about reducing smoking, one must understand that it is necessary to cut back advertising for smoking, particularly that aimed at young people. The length of time that people smoke is one of its most hazardous and appalling aspects. Some 1,149 people die every year in my constituency; of those, 179 are the result of smoking-related diseases—one in six of the deaths in my constituency. But there is still no clear plan from the Government about what they intend to do. They simply promote a lot of generally cheerful ideas stating that it would be nice if we were to cut down on smoking.

No matter which target in the document one examines in depth, one comes to the same conclusion: there are many pious hopes. The Government say that it would be wonderful if they could make it much easier for people to receive health education and could reduce the number of teenage pregnancies. However, there has been a consistent chopping of the provision of information to young girls on the need for proper health planning or the sort of service that they can easily receive. The results can be seen in every hon. Member's surgery when they are asked to provide houses for young people who are often homeless and pregnant. That connection is direct, not accidental.

We can take that argument further. We are told that one of the main targets is the provision of good health care for the elderly. In my constituency we are constantly told that we are lucky and that the reorganisation of trusts has improved health care—it is important to keep repeating this claim. The money keeps running out and the number of beds keeps being cut, but according to the Government my constituents should realise that they are getting a better service. As if those changes are not enough, we even have an ambulance trust created specifically as an independent unit. It has considerable problems related not only to its equipment but to the provision of its services throughout Cheshire and other parts of Merseyside.

We are moving towards what is lightly called community care. There is no better idea than community care, but it is not a cheap option. It must be provided not in the terms suggested by the present trusts—reducing the number of geriatric beds and ring fencing small sums of money that are inadequate to provide alternatives in the community. It must be provided by highly skilled nurses and support in people's homes given by health professionals. That requires a good, constant supply of money, but it is clear that such sums will not be forthcoming.

I asked my local trust what would happen when two of the geriatric hospitals were closed down. I do not pretend that they were adequate, but they provided health care and protection for many of my elderly constituents. When I asked about the closures, I was told that other wards would be made available in the district general hospital—itself a trust. But the wards to be built in Leighton hospital will not replace the beds lost by the closure of the Barony hospital. It was never intended that the money from the sale of the Barony and Arclid hospitals should be diverted into development moneys for the psychiatric department. There has been a long-standing commitment to build and fund 16 functional mentally ill elderly beds from straightforward development moneys. It is clear that, far from the necessary money being provided, there is to be a severe shortfall in the provision of care for the elderly. There is to be only a partial replacement.

It is also important to understand that the creation of trusts is having a direct effect on the level of nursing care. I have been told by the trust that the quality of service when the elderly health care strategy is complete should not be affected. Almost all the staff being transferred to the newly built nursing homes are being downgraded, although at present they have an oral promise of the retention of existing commitments. That means that the skill mix in those new homes will be considerably less than that provided in the original hospital system.

We now know what happens when a new trust is created. We are told that it is a better way of providing health care, but the administration cost is increased by raising the wages of the tiny number of people at the top while the provision of health care for local people is reduced.

We should also discuss the damaging decisions that the Government are to announce tomorrow about the closure of teaching hospitals in London.

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): Before the hon. Lady leaves Crewe, will she express pleasure at the fact that patient activity in Crewe increased by 9 per cent. last year?

Mrs. Dunwoody: I see people being run in and out of the services at great speed. One hon. Member said earlier that his wife had stayed in hospital for a week after having her baby. That is almost unique within medicare services and I hope that it was not a sign that she was suffering from any complications.

The way that people are now wheeled in and out of hospital services like sausages should be enough to cause even this Government to pause. I do not want the Minister to tell me that I should be delighted that patients are going in and out of hospital like people in a revolving door. I care about the quality of care that they receive and how many of them have to return to hospital for further treatment after they have been sent home too soon. I also care very much about what they find when they get home and how much care they receive there. The Minister does not talk about that at all.

In July last year I had what is termed a life-threatening illness and was taken into Barts hospital. I was there for some weeks and it became clear that the large ward on which I was being treated was entirely occupied by patients who came from Hackney, the City of London or the Barbican, where I have a home. Those in the ward were not patients who were not using their local health services.

Whereas I once might have said that there was a good case for dispensing a greater amount of expertise from London into other constituencies, I know that when the present Government shut centres of excellence they are not replaced. The same level of care is not provided outside the capital. All that happens is that those within the London district are deprived of services that are essential to them.

If the wholesale slaughter of the teaching hospitals is allowed to go ahead, there will be no provision for many people in the London region. The Government will not provide equal amounts of cash for Manchester, Liverpool and constituencies such as mine. All that they will do is cheat the population of London. Even the Government should be ashamed of that.

7.27 pm

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) on his excellent maiden speech. I pay tribute to his continuing work in health promotion with the Sports Council and the Health Education Authority.

Yesterday I had the pleasure of attending the official opening by the Princess Royal of phase 2 of the new Royal Bournemouth hospital in my constituency. On behalf of my constituents, I wish to thank my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and her predecessors for making that superb new hospital a reality. It was a casualty of the cuts in the hospital building programme during the last Labour Government and was, therefore, long overdue.

The maternity unit in phase two anticipated the recommendation contained in the Select Committee report on maternity service in pioneering the establishment of a midwife-led facility for low-risk women. This has been a satisfactory outcome of the health authority's original intention to centralise all obstetric services at Poole hospital, which might have been convenient for the consultants, but was certainly not convenient for my constituents or for those of my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley). I record our appreciation of our right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), who, as Secretary of State, ordered a re-think last year in response to our appeal to him. That has resulted in an acceptable compromise.

I congratulate the Government on pressing forward with their determination to make ours a healthier nation. Having implemented our strategy for a more efficient national health service, we are right to concentrate more than ever before on how we can avoid the need for health care in the first place. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said, tremendous progress has been made in recent years. Although it is right that the Opposition should point out where Britain lags behind, let us also give credit for the fact that we are leading the field in eliminating some of the seemingly incurable diseases of the past. Research is the key, and resources for it must remain adequate.

In the White Paper my right hon. Friend has selected five key areas for targeting; heart disease, cancer, mental illness, AIDS and accidents. These are the five horsemen of the modern apocalypse. Terrible as they all are, they have two things in common—they are mostly avoidable and they are mainly self-imposed. The Government must now build on that message.

A couple of years ago East Dorset community health council undertook "Survey 10,000" to discover consumers' views of health services and health promotion. It concluded that less than half of them were taking steps to improve their health. That is disappointing. The survey also concluded that of those who do seek advice, the majority will act on it. That is more encouraging.

Is there not more that can be done to encourage people to be more aware of their state of health by means of personal monitoring? I believe that there is. In July, a number of colleagues in the House responded to an invitation from IBM to become better aware of the use of information technology in our lives. Among the exhibits was a community based, touch-screen, public-access, health information system known as HealthPoint. It encourages the public to find out more about their state of health in a hundred different ways—diet, alcohol intake, smoking, AIDS, drug misuse and stress. For example, it can be placed in the waiting areas of hospitals and clinics, libraries, shopping centres, chemists and the workplace. If the Minister for Health is not aware of HealthPoint, I hope that he will make himself aware of it. It was developed by the university of Glasgow for his colleagues in the Scottish Office.

As the White Paper makes plain, heart disease followed by cancer present the greatest threat of premature death in Britain, not to mention ill health and disability for thousands. As my right hon. Friend said, we can do a great deal about both diseases and their avoidance. She rightly emphasised improved diet, and the growing emphasis on the risks of foodstuffs with lethal additives; sugars, salts and fats, is at last producing a consumer demand for more healthy alternatives, even in junk food like pizzas, burgers and potato crisps. This trend must be encouraged by education in schools, exhortation in campaigns and by clearer and compulsory labelling on foods. I hope that my right hon. Friend will keep up the pressure on our major food producers to find healthy alternatives to the more dangerous preservatives in food—emulsifiers in ice

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creams, for instance. I hope that they will respond even more positively to the clear, established link between saturated fats and heart disease.

Public attitudes and awareness of the need to take better care of one's health have improved in response to campaigns such as "Look after your heart". A recent Allied Dunbar survey showed that even more needs to be done to improve our fitness and to avoid heart disease. I was delighted by my right hon. Friend's initiative this week to promote health at work. The annual absenteeism cost of £5 billion suggests that a properly planned health promotion programme for staff would be incredibly cost-effective.

Many of us will be aware of the excellent organisation Fitness for Industry, run by our hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer), who is also responsible for establishing the Westminster gymnasium. Looking around the House this evening I do not see too many colleagues who use the gym, and sad to say there are still many companies not even contemplating how they can convert some under-used or redundant corner of their premises into a fitness area where their employees can work out at lunch time and before and after work. The investment need not be great; a home multigym can cost only £300, a sum which unfortunately cannot be offset against company tax. I ask the Minister to urge the Treasury to make it allowable against tax. He should also urge the Health and Safety Executive to issue guidelines to employers on health at work.

Smoking remains the greatest single preventable cause of premature death in this country. The recent manifesto for action on smoking issued by the Health Education Authority has already been mentioned. Among my constituents, 13·7 per cent., or one in seven, die from smoking; 500 a year are admitted to hospital because of smoking, using 14 beds a day, at an annual cost of £664,000. I am encouraged, however, by the fact that these statistics are the fifth lowest in the country.

I welcome the strategy in the White Paper, especially its emphasis on no-smoking areas in public to combat the effects of passive smoking. Surely Roy Castle's successful treatment for lung cancer will bring home the dangers of smoky pubs and clubs. I remain convinced that the answer still lies in education, not in penal taxation, which does little to discourage the hardened smoking addict, who will make other sacrifices, usually at his family's expense. It would be helpful, however, if my right hon. Friend would confirm once and for all that there is absolute and conclusive evidence that smoking leads to lung cancer, which in turn leads to an agonising and premature death. Health warnings on cigarette packets should state that clearly.

Now that doctors can put smoking as a cause of death on death certificates without having to refer to a coroner, I hope that GPs will not hesitate to use this opportunity to improve the accuracy of statistics on tobacco-related deaths.

The White Paper describes HIV and AIDS as the greatest new threat to health this century. There is no alternative but to continue to promote ever safer sex and to emphasise more strongly than ever that it is anal intercourse that is largely responsible for AIDS. With neither vaccine nor cure in sight, prevention remains the essential message, and the governing bodies of schools have a heavy responsibility when deciding what additional sex education to provide under the national curriculum for 12 to 14-year-olds. Such education must be appropriate to the schools and must encourage young people—indeed, all of us—to talk more easily about the subject.

I conclude with one of the broader lessons that can be learnt from the alarming report earlier this year about the HIV-positive Birmingham man who infected at least three women and was blamed for having infected a fourth. There are certain conclusions to be drawn from the fact that those reports exposed a lifestyle which he and his friends pursued in their inner urban area—a lifestyle revolving around alcohol, football, videos and sex.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

7.38 pm

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): I apologise for my voice. It would be wrong to blame it entirely on the fact that I am a victim of passive smoking in the Tea Room, a problem caused by those who are in turn the victims the tobacco advertising, but my hoarse voice is certainly linked to the smoke there. When one has a cold or a throat infection, the atmosphere in the Tea Room is bad for one's health. I just hope that my voice will last out this speech.

I want to concentrate on child health. Although that is referred to in the White Paper, children have been largely overlooked in the promotion of good eating habits and of health in general.

The target of reducing the number of children smoking has been mentioned, but from reading the report it is unclear how the Government will achieve that target without controlling the advertising of cigarettes. Other important issues, however, such as child nutrition, poverty and deprivation have hardly been tackled.

We could all read out our qualifications which entitle us to comment on such matters, as the Secretary of State did, but if we ignore the connection between child health and poverty and between bad housing and child health, we have learnt very little.

One in five of our children now live in poverty. That means that they are subject to great deprivation, as are their parents. Many of them live in bed-and-breakfast accommodation or in poor housing. Ministers' refusal to acknowledge the obvious link between child poverty and poor health is irresponsible and totally unacceptable.

It is self-evident that sub-standard housing leads to ill health. Similarly, families living in poverty will, of necessity, consume the sort of fat and sugar-loaded diet that easily staves off the pangs of hunger, but does nothing to build a healthy body. Anyone who has visited bed-and-breakfast accommodation knows that they offer no facilities for promoting a healthy diet.

The White Paper specifies targets for reducing adult obesity, which I welcome, but it says nothing about that problem in children. The seeds of obesity are sown in childhood. Anyone who has tried to change the pattern of eating established in childhood knows how difficult that is. People brought up in the 1930s filled a blank space with suet puddings, dumplings, cocoa and the like. They now suffer illnesses directly related to that diet.

We know better now, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) has said, it is important to reinstate the nutritional standard of school meals. Many children no longer have a hot lunch and they have replaced it with sandwiches, sugary snacks or crisps. The school lunch is often the only hot meal available to children and they are now suffering nutritional deprivation—they will suffer illness throughout their adult lives as a result of that.

In the 1950s, graphs were kept of the comparative growth of rich and poor children. In those days children received free orange juice, school milk and proper school meals and the gap between the development of those children narrowed; now it is widening. For years the medical schools of Guy's and St. Thomas's—I hope that they will not be closed down—have carried out a joint study of the height and growth of children, which are strong indicators of health in childhood. The height differences between children in different social groups narrowed in the 1970s, but it grew wider in the 1980s.

Only last month Professor Walter Holland, one of this country's leading experts on community medicine, warned that British children were getting fatter and that a time bomb of obesity and disease was ticking away under them. He pointed out that the increase in children's weight, particularly among girls and children from the poorer economic groups, had not been commensurate with their increase in height. That weight gain is an important indicator of the likely health of those children when they grow up, especially in terms of the greater frequency with which they will suffer from arthritis, diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure. As the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) said in his maiden speech, we need to tackle the need for exercise in childhood. Too many children now go everywhere by car. I do not believe that the White Paper has addressed those warnings.

The Government also have a responsibility to protect children from the advertising of products that are damaging to their health. Earlier this year we debated the issue of tobacco advertising and I drew attention to the Benson and Hedges advert that featured a puffin—a symbol clearly identified by children because of Puffin books. Whatever the tobacco giants may claim, I am firmly convinced that they target under-age smokers. Indeed, they do so in order to replace the 300 addicted smokers who die from smoking-related diseases every day.

More than 450 youngsters start smoking in the United Kingdom every day and five out of six of them are under the age of 16. The Secretary of State rightly pointed out that the parents of many children who take up smoking are smokers. She implied that if adults stopped smoking, children would do likewise. That is why it is so important that we tackle the advertising of cigarettes, because children whose parents smoke see the attitude in their homes reinforced through advertising. If that were not so, those children would be less likely to smoke. Perceived attitudes have never been challenged and that is why the role of advertising is so important.

I am appalled that the former Prime Minister is now promoting tobacco in the third world. That is absolutely disgraceful and she should know better.

Janet Sackman was a young and healthy teenager who was chosen especially years ago to advertise Lucky Strike cigarettes—behind a waterfall, I think. By the age of 17, having been encouraged to smoke, she was hooked on tobacco and she has since developed lung and throat cancer. Who was that advertisement directed at? Not at hon. Members, but at teenagers like Janet. My hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) and I have a high percentage of constituents who are now dying from smoking-related diseases and we know that they were affected by that advertisement. One could cite many other such advertisements. We must recognise the problem caused by tobacco advertising.

Voluntary codes have been mentioned and the Secretary of State said that one cannot force people to do certain things. However, it is important to take issue with another problem connected with advertising—the inadequate controls over misleading advertisements of sugar-loaded foods and confectionery. Those products are often described as energy giving to young children and their parents. If the truth were told, they would be more accurately described as tooth rotting. It is important that the Government take a long, hard look at that issue against the backdrop of reduced dental care for children.

Local authorities are making cuts in school health programmes because of Government restrictions on spending. Our children are deluged with advertising that is often linked with unfortunate preconceptions. They believe that if they eat a particular food they will be able to perform to a particular standard in sports. That is an absolute disgrace.

The school nurse programme is underfunded and under threat. It has been brought to my notice that, in Gloucestershire, parents have received letters giving notice of the discontinuation of annual school dental check-ups. The reason for that decision was improvements in child dental health, but what brought about that improvement? It was the annual dental check-up. Children will now receive four check-ups throughout their school lives between the ages of four and 18. With national health service dentists to become as scarce as coal mines if the Government have their way, more families will find themselves unable to afford private treatment. If adults do not regularly visit the dentist, it is unlikely that their children will get into that habit. School dental check-ups are a vital safety net against the background of disintegrating public health care for our children.

How some of the targets relating to children in the White Paper, welcome though they are, will be reached is a mystery. The commitment to reduce pregnancies among under-16s by at least 50 per cent. by the year 2000 is welcome, but how can that be achieved without taking practical steps to prevent conception in the first place? Special attention must be given to that matter if we are to avoid more teenage pregnancies. The Birth Control Trust, for example, should be given more funding and support if we are to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies.

7.48 pm

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): I join my colleagues in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) on his excellent maiden speech. I also congratulate the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) on surviving her 10 minutes. I thought that her voice became stronger as she went on, which shows that practice does help. That is an awful warning to all of us, is it not?

The White Paper is a move forward in health promotion, but I want to issue one or two warnings about it. I also disagreed with a couple of things that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said. I welcome the White Paper and all that went before it because they have created the framework for health promotion. It is right to

[Mr. Simon Coombs]

pay tribute to the progress that has been made in relation to GP contracts and the improvement in targets in such things as cervical smears and child immunisation. Those are welcome steps in the right direction, but we still have serious problems in this country.

The first problem is coronary heart disease. This week I put a question to a Minister at the Welsh Office, and received the information that in Wales the number of deaths from coronary heart disease had fallen from 345 to 331 per 100,000 in the past 11 years. That is progress, but it is slow, and it is not speedy enough to satisfy those hon. Members who feel strongly about such issues.

In almost 10 years since the publication of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy report there has been little progress in reducing our population's intake of saturated fats. There has also been too little progress on increasing the amount of fibre in the diet through eating fruit and vegetables. I do not join Opposition Members in saying that it is simply a matter of social class or is due to whether people are richer or poorer: it is up to people to make choices, and they can make them irrespective of their income or that of their families.

Another problem is plasma cholesterol. That is often a genetic feature, but we can all do something about it. A 10 per cent. reduction in plasma cholesterol could lead to a 20 per cent. reduction in premature coronary heart disease. There are ways in which cholesterol can be reduced, even by people who may have a genetic tendency towards it. That is of crucial importance. I hope that my hon. Friend will tell us at the end of the debate when the Government intend to respond to the Standing Medical Advisory Committee's proposals on cholesterol testing. The House will be interested to know when we can expect progress in that direction.

Like every other Member who has spoken, I must mention smoking. I am one Conservative Member who feels that we must insist that the European Community does something about the scandalous subsidising of tobacco crops throughout the Community, which is costing its taxpayers £1 billion per year. We must also consider the vexed question of tobacco advertising. Having lost a parent from lung cancer, I feel that we must take any step that will reduce people's tendency to smoke and to reduce the number of passive and active smokers.

Clearly the Government have set a challenging target. Why lose any opportunity to reach that target? When the Smee report is published next week, I am sure that it will show that in countries which have banned all advertising —not merely television advertisements—that has helped to reduce smoking. Let us follow suit and not be too worried by arguments about freedom. It will still be up to people to decide whether they smoke. For heaven's sake, why do we want to encourage them in any way?

On health education, we must deal with nutrition education in schools. That has not been mentioned in the debate so far. I am not happy that the nutritional advice made available through home economics within the national curriculum is sufficient to encourage young people into healthy eating and cooking when they become responsible for families. We must ask the Minister to talk to Ministers at the Department for Education—not merely through a Cabinet Committee—to impress on them the need to ensure that health economics teaching includes advice on diet and nutrition. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will feel able to respond to that at the end of the debate.

I welcome the healthy schools project, and I hope that it will include some of the suggestions from the school meals campaign. It is not good enough that while some counties, such as mine, make every effort to encourage healthy eating in schools, in others the pizza generation has taken over, almost to the exclusion of everything else. The pizza van waits outside the school gates every lunchtime for its ready victims to come forth. We have to insist on national standards in something as important as school meals.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will tell the House when we can expect the Government to propose full nutritional labelling. There has been much consideration and involvement with the European Community on that subject: now we need action. A great deal of progress is being made. It is true to say that industry is now more aware of its responsibilities for the diet of the nation.

The Food and Health Forum—the all-party group in the House which I have the honour to chair—has received presentations from organisations as diverse as the National Farmers Union and the Food and Drink Federation and they all accept that they have responsibilities to improve the nation's diet. That is important and should be encouraged by Members on both sides of the House.

Finally, the targets in the report may not look tough to some hon. Members but they will be hard to achieve because, human nature being what it is, people will resist blandishments, encouragement, education and incentives. There will always be those who say, "We know best" and "My grandmother lived to be 90 and she smoked 40 a day, so I can do it too." They may be right, but that does not alter the fact that everyone who smokes has a greater chance of dying a premature and agonising death. That fact is incontrovertible. We must tell people who have a sweet tooth and who enjoy a rich fatty diet that they are taking risks with their health and that they could avoid those risks if they chose to do so. However, we all know that many of them will choose to ignore whatever advice is given. We must press on, and we must tell the Government that it will not be easy to reach those targets. Too many people will say, "We are immortal—it will never happen to us."

Education will be important. Whether it is provided by the health education authority or by health education units within the health authorities, it is expensive and it will have to be paid for. My hon. Friend will have to deal with the problem of where that money is to come from. We can improve the lifestyle of all the people in this country, if we are prepared to do so, but let us not pretend that the White Paper is anything more than one step along a road which will be difficult and challenging, and which will require sacrifices by everyone in the country, whether they are smokers or those who indulge in the various dietary inadequacies which disfigure our population to far too great an extent.

7.58 pm

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): Many Labour Members, including my hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) and for Eccles (Miss

Lestor), have expressed our reservations about a health promotion strategy that fails to give proper attention to significant factors such as unemployment, economic deprivation and poor housing conditions.

While the Secretary of State for Health has sought to develop a strategy to improve the health of the nation, other policies are being developed by different Government Departments which are having the opposite effect on that strategy. I am thinking of the Government's economic and industrial policies, which are creating an inexorable rise in unemployment, of the Government's employment policies, which are encouraging low and poverty pay, and of their housing policies, which are creating ever-increasing tension and stress in the housing stock, especially in public sector housing.

I do not intend to dwell on that aspect of our reservations about the Government's health strategy, although I must say a little about what is happening in my constituency. In two years Barrow and Furness has lost 8,000 jobs. Every week, when I hold my advice surgeries, I see growing signs of increasing economic deprivation. More and more of my constituents are being forced on to income support and benefit, and I am deeply concerned about what is happening to the health of my constituents. I know that in the coming years there will be many other constituencies throughout the country where the Government's policies will have an effect on the health of many thousands of people.

I wish to concentrate on three issues that arise from the White Paper which bear on the Government's policies on accident prevention, reducing the incidence rate of cancer and dealing with mental illness.

I ask the Government to consider the role of home safety committees within their strategy on accident prevention. I read the White Paper and I could not find one reference to the committees. I assume that that is an oversight by the Government and not the result of their pathological aversion to anything and everything that is provided by local authorities.

Home safety committees are administered by local councils. They bring together local NHS agencies, emergency services, voluntary organisations and trading standard officers. They do an excellent job and the Government should examine their work carefully with a view to putting it on a statutory basis. In taking that course there would be resource implications for the Government, and perhaps that is why there is no reference to the committees in the White Paper.

Perhaps the Government, and especially the Minister for Health, will have to consult Ministers in other Departments. I hope that the Minister will be able to give us an assurance that he will at least consider my suggestion. Home safety committees, and especially the one in my constituency, are doing an excellent job.

It is important that action is taken across a range of areas to tackle the incidence of cancer. Many of my hon. Friends—I am glad that there are Conservative Members who support the view—believe that the Government cannot continue to avoid taking further measures to prevent tobacco companies advertising their products. Despite what is often said by these companies, their advertising is clearly and blatantly aimed at young people and at recruiting new smokers. That is a disgrace.

I regret that the White Paper takes a rather disingenuous approach to tobacco advertising. As a result, the Government's targets for reducing the incidence of lung cancer and other smoking-related illnesses appear to be hopelessly optimistic. A ban on advertising should be at the top of the Government's agenda and not wrapped up in the weasel words that are all that we see in the White Paper.

In the treatment of cancer, excellent work is being done by the hospice movement in providing palliative care for those who are dying from the disease. I mention especially the work of St. Mary's hospice in Ulverston in my constituency. It is a small hospice—there are only six beds —but it provides a vital home care service and a drop-in support service. Demand for the services that it provides constantly outstrips availability. The hospice has to rely heavily on voluntary contributions. Its budget is about £500,000, about 83 per cent. of which comes from its own fund-raising efforts. That is a remarkable tribute to the people of Furness and of the south lakes area.

The hospice receives no direct funding from the South Cumbria district health authority, but I am glad to say that it benefits from the Government's allocation to regional health authorities. Of course, that funding is not guaranteed beyond this year. I hope that the Government will extend their support to the hospice movement in general and keep under constant review the mechanisms through which health authority funding is distributed to the hospices.

I would like to have seen greater emphasis in another area of the Government's proposals, and that is on a recognition of the value and role of proper bereavement services in promoting the health of the nation. Those who, like myself, have experienced the immense grief that is caused by the death of a child will know how debilitating the sense of loss can be. There can be a real threat to the physical and mental health of those who are mourning the loss of a loved one.

I shall never forget when my second son, Jonathan, died 10 years ago. I was told by caring professionals in the NHS that I was young and that my family and I could look forward to having more children. I was told that, in effect, there was nothing to worry about. That was not the result of callous indifference on the part of the profession. I believe that it was the result of a lack of efficient and proper training. I want the Minister and the Government to recognise that this is an area in which the expertise of the hospice movement can and should be central to developing a national response and strategy. I hope that the Minister will be able this evening to say something about the Government's view of bereavement services as part of their target of improving the mental health of the nation.

As I have said, I hope that the Government will be able to respond to what I have said about the role of home safety committees and bereavement services. I have reason to believe that I should be less than optimistic that they will begin to address the problem of tobacco advertising. Unless they do so, however, their credentials in promoting the health of the nation will be seriously compromised.

8.7 pm

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): I begin by congratulating the Government on bringing forward for the first time a real health strategy. For too long debates in the House have focused on funding mechanisms and developing the correct mechanisms to achieve better value for money. At last we have started to measure output in our health care

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system. For too long also we have measured the quality of health provision by what we put into the system. That is rather like the shopper who measures a good day's shopping by the amount of money that has been spent rather than on what has been brought home. The White Paper goes some way at least towards setting real targets in trying to achieve good value for money and the correct outcome in terms of health care.

We must congratulate the Government where credit is due on having the lowest infant mortality rate of all time, the lowest post neo-natal mortality rate, on having brought in the new haemophilus influenza B vaccine and the new typhoid vaccine and, I hope, increasing the take-up of them. These are real improvements in our health care. I wish that sometimes the Labour party would give us, the Government, a little credit when we bring forward real improvements. Constant sniping—pretending that nothing good is happening in the health service —is bad for the entire debate and makes the climate for debate all the more difficult.

I have a particular interest in the primary care sector, because I was a general practitioner until the general election. Most of my hospital training was in the east end —the poorer part of Glasgow. For a short time I worked in Harlesden, in Brent. I was appalled there at the inequality within primary care services. In inner-city London, there were general practitioners with no appointment service and no proper system of record keeping. In some instances, there was no running hot water. At the same time and in the same system, but in another part of the United Kingdom, there were general practitioners who, with the same funding system, were providing plush waiting rooms, an excellent appointment system, health care clinics and preventive measures. Surely that is unacceptable in a publicly funded service.

What do we do? The Government responded by bringing in the general practitioner contract to try, for the first time, to establish a minimum acceptable standard of care. What did we get? The Labour party was up in arms. It told the people that the health service was about to fall apart. The British Medical Association told us that it would not be able to carry out the preventive measures that it had been undertaking until that moment.

I ask the House to look at the record. We have seen a tremendous increase in the take-up of immunisation. Preventive measures have been taken in the form of hypertension, diabetic and asthmatic clinics. These have been provided within the health service, but perhaps there have not been enough of them.

The carrot has worked rather well. It has brought forward many more services. It worries me, however, that general practitioners, especially when there is a high patient turnover, can still make a good and happy living without having to bring in some of the services that are detailed in the contract.

I would be happier if the Government considered carrying something of a stick. Perhaps we could have a general practitioner inspectorate to focus especially on inner-city practices. We have made tremendous advances, but there are still some places and areas that leave something to be desired.

We shall also have to consider the role of medical education, especially in view of the community care programme. For example, general practitioners do not have much training in dealing with mentally handicapped people or mental illness. I had six months' training in psychiatry as part of my general practice training, but that was not compulsory.

It is possible to be a general practitioner in Britain with no experience in psychiatry apart from a couple of weeks' training as an undergraduate. We must consider that if we are serious about obtaining the proper treatment for mental illness in order to attain our targets. If we are to deal adequately with potential suicides, we must know how to spot them. If we are to deal adequately with post-natal depression, we must know which patients are vulnerable, and that requires good medical skill.

The most attractive feature of the White Paper is the Government's clear commitment to a multi-departmental approach. It is far too simplistic to say that poverty causes this and homelessness causes that. Public health is multi-factorial. We know that asthma is worsened by too many vehicle emissions. All the evidence points to that. But that is the consequence not of a poor society but of an affluent society with too many motor cars on the roads. Much heart disease is due to people having too sedentary a life style because there is too much transport so that they do not do enough walking. Again, that is a problem of affluence. All I ask is that the House does not take too simplistic a view in dealing with such matters.

Of course poverty is a factor. All epidemiological evidence suggests that there is something in that, but all we hear from the Opposition is poverty, poverty, poverty—la, la, la, always on the one note, never accepting the complexity of the issues. Not once did the Opposition mention that. They are always hitting on the one strand. That does not advance the debate one little bit. It is just boring for Conservative Members.

There is one other problem in how we are to move forward. We know that we will have to work within public spending constraints and we know that medical science will continue to demand ever more. Therefore, irrespective of national wealth, there will be a genuine gap between what we can afford to buy and what medical science can provide. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister tonight to question some of our priorities.

For example, is it ethically justifiable to spend £3,000 a time reversing vasectomies that patients have chosen to have on the NHS when we have a shortage of coronary care beds? Should we spend millions of pounds removing tattoos when we have other priorities in the health service? Those are genuine questions which will have to be addressed.

I am sorry that, largely because Opposition Members take such a simplistic view, those issues have not been aired as they should have been today. I hope that my hon. Friend will consider all of them. The Government are to be commended for a courageous White Paper. It is a welcome start.

8.12 pm

Ms. Angela Eagle (Wallasey): I crave the indulgence of the House at the beginning of my speech as I am suffering from an affliction similar to that of my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor). I only hope that my voice lasts as long as hers did.

I was particularly moved by what my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) had to say about bereavement. Having suffered the loss of a parent, I too believe that there are large gaps in the services currently offered in that area, which need addressing urgently.

It is just possible to believe that we have a Government who care about the nation's health. I commend the Government for having a strategy, however inadequate, and for finally deciding to introduce health targets. Any target, even the wrong one, is better than no target at all. That is the faint praise that the Government will get from me tonight.

Leaving aside the alarming omissions of analysis in the White Paper which render its prescriptions flawed and problematical, and leaving aside the Government's obsession with individualism and their refusal to admit that good health relies on far more than a responsible attitude to one's own health, important though it is, and even forgetting the Government's obsession with market forces as a panacea for all problems—we heard a great deal earlier about the so-called centrally planned socialist method of delivering health care in Britain, which served us well for many years—what we have not heard about is the fundamental problems in delivering health care services according to a market ethos.

They are there in theory, in that the market fails for health care because of externalities, imperfect information and supplier-induced demand. The market fails in neo-classical economic theory and it fails in experience. We need only look at the parlous state of the American health care system, which is the most privatised and market-oriented in the world, to prove the truth of that contention.

Even with those gaps, we might suspend disbelief and give the Government the benefit of the doubt, but the omission of the issue of social inequalities, which has rightly been much commented upon by my hon. Friends, finds them out. There can be no realistic or serious preventive health care strategy without an analysis of social inequality, poverty and its ill effects, unemployment and its ill effects, bad housing and its ill effects and—this will be an increasing issue as the market-oriented reforms come through—access to health care for all and increases in charges which deny access and the ill effects that that can have in a preventive health care setting.

It is not my intention to show any disrespect for the often important work that is being done in that area by the regional health authorities, the family practitioner committees, associations, district health authorities and general practitioners, but they cannot be expected to make a good case and fight ill health with one hand tied behind their back.

How can we take seriously any attempt to improve the nation's health which makes no mention, in 125 extremely glossy pages, of poverty and of the proven links between unemployment and ill health and between bad housing and ill health?

If the World Health Organisation's report was an inspiration to the White Paper, why on earth did it take the Government more than 10 years to get around to introducing the first health targets? The WHO initiative was launched in 1978, and it was not until 1988 that the Secretary of State for Wales introduced the first targets in Britain.

Why, if the WHO was such an inspiration to the White Paper, have the Government ignored the first target of that initiative, which aims to reduce inequalities both within countries and between countries in income and social provision? Instead of acknowledging that well established connection, the Government seem to have omitted to mention it as often as possible, presumably in the hope that no one would notice. As a fall-back position, they have come up with lame excuses for taking no account of it.

When the Green Paper was published, the then Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), said that the Government did not believe that there was any panacea either in terms of a full explanation or a single action which would eradicate the problem of the ill effects of social inequalities. But the Government have, by act of their own policies, made social inequalities worse, and that has exacerbated the problems of ill health in some of those pockets of poverty that those of us who come from constituencies where such poverty exists see in our surgeries day in, day out. The Government have systematically and deliberately lowered, worsened, destroyed social provision for millions of Britain's people, and it is compromising their health and well-being even as we speak.

The Government have created, by design or incompetence—one can take one's pick—mass poverty on a scale not experienced since the 1930s. The Government have created, by design or incompetence, two recessions in 12 years. They have created mass unemployment, and even as we debate they are planning to destroy the jobs of 31,000 miners and 70,000 in the service industries with one more swing of the axe. As Tory recession turns to slump, it is worth remembering that the Government's policies have worsened social inequality. It follows that they could better achieve equality with the right policies, and thereby improve the nation's health.

The correlation between inequality and health is well established. Office of Population Censuses and Survey figures on occupational class and mortality demonstrate a widening gap between the death rates of manual and non-manual workers, with the unemployed doing worse still. In fact, mortality rates are worse among the poor, who also suffer a higher prevalence of long-standing illness. They have shorter lives and suffer poorer health.

Earlier, the Secretary of State quoted the chief medical officer and refused to allow me to intervene, with the valedictory statement of the previous chief medical officer:

> "Analysis of the major advances in health which have occurred since Sir John Simon's first report show that these have been more often with improvements in social circumstances than with medical advances. Thus, where people are in a position to exercise greater choice in their housing, environment, employment, leisure activity, and consumption generally, this has tended to be beneficial to their health. By contrast, those not able to exercise greater choice because of low income, lack of education or lack of capacity to take the initiative tend to suffer more ill health."

Research shows that life expectancy is closer correlated to a distribution of income. That was borne out by experience during the second world war, when civilian life expectancy increased two to three times, despite the Luftwaffe and the blitz. One of the features of wartime Britain was that income was rapidly redistributed, and many ate better on rations than they ever dreamed of doing in the recession-ravaged 1930s.

In a recent article in the *British Medical Journal*, Tony Delano wrote that, as Britain had become much less equal, the mortality of men aged between 15 and 45 had once again begun to increase—and that excludes death from

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AIDS. Why is there no Government recognition of those facts, much less any attempt in the White Paper to do anything about them? We have a clue to a real and meaningful preventive health care programme that would deal with fundamental issues, rather than dishonestly tinker around the edges. I plead with the Government to make social inequality a key area and to do something about it.

8.22 pm

Mr. Michael Trend (Windsor and Maidenhead): A better state of health is a laudable objective, and for the national health service to be required to focus as much on that as on health care is all to the good. I commend the good sense that informs the views in "The Health of the Nation", but I want to voice a few concerns that struck me as I read it.

It will be difficult to strike the right balance between that which the Government, and they alone, can do and that which, to quote the introduction by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State,

> "other organisations and agencies need to do and, finally, individuals and families themselves must contribute if the strategy is to succeed."

We are all concerned by the prospect of illness. One press commentator recently said that serious illness and indeed death are

> "regrettable misfortunes that interrupt the optimistic planning of our lives, and so are best avoided."

Quite so. The question is: how to avoid them? One of the White Paper's answers is to evolve an overall strategy with targets to be met.

If I were a doctor and someone came to me suffering from a "strategy", I would advise recourse to a bottle of aspirin. If the patient later returned complaining of "targets", I would put him on Mogadon.

Some may think that I am only trying to make fun of modern buzz words and that I should bravely swallow the prescribed nostrums and retire to bed. That is far from the case. My concern is that "The Health of the Nation" has a tendency to follow the five-year-plan-school-of-government, beloved by those highly centralised socialist economies that are now so out of fashion. In those cases, they were mainly trying to plan for tractors and other inanimate articles. They had little success. How much more difficult it is to plan for people.

We are not, thank heavens, a highly centralised socialist country where the whim of the few dictates the fate of the many, but the central dilemma for the Government lies in that area.

Let us imagine for a moment that the suicide rate does not drop by 15 per cent. by the year 2000—or that the rate of conceptions among under-16s is not halved by the year 2000. Who will be to blame? The answer is easy. The poor old Government will cop it, as usual.

On the one hand, the Government have very limited powers to affect the targets that they have chosen—other than those which seem likely to be achieved through momentum already in the figures. On the other hand, the Government have put themselves in a position where they will get the blame if the targets are not met. They cannot win either way, whichever party is in power in the year 2000—and of course it will be the Conservative party.

I would like a much stronger emphasis to be placed on the proposition that individuals are free to make their own decisions and that they will often involve moral choices —such as whether or not to bring a child into the world without the benefit of marriage.

The great growth in the number of teenage pregnancies has occurred at a time when sex education has been freely and widely available in schools. We all know that figures can be made to serve many purposes in circumstances such as this, but the present evidence will not allow the proposition that more sex education equals fewer teenage pregnancies. The reasons for such a development lie elsewhere.

What is most needed is a stronger emphasis on the individual and more stress on the limits of the Government and their proper functions. Health education is all-important. Above all, people should be taught to look after themselves, with minimum interference from the state.

I remind the House of Disraeli's great 1872 Manchester speech, when he advanced the motto, "*Sanitas, sanitatum, omnia sanitas.*" He, too, was talking about health but his central observation was:

> "The great object is to be practical."

He was after clean air and water and better drains. Those are practical challenges to which Governments can rise. Legislating for individual behaviour is, however, a very different matter.

Sensible people will behave sensibly about their health, and when they do not they will know that they are not behaving sensibly—and will only persist in a course of action—say, smoking—in full knowledge of their actions. They will accept the responsibility for such action.

The key is to make a nation of sensible people. The House will forgive me if I postpone giving my prescription for achieving that great objective until another time. I will only say that it is not very sensible for the Government to offer some of the hostages to fortune that it has in the overall strategy of the White Paper, with its specific targets.

I do not believe that we must insist that people adopt a certain approved way of living. That was the argument of the theologians of the middle ages—that the Church was so important that people must be "forced to come in." It may well be that health has become the new religion, but the Church has had to face up to the enlightenment—and health care professionals must also accept that the supreme idea of the freedom of the individual should only be circumscribed if one individual's actions damage the rights of another. It is in this context that I turn to the question of tobacco advertising. Nothing is more important than that people should be allowed to make their own decisions, as far as possible.

Does giving the right to one person to decide whether to smoke one brand of cigarette or another infringe the right of any other person? I think not. In certain cases I would approve of restricting advertising in places or in contexts where the young would be particularly likely to see it. In general, I believe that a ban on tobacco advertising would be an infringement of the rights of the adult individual and the companies that manufacture—however much one might disapprove of it—a legal commodity.

All sides in the debate are asking for what is called nowadays a level playing field. None of them means that.

They all want to see their own position triumph, however bumpy the field may be. That is particularly true when the European element enters into the argument.

Why on earth should tobacco advertising be a matter for the European Community? The issue should be dealt with by national Governments. Here is a clear case of subsidiarity—unless one is one of those people who want to change British policy through the Brussels back door.

What of those European Governments who have banned tobacco advertising, while themselves remaining substantial owners of tobacco industries? That is a bogus position to which no British Government should seek to tie themselves.

Moreover, we have been reminded that, between 1976 and 1986, the incidence of smoking in the United Kingdom fell by 29 per cent.—a reduction second only, in Europe, to that in the Netherlands. As the Secretary of State pointed out, the Netherlands, like the United Kingdom, favours a voluntary system of controls on tobacco advertising.

We have also heard that the United Kingdom has, after Denmark and Ireland, the most expensive cigarettes in Europe; but in Spain, where a total advertising ban is proposed, a packet of 20 cigarettes costs only about 40p. That contrasts with the position in our country, where the price mechanism is fixed strongly against the producers. Britain, furthermore, is one of only five European countries that do not grow the dreaded weed. Those that grow it enjoy subsidies under the common agricultural policy, which I regard as entirely unacceptable.

Where is the sense in it? I ask the question especially of those who support the notion that we should ban tobacco advertising in this country under the aegis of the European Community. It is also worth noting that the four EC countries that have nationalised tobacco industries—together with Greece—have the lowest-priced cigarettes in the Common Market. As the Secretary of State said, it would be ludicrous for Britain to take lessons from other countries whose records on the reduction of smoking leave so much to be desired.

Advocates of a ban on tobacco advertising should not lose sight of the wider issues, such as the freedom of the individual and the commercial freedom of speech of companies in the legitimate pursuit of their business. I hope that my party will resist the siren voices that demand that we turn our backs on the advanced and effective voluntary agreement to restrict advertising that we currently operate. I think that it can be said that the Opposition parties see some blatant partisan advantages in that.

For many years now, Conservatives have argued that we should roll back the limits of the state. We have talked about the nanny state, and about how we wish to be rid of nanny. I share that view, especially because I believe that the only eventual loser in the nanny state is the state itself. Let us be more careful about the ends for which we choose to aim, and let us limit ourselves in the means that we try to deploy. Nanny belongs in the nursery of life, not in the corridors of power.

Having said that, however, I must end by observing that, if we must have a nanny, I can think of none more pleasant or acceptable than the present Secretary of State.

8.32 pm

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): The Secretary of State told us of the success—as she put it—of the health service reforms, and advised us to lift our sights above the structural issues in the service; but none of the objectives of the White Paper can be met unless the resources of the health service are spent effectively and the service managed efficiently. I wish to raise a structural issue. I believe that I have every reason to say that money is not being spent effectively and that, both as a cause and as a consequence, management is not efficient.

The day after the House rose for the summer recess, the district auditor published a report on the regional information systems plan, RISP, which was abandoned by Wessex regional health authority in 1990. Between 1982 and 1990, £43 million was spent on the now abandoned computer system. Money was wasted on a vast scale: the exact amount is not known, but the current general manager has estimated the losses at a minimum of £20 million.

That loss is staggering, and the lost opportunity to treat patients or to prevent illness is immense. A BBC South investigation broadcast earlier this evening showed surgeons relying on an Army field hospital at Southampton general hospital because no money was available to repair the roof; yet £20 million has been wasted on a computer system. The district auditor's report revealed mismanagement and suspected malpractice on a massive scale. In 1983, health authority members were told that the scheme would cost £26 million. The officers believed that it would cost £75 million, but did not tell the members because it was apparently deemed politically unacceptable.

In circumstances which are still unexplained, a £21 million contract was awarded to a consortium led by Andersons and involving IBM, although its proposal had originally been ranked fourth in order of merit. The decision was made at an inquorate meeting; members were not told of disagreements among officers; and, according to the district auditor, there was

> "an unacceptable conflict of interest, in that one of the tenderers to whom the contract was eventually awarded would appear to have had access to confidential information concerning rival bids".

I note that there was a member of the IBM board on Wessex regional health authority for much of the 1980s.

At a later stage, £3·3 million was spent on an IBM computer which was not needed. The opportunity to cancel the contract and minimise losses was missed, and the computer sat unused in a Slough warehouse for 18 months. Some Wessex computing functions were transferred to a new company, Wessex Integrated Systems. According to the auditor,

> "all the major decisions were taken by a small group of officers (one of whom was intended to become a director of the company) who were in turn reliant upon the advice of the consultants who later benefited from the decision."

Other computing work was transferred to a company involving AT and T Istel. It is now the subject of police investigations.

Many other failures of management and budgetary control are detailed. For instance, there was over-reliance on consultants—some costing £14,000 per month—and at least £7·7 million being spent on consultancy fees for a project that was subsequently abandoned. There have been conflicts of interest. In one case, an officer advised on

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the appointment of consultants without tender; he then resigned, and came back as a consultant to the firm that had been offered the contract. Later, a consultant seconded from IBM advised against the cancellation of the order for the IBM computer that was not needed.

I have touched on just some of the key problems revealed by the district auditor's report. The RISP disaster is a fully fledged scandal in its own right, but it throws up many more questions. Have such problems been endemic in the national health service? Are proper systems now in place to prevent abuse and mismanagement? Does the NHS ensure that the painful lessons learnt in one place are quickly transmitted to other parts of the service? I believe that the problems have been endemic, and that there is still no evidence of the existence of effective systems of accountability. I believe that the service is still failing to learn the lessons of past disasters.

As a result, not only is money being wasted, but there is a question mark over the information systems on which the Government's own internal market policies depend. There are many other cases of failed projects and poor financial control. A critical audit report is expected any day now on the £2·3 million Healthtrac system in the west midlands. We know that computer systems have been scrapped at Guy's hospital.

It is alarming to note that every major computer failure that has come to light in the health service has done so not because of the strength of the internal audit procedures but because the story has leaked out to the media, and an investigation has subsequently taken place. If magazines such as *Computer Weekly* had not covered such stories, we would not know about them, and we would not know how much money had been wasted. We must ask how many other high-tech skeletons are in the cupboard.

In 1990, the National Audit Office report on managing computer projects in the NHS examined the RISP project, but failed completely to identify the damning evidence now available in the district auditor's reports. The NAO report said that the NHS needed between 4,000 and 5,000 skilled information technology staff to manage its information strategy, but that only 2,000 were in place. As a result, expenditure on consultancy firms was running at £50 million per year. Has there been an improvement? Has there been any monitoring of that objective?

The same report called for the training of 800,000 NHS staff in the use of IT systems. Has that been achieved? The Government promised to publish an information strategy for the NHS in April 1991. As far as the House of Commons Library and the Department of Health have been able to tell me in the past few days, there are still no signs of it, and no signs of the resources that are needed to make such a strategy work.

How much money is being spent on computer hardware and software? According to the *Official Report*, expenditure in England in 1990-91 was £110 million—surely a large proportion of the whole. According to a commercial survey by Romtec, hospitals alone are planning to spend £300 million on hospital information support systems in the coming year. A report by the European Marketing Association puts the figure for all IT expenditure, excluding telecommunications, at £800 million.

Who is right? Do the Government know? According to the *Official Report*, the Government do not collect data on computer expenditure by trust hospitals. The hospital information support systems project was supposed to computerise hospitals at a cost of £2 million to £3 million each. It has turned out to be much more complicated and expensive. Mr. Giorgianni of the computer company HBO is quoted as saying that the Department of Health

> "never put a fence around the projects. The concept has grown from a lizard to a dinosaur."

One project, in Nottingham, is costing £8·5 million.

Finally, there is a fundamental question about the IT strategy itself. Confusing mixtures of megaschemes and smaller schemes are being pursued. Nobody has had the courage to enforce standards in information systems across the health service to ensure that one machine and one system can talk to another machine or another system. It is likely that many millions of pounds have been wasted as a direct result of NHS reforms, as systems developed for a different style of management in the health service have had to be scrapped in order to respond to the new internal market reforms.

Without effective information systems, the internal market certainly cannot work. This is not a technical management issue. It has its roots in the pace of change of ideologically driven reforms. That change has taken place without an attempt having been made to assess the resources needed, to provide them, or to monitor their use effectively. For all their talk of efficiency, the Government have created a climate of irresponsible management, which has been exploited by the computer industry. That should now be investigated. I have today written to the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee urging him to do just that.

In 1987 Mr. John Garfield, consultant neurosurgeon and chairman of the regional medical advisory committee, wrote to the regional general manager of Wessex regional health authority saying that his committee considered

> "that the past and projected expenditure on RISP will jeopardise services for direct patient care."

That warning was ignored and £43 million was spent, a large part of which was wasted. If a similar letter were written today by somebody who was concerned about patient care, would it make any difference? Would that person be listened to, any more than were the doctors in Wessex when they warned of a disaster which has led to the pouring of taxpayers' and patients' money down the drain?

8.42 pm

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): I welcome the White Paper. In doing so, I intend to approach the debate from a different angle. I declare an interest as a retailer. I sell foods that we eat and cigarettes that some people—a minority of people in this country—smoke. I have been involved in my family's retail business since I was tall enough and smart enough to operate a till. I got to know how consumers think. The White Paper emphasises health promotion and recognises the fact that the health of the nation is the wealth of the nation—that people are our greatest national asset and should be encouraged to look after themselves.

A gentleman in his eighties told me that, had he known that he was going to live for so long, he would have looked after himself better when he was younger. Is not that ever the case? We expect to live longer now, so we ought to look at how we can improve the quality of our lives. A key target in the White Paper is the reduction of coronary heart disease and strokes, the single biggest cause of premature deaths in Britain in 1991. Another aim is to reduce obesity, a condition to which some hon. Members would have to plead guilty, although when I say that I am careful not to look at any individual Member. Another good aim is to reduce the energy derived from saturated fatty acids and fat.

Alongside that, however, is the danger that, in providing the information necessary for consumers to make the right choices, the whole issue will be over-simplified—that it will become a question of good foods versus bad foods, when all that is really needed is a balanced diet. A Mars a day helps us to work, rest and play, but 20 Mars a day would probably kill us after a while. We need to strike the right balance. The clear labelling of goods should not be so over-simplified that it is reduced to decribing foods as good or bad. All that the consumer needs is more information.

There appear to be many experts giving their advice on certain food products, advice that is contradictory and that ends up confusing the consumer. More education is needed in our schools. School dinners have been mentioned time and time again. I hope that they will receive the attention they deserve. We need to balance our food requirements, not directives that simply state that chips are bad for us and yoghurts are good for us: an excess of either would probably damage us. Schools have to be the key to a healthy future.

The pilot assessment schemes mentioned in the White Paper are essential if we are to monitor the progress that is made. If those schemes work, we shall need to widen them immediately. That goes along with good sports exercise, which was mentioned in the excellent maiden speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe). We look forward to hearing from him on many occasions.

The fact that cigarette consumption has declined is to be welcomed. That decline has taken place during the last 13 years of Conservative government, and now accounts for less than 35 per cent. of my turnover, whereas in the 1960s it was nearer to 60 per cent. Cigarettes are a price-sensitive product. Taxation levels have worked. Cigarettes cost 41p for 20 in Spain—a ridiculous price. However, as I believe in subsidiarity, I have to say that they must get on with it. If one refers to subsidiarity though, one must also consider the £1 billion subsidy to tobacco growers throughout Europe. That is insane, for it affects each and every one of us.

I do not believe that advertising of tobacco products, in their regulated form, or tobacco sponsorship leads people to smoke. It may lead to some brand switching. I do not think, however, that anybody who watches the Embassy-sponsored snooker championship gets out of his seat at the end of it to go and buy 20 Regal, or that anybody who reads the message from Reg on our billboards—that moron-type character who is leading the Regal advertising campaign—will be enticed to smoke cigarettes. The message underneath the advertisement, that smoking kills, would persuade me not to smoke.

We must adopt a balanced approach. If we do away with the billboard advertisements, we also do away with advertisements that tell people that smoking kills. We want education, not legislation. Retail businesses that rely for their core profit on tobacco products must be few and far between. I suggest that they should do what we have done—diversify as much as they possibly can away from tobacco products. If the successful trend of the last 13 years under this Conservative Government continues, their profits will be even further reduced.

If we are given full information about the contents of food products, we shall be able to make the right choices as consumers. The right choices will lead to a healthy nation, which we all want to see. The approach adopted in the White Paper will lead to what we want to see.

8.48 pm

Ms. Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): When I held my weekly surgery last Monday I met a lady whose circumstances were typical of those of many of the people who come to see me every week. She came to my surgery with her husband and three children. Both she and her husband are jobless, poor and living in accommodation that is not big enough for them and their family. Two of their children have asthma. The flat is infested with cockroaches, and that morning she had taken a cockroach out of her baby's mouth as she was eating breakfast.

For my constituents, the debate on "The Health of the Nation" must be measured against the extent to which the quality of their lives and the opportunities for their children will be improved. The solutions to the economic and social difficulties facing so many families I represent are way beyond fine tuning aspects of their life style. Their circumstances demand collective and whole-hearted solutions, which only the Government can deliver. The health of the nation will be measured by its results, not by its fine words.

In my constituency, twice as many babies die within the first year of birth as in Tunbridge Wells, which is about 50 miles down the motorway, and three times as many die as in the Prime Minister's constituency of Huntingdon. The reason why perinatal mortality is much higher in my constituency has nothing to do with the quality of the maternity and ante-natal services that are available. King's College hospital has one of the finest neo-natal units in Europe and obstetric services of which we should be very proud; but so many women who are admitted to King's to be delivered come from homes that are damp, they have had inadequate ante-natal care, they are poor and they have not been able to enjoy a good diet in the months leading up to their baby's birth.

Deprivation and perinatal mortality go hand in hand. Of course we must celebrate the fact that huge strides have been made in reducing the average national rates of perinatal mortality, but the national average obscures wide regional variations, and the rate of perinatal mortality in my constituency is still one of the highest in the country. My constituents also experience the high rates of heart disease, lung cancer and sexually transmitted diseases. All are related to poverty and the physical deprivation of the part of Camberwell that I serve.

It is ironic that one of my constituency's most respected and well-used family health clinics was closed a year ago by the health authority, which was required to make savings in preparation for becoming a trust. Until news of its closure became known locally, the Amott road clinic was well known, accessible and a point of access to family planning, contraceptive advice, well woman services and ante-natal services, which that deprived population of inner London so desperately needed and without which

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the link between the aspirations of the health of the nation and improvements in the quality of life will never be achieved.

I am pleased to see that attention has been given to the mechanisms by which rhetoric is turned into practical improvements, but we must wait and see whether the device of a Cabinet Committee will be adequate. Some say that housing and income in improving the health of the nation are so important that the lead should lie with the Department of the Environment rather than the Department of Health. Certainly, if the Government do not commit the money to will the ends, this will simply remain a rhetorical exercise, unfulfilled in its promise—certainly to the people I represent.

Like many other hon. Members, I should like to deal briefly with the issue of smoking and the Government's clear responsibility to act in the face of the absolutely unanswerable evidence. It is worth bearing in mind the scale of the smoking epidemic and of the devastation that smoking causes. According to statistical probability, in a roomful of 1,000 smokers, one person will be murdered or will die violently and five or six people will be killed in road traffic accidents, but 300 people will die because of smoking or smoking-related illnesses. The failure to take the most effective possible action in the face of the overwhelming body of medical and scientific evidence is nothing short of negligent.

It is particularly important that we target the need to stop children from smoking. Many of us will have taken part in the launch of the Health Education Authority's profile of smoking throughout the nation—I certainly did. Nine out of 10 young people under the age of 15 have smoked. Smoking is a habit acquired in late childhood, and for two out of three adults becomes established for life. It is very difficult to give up smoking once one has the habit.

It is important that we invest resources in stopping children smoking. I was struck by the remarks of a constituent who told me how his daughter had asked to be taken to buy some sweets "from the smoking shop". The sweetshop's canopy is sponsored by one tobacco firm, and stickers all around the door are sponsored by another. One finds out whether the shop is open or closed by looking at another set of tobacco advertising stickers. A ban on cigarette advertising and tobacco sponsorship of sporting events is undoubtedly one of the most constructive steps that we can take to stop children starting to smoke. For the Government to ban such advertising would probably be the most significant step that they could take towards improving the health of the next generation.

8.58 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): In the context of the White Paper I should like to speak about the proposals in the Tomlinson report, which will be published tonight, for the wholesale closure of some of our London hospitals. Of course, the targets in the White Paper are not achievable except within the context of general practitioner care and hospital care.

Early in the debate the Secretary of State implied that the proposed closures would have universal support. She may be in for a surprise. Of course there are historical anomalies in the pattern of health provision in London—generally speaking, we have suffered from low standards of primary and community care—but in truth the proposed closures are the inevitable result of a Government strategy motivated primarily not by the health of the nation but by the need to cap costs.

In the run-up to the general election it was clear that under the new market system introduced by the Government the London teaching hospitals were coming under pressure. Of course, the Government queried not the new market mechanisms but the existence of our teaching hospitals. They were clearly terrified that one of those hospitals would collapse before the election, so they took short-term steps.

There were strong administrative reasons for the Tomlinson report, but I believe that the Government will use it as a device——

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The hon. Lady does not yet know what the Tomlinson report will say, but she may have read the King's Fund independent report. Does she feel that her remarks are equally relevant to that report?

Ms. Abbott: I shall come to the King's Fund report later in my speech. If I may be allowed to continue, I was saying that the Government will use the Tomlinson report as an excuse to close hospitals and to present an essentially cost-driven strategy as something else.

We are already hearing—we shall hear a lot more in the coming weeks—about London's "redundant" hospitals, and I want to ask whether those hospitals really are surplus to our current requirement. In so doing, I shall indeed refer to the King's Fund report.

It is easy to look at a computer printout and say that we in London have more hospitals per head than any other part of the country. I suspect that a computer printout may be all that the Secretary of State has looked at. I put it to her—thousands of Londoners will be doing the same over the next three months—that those figures are misleading. In London there is the enduring problem that the population is underestimated, both in censuses and in the electoral registers, due to homelessness, shifting population, refugees, immigrants, and so on. At the general election I found that 2,000 members of my electorate had gone missing. In that there is no substantial loss of population in Hackney; those people are simply not accounted for in the official lists and figures.

The Secretary of State and her colleagues in government have refused to accept—and will continue to do so in the debates on the Tomlinson report—that inner London is different from the rest of the country, different even from other inner city areas. We have more elderly people living alone, more one-parent families, more households lacking basic amenities, huge numbers of commuters—1·3 million of them—and huge numbers of homeless people. It would be more helpful if, instead of using mathematical averages, the Government compared like with like. If we compare inner London with other inner city areas—in Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Liverpool and Manchester—we find that, far from having a superabundance of hospital beds, London has fewer beds than inner city districts in those other provincial centres. As a deprived inner city area, London is less well served than the others.

The Secretary of State referred to the King's Fund report. I shall quote from another King's Fund report:

> "Our results suggest that there are no more beds in London than one would expect, given the nature of London's health districts."

I hope that the Secretary of State will quote that in the forthcoming debate on the Tomlinson report, rather than using crude figures for beds per head of population.

In the coming months we shall hear about a declining need for London's hospitals. Let the Government tell that to the nurses at Bart's, with their packed wards, and to the GPs in Hackney who know about the huge waiting lists. Bart's is one of my local hospitals, and it is threatened with closure. The Secretary of State and other Tory politicians will be telling us how such hospitals serve a non-existent or vanishing population. Yet Bart's hospital serves almost 250,000 people within a two-mile radius—if we include commuters that rises to almost 500,000 people—and its 24-hour accident and emergency service is always busy. If our hospitals are so redundant, why are there 150,000 people on the waiting lists in London? The problem with the teaching hospitals is not that they provide too many beds but that there is not enough money to fund Londoners being treated in them.

We shall hear that teaching hospitals are too expensive. Their costs have been inflated because they are forced to include the notional value of their sites, although they were paid for hundreds of years ago. General practitioner fund holders and health fund managers outside London increasingly send their patients to local general hospitals instead of to London teaching hospitals. If consumers are to make an informed choice, the Secretary of State should provide more information.

We do not hear enough about outturn figures in the NHS or about the mortality rates of some of the procedures practised in our teaching hospitals and in hospitals outside London. If we had more outturn figures, and if we knew more about mortality rates, we might find that, although it is cheaper to do some things in our general hospitals, the outturn is not necessarily so good as in some of our top teaching hospitals.

The Minister will tell us about out-dated facilities. At Bart's £66 million has been spent on capital developments in the past five years. We have beautiful new children's wards paid for largely by fund raising. We have some of the most technically advanced operating theatres in Europe. There are valuable specialties at Bart's which will be lost if it is shut. Those specialties include child cancers, respiratory medicine, diabetes and low birth weight research.

There will be an effect on medical training. Bart's has one of the best medical schools in London. In three of the past five years, Bart's students have been top in the final qualifying examinations.

Apart from many misleading ideas about redundant hospitals, empty beds and declining needs, the Secretary of State will tell us about the need to develop primary care and community care in place of hospital care. Let us be realistic. The Secretary of State knows as well as we do that in the context of the current public expenditure round the likelihood of money being available for sufficient primary and community care is nil. If the Secretary of State goes into the three months' consultation on the hospital closures giving airy promises of increased funding of primary care and community care, she will be perpetrating a fraud.

Some have spoken of raising money from the sale of the sites. The Secretary of State must know that many of the big hospital sites in London have been found to be unsaleable.

Bart's is part of a trust with Homerton hospital, which is bang in the middle of my constituency. Despite all its problems, Homerton hospital maintains a high standard of care. If Bart's is shut, the standard of care at Homerton will necessarily drop because Homerton has relied very much on consultants and doctors based at Bart's. Conservative Members shake their heads. I had my baby last year at Homerton hospital. I had the benefit of the care and help of Bart's-based obstetricians, gynaecologists and doctors. Like thousands of ordinary Hackney women and girls, I had access to the finest consultants and doctors one can imagine. If Bart's is shut, Homerton will inevitably decline into a second-rate, inner city hospital.

The employment aspects of shutting our city hospitals are of absolutely no interest to the Secretary of State. Hospitals such as Bart's, St. Thomas's and Guy's employ thousands of local people, especially women. In areas such as Hackney, where industry has gone completely down the drain, the only two major employers left are the local authority and the health authority. The closures suggested by the Tomlinson report will be devastating to the local economy and especially to local women, many of them black or from minority groups.

I have a direct question for the Minister. I am trying to do some research on the contribution that generations of nurses from the Commonwealth have made to the British health service. I wrote to the Minister some months ago asking for help and any information that he had. I know that the Department of Health has information because I spoke to one of its statisticians. I know that it has extensive figures of nurses who came from the Commonwealth in the 1950s and 1960s. I received a letter signed by the Minister saying that he had no information on Commonwealth or black nurses. That is obviously untrue. I will be seeking a meeting with the Minister and I hope that he will be more helpful then. It is an important project. A whole generation of women gave their lives to the health service and I want to document that service.

I seriously ask Conservative Members whether we have learnt the lessons of the 1980s, especially from what happened with the closure of the long-stay mental facilities outside London. When the proposals came forward to close those long-stay medical facilities, we were told the same things that we are being told about the teaching hospitals. We were told that they were old-fashioned facilities, that medical practice had moved on, that those people should be cared for in the community, and that that was the onward march of progress.

I was a Labour councillor on Tory-controlled Westminster city council in the 1980s. We went to the Government and said, "Unless you provide us with the money, there is no possibility of adequate training and care being provided." The Government ignored us. The long-stay hospitals were shut and we see the results of that on our streets every night. Mentally ill and unhappy people are sleeping on the streets because closures were forced through, allegedly for medical and managerial reasons, but in reality to cut costs.

The Secretary of State for Health and Conservative Members may think that the closure of a whole string of London teaching hospitals will be greeted with universal acclaim. I am afraid that they are wrong. My mother and

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many of my female relatives worked in London hospitals. Like many Londoners, I have a close personal relationship with those hospitals, not just as a customer or patient but in terms of my family and the people I know who have worked in them. We shall not take kindly to the wholesale closure of our hospitals on the basis of misleading arguments about numbers of beds per head of population. We shall not take kindly to the closure of our hospitals on the basis of groundless policies of more money for primary and community care. The proposals in the Tomlinson report for the closure of so many of our teaching hospitals are a disgrace. They do not reflect the reality of health and medical needs in inner London.

In the past 10 days we have seen how much of a battering the reputation of the President of the Board of Trade has taken in respect of his attempts to close 31 pits. That battering will be as nothing to the battering of the reputation of the Secretary of State for Health if she goes ahead with the misbegotten plans to slaughter so many of our great teaching hospitals.

9.11 pm

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): After a decade or more of a Government wedded to free market principles, I am delighted to see that Adam Smith and the "Wealth of Nations" is giving way to "The Health of the Nation".

I welcome the emphasis in the White Paper on health rather than health care. The last Labour Government were committed to that emphasis. That was one of the reasons why the Black report—one of the first reports on the health of the nation—was commissioned. It is a great shame that that report was buried more than 10 years ago, to resurface in policy terms only at this late stage. I also welcome the emphasis on health outcomes and not just health processes.

Much reference has been made to tobacco advertising. When the Health Education Authority published its book last week on the smoking epidemic in the United Kingdom, it asked me to help with a local launch. At that launch, York health authority asked me to sign a pledge calling on the Government to ban tobacco advertising. In these days when health authorities are under the rule and diktat of the management executive and of Ministers, I should like an assurance from the Minister that he will not retaliate and victimise York health authority by abolishing it.

There was no mention in the Green Paper of health inequalities. In the last few pages of the White Paper, there is reference to "socio-economic groups." It refers not to health inequalities, but to health variations, and states:

> "The reasons for these variations are by no means fully understood. They are likely to be the result of a complex interplay of genetic, biological, social, environmental, cultural and behavioural factors."

And so they may be, but could they not also be a result of poor housing, poverty and unemployment? Why is that not in the White Paper?

The process by which key areas have been selected and reduced to the small number in the White Paper is exceptionally unclear. It is not transparent. During the process from Green Paper to White Paper, some key areas such as diabetes, hospital-acquired infection, breast feeding, food safety, health and environment have been excluded—perhaps for good reasons or perhaps for bad reasons, but there is no clear explanation of those reasons. Before we talk about priorities in selected key areas, we should know what criteria are being used to select them.

Two criteria, in particular, are missing. One is the principle of equity—that health interventions should be based on health needs equally for people with similar health needs. That was spelt out by the Faculty of Public Health Medicine in 1991 as one of the key principles in the World Health Organisation's "health for all" programme, and it should be stated explicitly and form part of the health for all strategy for England.

The second missing criterion is cost effectiveness, which is vital in a health service that is strapped for cash. That it is missing is all the more surprising because on 8 July when the Secretary of State made her statement on the day on which the White Paper was published, in answer to a point that I made she said:

> "By concentrating on prevention . . . we can achieve health gain cost-effectively . . . priority will be given to the key areas, chosen because through them we can most effectively improve the health of the nation."

Yet cost effectiveness does not appear in the selection process. The costs issue is extremely important. Also on 8 July, I posed a very straight question when I asked:

> "has the Department costed these plans?"—*[Official Report, 8 July 1992; Vol. 211, c. 351.]*

I asked the Secretary of State whether there would be new money to implement them. That question goes to the heart of the issue. If there is no new money, the implementation will either stall or take place only at the expense of cuts in existing health services. The costs are real. During the AIDS campaign, a leaflet was delivered to every door in the country—at a cost, according to the Office of Health Economics, of £20 million. The Centre for Health Economics in my constituency of York and the York Health Economics Consortium estimate that the resources for even a modest—their word—smoking strategy is £20 million to £30 million a year. In its briefing for the debate, the House of Commons Library states:

> "Not all aspects of the strategy have significant financial implications but some do."

When we add them all together, the costs will be high —millions for AIDS, millions for smoking, and millions for other priorities in the document. It will cost hundreds of millions altogether. That has to be funded by new money, or serious problems will arise. I ask the Minister to spell out the missing part of the White Paper: what finance will be provided to bring in the new benefits? Will the finance have to come from cuts in other national health services?

9.17 pm

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): I congratulate the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) on his maiden speech. I too am making my maiden from the Dispatch Box this evening. The Opposition entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman's assertion about the value of a national health service. That assertion is beyond dispute. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that we dispute with the party that he represents how the national health service is financed and run. We agree also that the best way to make sure that the national health service is used properly is to stop people being ill in the first place.

I thank my hon. Friends for their support and their excellent contributions covering the very important issues of health care and the health of the nation.

The debate is held in the shadow of the leaked proposals of the Tomlinson report. Those proposals will butcher the health care services in London. The proposals suggest the closure of St. Bartholomew's, Charing Cross, Queen Charlotte's, the royal ear, nose and throat hospital and the tropical diseases hospital. They propose the merger of St. Thomas's and Guy's and the merger of the Middlesex and University College hospitals, as well as cuts at St. Mary's Paddington and sales of part of its site. They suggest the rationalisation of the Royal Brompton and Marsden hospitals, possibly on the Charing Cross site, with a consultation period—this will comfort them—of three months.

What price the health of Londoners who will be affected by those drastic cuts? The Government have an ideological commitment to the market and an ideological obsession that has failed the economy, jobs and industry. That obsession will destroy our national health service. The market is supposed to find the cheapest, most efficient alternatives for consumers. Are those closures what the market will mean to Londoners? The market will find alternatives that maximise profits and the position of shareholders, then make it acceptable to consumers only because there is no alternative.

The market is fragmenting the national health service. It is encouraging competition, commercialisation and the creeping privatisation of care. The Government are preventing the national health service from co-operating, collaborating, and sharing experiences and expertise for the benefit of those who wish to use the services. Market competition is the priority, and strategic planning goes by the board.

There is much evidence to suggest that the market and the Government reforms are making the national health service more expensive. The Department of Health's figures show a tenfold increase in the cost to the national health service of general managers. Salaries increased from £25 million in 1987 to £250 million last year. The Office of Health Economics' figures show that the number of nurses and midwives per thousand of the population is set to drop to its lowest level for 10 years.

At a recent conference, Mr. Evans, the professor of geriatric medicine at Oxford university, said that one fifth of coronary care units have an upper age limit for admission. To refuse treatment on the ground of age is discrimination. If patients could pay, I am sure that their money would not be refused on the basis of their age.

A hospital described by the Prime Minister as a model of efficiency and consumer service announced ward closures and the cancellation of non-urgent surgery the day after his visit. The 640-bed hospital in Penarth was one of the 36 public service organisations to win the first charter mark award. Hospitals should beware of the charter mark award, as it may herald their closure.

Many targets should be set for improving the health of the nation, but the most important and frequent cause of ill health is poverty and inequality. Florence Nightingale understood the links between poor health and poor housing. In drafting "The Health of the Nation", the Secretary of State has demonstrated that she does not understand the links between ill health and social deprivation. Health should mean a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease, important though that is. But the policy of "The Health of the Nation" can be summed up in one phrase: the absence of Government where they are needed and the interference of Government where they are not.

The most glaring absence of Government in current health policy stems from the denial of the link between povery and ill health. This Government do not believe in society; they see the country as a multitude of individual consumers. This philosophy translated into the health of the nation means that the point is not to change society where bad health is caused but to influence individuals so that they can choose, if they can afford it, a different life style that will improve their health.

Mr. Trend: It will not have escaped the hon. Lady's attention that Conservatives are fed up with hearing the parrot-like cries of "poverty". That is too simplistic a solution to a complicated problem. I will put to her another proposition that she may find too simplistic, but it is a black and white one.

I recently went to Hong Kong, where the housing is cramped, the working conditions are poor, and the health services less extensive than here; where there is greater pollution and humidity; where the people are overcrowded and suffer all the stress of a metropolitan society—yet infant mortality there is lower than ours and life expectancy higher. How does she explain that?

Ms. Primarolo: Just as the Government cannot produce an expert to prove that coal is more expensive, so they cannot produce an expert who will deny that there is a link between poverty and ill health.

The strategy of the White Paper could almost be said to run as follows. Now that poverty has been abolished—this fits in with what the hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Mr. Trend) has said—unemployment cannot be helped and housing problems have been solved, health promotion is just a question of good management.

Mildred Blaxter's recent work has demonstrated that people living on low incomes are exposed to multiple deprivations which put their health at risk. I refer to working conditions, diet, accidents, living conditions, environment and smoking, to name but a few. People with higher incomes, she says, are less likely to be exposed to these multiple risks because they are more likely to be able to afford good housing and a decent diet and to be able to live in a nice environment.

The Government's approach—of encouraging good life style practices only—may help the few people who are better off, but those suffering from the deprivations of low income need a great deal more doing for them. The Government need clear evidence, they say, of what causes ill health, but still the Department of Health will not produce figures on the effect of income deprivation and working conditions on health. So the Government deny the link but will not produce the figures.

Dr. Liam Fox: Surely the hon. Lady is not telling us that the huge increase in immunisations since the introduction of the GP contract—an increase in all types of social area—is not to be welcomed?

Ms. Primarolo: The hon. Gentleman will have to wait till I reach the relevant part of my speech.

Just over a decade ago, we had what could be described as a great debate on the nation's health, or at least we attempted to start it. The then Labour Government, so often quoted by the current Government but fast

[Ms. Primarolo]

disappearing from the memories of many of us because it was all so long ago, commissioned the Black report on health inequalities. I am sure hon. Members will recall that the Conservative Government hushed up the findings of that report as soon as they possibly could because it revealed the incontrovertible link between poverty and ill health. Sir Douglas Black found that deprivation and inequalities in income, wealth, housing and employment added up to thousands of lost years as a result of avoidable disabilities, chronic sickness and premature death.

Black recommended substantial Government intervention to abolish child poverty, to provide children with free school milk and school meals and to improve the housing stock. Countless studies since Black have reaffirmed the causal link between low income and poor health. If one's income is low, one's children are more likely to be stillborn or to die within the first year of life. Parents of those children are also more likely to die young.

Of the 70 major causes of death in women, 54 are more common in women married to men in social classes 4 and 5. The growth of poverty and poor health among pregnant women is causing more babies to be born under weight and vulnerable to illness and death. Infant and perinatal mortality is rising in a number of regions. The former chief medical officer, Sir Donald Acheson, when announcing his annual report last year, merely summarised the weight of that evidence when he remarked:

> "where people are in a position to exercise greater choice in their housing, environment, employment, leisure activity and consumption generally, this has tended to be beneficial to their health. By contrast, those not able to exercise greater choice because of low income, lack of education or lack of capacity to take the initiative tend to suffer more ill health."

In the period since the Black report, no other country has seen income inequalities widen so sharply as the United Kingdom. In 1979 under 6 million people lived on or below the state poverty line. In 1987, the number had doubled to 12·2 million, which is nothing to be proud of. Wage inequality is wider now than it has been for more than 100 years when the figures were first collected. The bottom 10 per cent. of male manual workers earn only 63 per cent. of average pay, compared with 69 per cent. in 1886.

More families are suffering from the privations of unemployment and more are living in temporary lodgings that are unfit for habitation. That has a direct bearing on the immunisation programme, as do the poverty and nutritional surveys, which show that there is a direct link between poverty and poor diet, which leads to a greater likelihood of ill health. Poor families go hungry because they cannot afford food, or they are forced to buy unhealthy food that gives them more calories for their money. As a result, evidence is emerging of an increase in obscenity—I mean obesity.

Mr. Tredd: It is an obscenity.

Ms. Primarolo: Yes, the figures are an obscenity, because they prove that low-income children have an increased likelihood of heart disease in their later lives.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Primarolo: No, because I must finish by a certain time.

As a result of Government policy, the number of children taking school meals has dropped from 4·9 million to just 2·8 million. One in six secondary school children have no hot evening meal—the majority of those children are from poor backgrounds. Many children go to school without eating breakfast, and the midday meal is the only substantial one of the day for many of them. A whole range of evidence shows the link between poor diet and health problems associated with growth and development, tooth decay, obesity, anaemia, bowel disorders, heart disease and cancer, yet the Government steadfastly refuse to revitalise school meals to improve the nation's health.

The Government acknowledged the importance of housing in the Green Paper, but it does not appear in "The Health of the Nation". Yet, as a direct result of the Government's policies, 11,000 homeless families are living in so-called bed-and-breakfast housing. If one provided suitable family accommodation instead of bed and breakfast, one would tackle head-on a range of health problems which stem directly from that inhuman form of accommodation.

For example, birth weight is the most important determinant of a child's health, yet 25 per cent. of babies born to families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation are of low birth weight. That compares with a 7 per cent. national average. Living in dangerously cramped rooms, often with little or no cooking facilities and no play facilities, for as long as seven years in some cases, bed-and-breakfast children are more prone to sickness and to respiratory illnesses, as well as psychological and emotional health problems.

More generally, as housing repairs dwindle, the lack of local authority funds means that children are living in damp houses and falling victim to the respiratory and bronchial illnesses which go with it. Tuberculosis has increased by 10 per cent. this year.

The Government will not take direct action to alleviate the poverty which causes so much ill health and premature death. They have to get rid of free dental and eye tests. They have increased prescription charges and have used GP contracts to pour health promotion money into better-off areas, instead of dealing with acute health needs. That is not good enough.

The Government have confined themselves to setting targets that their civil servants in Whitehall can measure statistically. As the Government choose the topics for which statistics are developed and collected, it is hardly surprising that the process has enabled them to back winners.

The nation's health is divided by a bankrupt, free-market Government, whose policies beget unemployment, which begets poverty and in turn ill-health, and whose health policy is increasing the same free-market business approach, which gives choice and quality only to those who can afford it and neglects those who cannot. No other area of policy shows more clearly the difference between Labour's philosophy and that of the Government.

Conservative Governments have accelerated the causes of ill health by widening the gulf between rich and poor and ignoring it in "The Health of the Nation". We would put the eradication of health inequalities at the core of our health promotion strategy to create a health policy which would be more than the candy floss described by my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon), more than merely a series of targets in backing winners, a policy that really tackled ill health—the issue raised by the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne. We shall ensure the highest quality of support and treatment, free at the time of need, with the greatest choice and flexibility through the national health service, which has been shown to be the most cost-effective in the world.

The Government choose commercialisation, which inevitably leads to a two-tier system based on ability to pay and the rationing of ever more scarce resources between competing units. "The Health of the Nation" is a missed opportunity. The Government could have tackled the major cause of ill health in our society—the poverty that they have created—and it is a scandal that they have not done so.

9.38 pm

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): I begin by welcoming the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) to her new responsibilities. As she knows, I have had mine for a few months longer than she has had hers. However, we are coming to the Dispatch Boxes as comparative newcomers, at least in our present area of responsibility. Before we have too many more debates I think that we shall have to try to find some common ground of language and understanding on what it is that we are to debate. I shall come to that in a moment.

We have had a good debate. A range of views have been expressed, and for the most part in a constructive way. I hope that that will be part of the continuing debate in the months ahead.

If I had believed everything that the hon. Member for Bristol, South said in the context of the policies of a democratic party offering itself to the electorate, that party would not have stood a chance of getting elected. The fact is that the Conservative party was elected. That happened because our policies bear little relationship to the hon. Lady's remarks.

Some of us have reflected with nostalgia on the absence of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). Earlier, however, he told the country that the general election was to be a referendum on health. That was his view and the view of the Labour party; it was not our view. The people made their views clear on the health care of the country. The hon. Member for Bristol, South reflected her party's pro-referendum policy; unfortunately for her, the world has moved on since then.

I am sorry that the hon. Lady could not bring herself to welcome, for example, the fact that in the past year 7·2 per cent. more patients have been treated in national health service hospitals than during the previous year. That statistic represents tens of thousands of patients who have benefited from health care. I should have thought that the hon. Lady would welcome that, just as she would welcome the fact that 8·2 per cent. more patients have been treated in trust hospitals. Unfortunately, she did not do so. I can understand, however, why she did not.

Mr. Bayley: Will the Minister give way?

Dr. Mawhinney: I should prefer to get started before giving way.

The hon. Member for Bristol, South had to follow the lead of the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett). I was interested to hear what he had to say. I hope that he will accept it in the spirit in which it is intended if I welcome him to the debate and offer my congratulations to him on assuming his new responsibilities. I must say, however, that he redefined the NHS in terms that I did not begin to recognise. He talked about the responsibilities of virtually every other member of the Cabinet except those of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. The nation is spending about £100 million a day in the NHS.

I am sure that my right hon. Friend is flattered that the hon. Gentleman thinks that she should be the Secretary of State for the Environment, for Social Services and for Education as well as for Health. The fact is, however, that the NHS and the responsibilities that my right hon. Friend discharges so effectively and to such good effect are the issues that we are debating. I shall take up the point made by the hon. Members for Brightside and for Bristol, South about inequalities later in my reply.

We shall listen carefully to everything that the hon. Member for Brightside says. We shall sift his remarks for information, truth, helpful suggestions and constructive ideas. I must say, however, that we shall listen to him against the background of Sheffield and the National Union of Public Employees. We shall have to draw some conclusions from that.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) on becoming the Chairman of the Select Committee on Health. I welcome the considerable significance that she attached, as we do, to the importance of developing healthy alliances. She said that she would welcome an annual report on the progress on "The Health of the Nation". I shall be happy to think about that. I undertake to draw her comments about a maternity report, and especially those about post-natal depression, to the attention of my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State, who has particular responsibility within the Department for those matters.

I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) on his maiden speech. First, I thank him for paying generous tributes to his predecessors from both sides of the House. He will discover that such generosity of spirit is always appreciated by his colleagues. He spoke movingly of his constituency, and rightly, so. Whatever our differences in the House, all of us have an attachment to our constituencies. That is right and proper, and he reflected that in his speech.

We shall, of course, pay particular attention to what my hon. Friend said about the need for the Health Education Authority and the Sports Council to work more closely together. He might even have been suggesting that they go further than that. He has unparalleled experience, not only from his previous activities, glorious as those were, but from having served on both of those authorities. I shall pay careful attention to what he has said.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley) for his welcome of outcomes. I hope that he will take the opportunity of having a word with his hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), who, unfortunately, is not in her place at the moment, because she had her usual rant on the subject and the House will have heard her unwillingness to acknowledge——

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): The Minister would not have said that if my hon. Friend had been here.

Dr. Mawhinney: Yes, I would.

[Dr. Mawhinney]

The House will have heard the hon. Lady's unwillingness to acknowledge the fact that 9 per cent. more of her constituents have been treated in the trusts in Crewe.

Mr. Bayley: If the strategy works and the health of the nation improves, will the Minister be celebrating at the Dispatch Box the fact that fewer people will be going to hospital? The fact that more and more people year after year need hospital treatment reflects, in part at least, the point made by my hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) and for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) that the more people there are who live in poverty and who eat a bad diet, the more people there will be who need their health to be repaired.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman felt it necessary to make that contribution. I listened carefully to his original speech and with more appreciation than I did to that.

I understand the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) about the community care policy. I hope that she will join others on both sides of the House in helping to ensure, through the closer collaboration of health authorities and local authorities, the private sector and general practitioners, that the community care policy is a success, not for the greater glory of the Government, Members of Parliament or local politicians, but for the benefit of the frail elderly for whom it will be an important initiative.

On a personal level, I agree with the hon. Lady that there is probably still more benefit to be derived from expanding and exploring further complementary medicines.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) and welcome his comments on the new hospital that has just been opened in his constituency. I particularly identified with what he had to say, because the Edith Cavell hospital in Peterborough was promised by the last Labour Government and was killed off when the then Chancellor of the Exchequer had to come back from Heathrow to talk to the International Monetary Fund. That hospital was built under this Administration and in that sense my experience is identical to that of my hon. Friend.

I listened to everything that Opposition Members had to say on the health service against the background of the knowledge that for years my constituents were deprived of the hospital care which they should have had and which they needed because the Labour Government incompetently ran the British economy.

The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) made an important speech and I hope that he will accept it in the spirit in which it is offered when I say that it was also a moving speech. I take his point about the importance of the home safety committees. He will be interested to know that, as part of the implementation of "The Health of the Nation", we are setting up a task force on accidents. I will ensure that the task force's terms of reference include learning from the experience of home safety committees.

The hon. Gentleman's comments, particularly from his own experience, about the need for bereavement counselling are well taken. It is an element in the health service that has developed over the years and is better than it was, but the hon. Gentleman said that there is room for further improvement—and I would not want this debate to end with the hon. Gentleman thinking that I had not carefully noted that point.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox) for his comments. He is able, as a former general practitioner, to help the House understand that the new GP contracts have begun to bring improvements to the standard of GP care throughout the country, though there is more to be done. My hon. Friend was right to emphasise the importance of developing primary care in terms of medical education.

The remarks of the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott)—and I am sorry that she is not in her place—about the Tomlinson report told us more about the hon. Lady than the report. Although she has not read it, she felt free to condemn it. People will draw their own conclusions when Labour Members—and I regret that the hon. Member for Bristol, South fell into the same trap—display such a knee-jerk reaction. They will not read the arguments, reflect on them, or consult but simply leap to conclusions.

We will read the Tomlinson report. We will listen to anything that people have to say about it, consult, and then reach conclusions. We will not behave as Labour politicians behaved this evening, and leap to conclusions that arise from prejudice and lack of knowledge and understanding, and dismiss out of hand the work of people who spent considerable time producing arguments for us all to consider.

As to tobacco, it is important to understand the difference between an end and the means of achieving that end. My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne stressed the importance of people being able to make informed choices in the delivery of health care. I very much agree. Right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House made the point that when it comes to health, Governments —like everyone else—must rely on persuasion, education and information in convincing people to change their life style and behaviour. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made that point strongly at the beginning of the debate, and I make it again equally strongly now.

Mr. Blunkett: Does the Minister agree that the £100 million spent on tobacco advertising not only influences those who already smoke but has a direct impact on the lives and well-being of those who, against their will, are passive smokers? That is a consequence of others being persuaded to buy a product that damages their health. The industry continues to spend a large amount of money inducing smokers to continue damaging their health because that is good for their profits.

Dr. Mawhinney: I believe that smoking damages health, and I imagine that that view is shared in all parts of the House. I believe also that advertising influences behaviour. That is precisely why the Government already have in place restrictions on tobacco advertising.

Like a number of other hon. Members, I have read the advertisement in today's edition of *The Independent*. It is unquestionably true that the advertisement has been signed by a number of very distinguished people. I am not sure that I recognise every fact on which the argument purports to be based, but the statement is clearly important, and we shall reflect on it after the publication of the Smee report—which, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State told the House, will be next week. I look forward with interest to hearing what will no doubt prove a lively discussion about it. Incidentally, everything that the hon. Member for Brightside said about the report in his speech was wrong.

I shall be even more impressed if I open tomorrow's edition of *The Independent* and find another full-page advertisement, signed by all the same people, saying that children both of whose parents smoke have a 15 per cent. likelihood of smoking, that children neither of whose parents smoke have a 6 per cent. likelihood of smoking, and that therefore all those distinguished people want parents to stop smoking so that the prevalence of smoking among children drops by 150 per cent. No one in the House or in the country believes that a ban on advertising would lead to a 150 per cent. reduction in the prevalence of smoking among children; yet that is the statistic given by the OPCS survey.

I look forward to opening Saturday's edition of *The Independent* and seeing a further advertisement signed by all those distinguished people. I hope that on Saturday they will be saying that a 10 per cent. increase in the price of cigarettes is likely to produce a decrease in smoking prevalence of around 5 per cent., and that they will be encouraging not only the Chancellor of the Exchequer but all our European partners to pay much more attention to price than to some of the other issues that are currently on the agenda.

I look forward to opening *The Independent* on Monday, and seeing yet another full-page advertisement—by the way, I am not receiving a rake-off from the paper for this commercial—in which the same distinguished people ask whether the country is aware that one of the most important influences on children in regard to smoking is peer pressure. If a child has a boyfriend or girlfriend who smokes, that is one of the best predictors available in all the statistics. Opposition Members run the risk of mixing up the means and the end. We have no difficulty about the end, but a variety of means need to be put in place to achieve that end.

Let me remind the House that, between 1974 and last year, the prevalence of smoking in this country dropped by one third as we pursued a range of policies—none of which, incidentally, included the total ban on advertising that is advocated by Opposition Members. Let me also remind the House what my right hon. Friend said about the position of this country in Europe in terms of smoking reduction. We are determined to use all the means at our disposal to achieve the further reduction specified in "The Health of the Nation".

There is a variety of ways in which the policy will be implemented—not only through the Cabinet Committee to which my right hon. Friend referred, but through working groups, one of which I chair. People from different walks of life are involved. One of the groups will be chaired by the chief medical officer, whose job will be to monitor and review progress towards achieving the targets; another will be chaired by the chief executive of the management executive, and will be designed to carry forward the policy within the NHS.

Task forces will be set up on nutrition, smoking, accidents, the workplace, physical activities and mental illness. All of them, and many others, will combine to carry forward and put into place the first-ever health strategy for the country, a health strategy that depends on all of us playing our part co-operatively, to the benefit of the health of the nation. I look forward to that being achieved in the years to come.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

European Fighter Aircraft

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

10 pm

Dr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise this topic in the first week of the House's return after the summer recess. No hon. Member doubts the importance of the European fighter aircraft project. It is important from both the military and the industrial point of view. It is also important because of its cost to the public purse.

The design and development of military aircraft is a long process. EFA is no exception. Discussions about a possible European combat aircraft began in the late 1970s. The outline staff target for a future EFA was agreed between the air staffs of France, West Germany, Italy and Spain in 1983. France pulled out in 1985. In April 1988, the British Government announced their decision to embark on the full development of EFA, subject to similar decisions by the three other collaborating countries.

By the end of November 1988, all four countries had signed a memorandum of understanding. The two main EFA development contracts were awarded to two consortia. Both consortia were comprised of one company from each collaborating nation. Euro-fighter was commissioned to develop the airframe and weapons systems. Eurojet was awarded the contract for the development of the engine.

As set out in the memorandum of understanding, the work carried out and subcontracted by each consortium is divided so that Germany and Britain both take 33 per cent. of the work share, Italy 21 per cent. and Spain 13 per cent., each nation then paying for the work done within its borders.

There is all-party agreement on the military requirement for EFA. While the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw pact means that nobody now can be anticipating a threat from the eastern bloc, EFA was intended to match the possible threat posed by Russian aircraft. The Mig29 Fulcrum has been exported to Cuba, India, Iraq, Iran, North Korea and Syria. The SU27 Flanker has been sold to China. We have no reason to believe that export contracts with other nations are not being pursued by Russia.

The British people will not forgive the Government if they saddle the RAF with a plane of inferior capability to those of a future enemy. The German Government's proposed EFA Lite would be just such a plane. As it would involve the redesign of the airframe, engine and installed equipment, it is certain that that plane would be militarily inadequate. Furthermore, it is by no means certain that to abandon EFA and embark on this new project would work out cheaper then the completion of EFA. All alternatives to EFA have been found to be more expensive, less capable, or both.

The only plane that is superior in capability will be the United States F22 ATT. It is widely estimated that that would be at least 60 per cent. more expensive than EFA. Furthermore, it is doubtful whether the United States would make the plane available for export, even to Britain.

The chiefs of staff of all four EFA nations reaffirmed the need for EFA in March. The House of Commons Select Committee on Defence concluded that the high levels of reliability, coupled with the ease of maintenance and testing of EFA, should result in EFA being significantly cheaper to operate. I pay tribute to the report of the Select Committee on Defence, published on 11 March, and quote exactly what it said on page xxx:

> "The current indications are, however, that the possible alternative aircraft to EFA would have significantly inferior performance, and yet would offer limited or no savings in cost. The higher levels of reliability, coupled with ease of maintenance and testing of EFA, should result in EFA being significantly cheaper to operate and having higher levels of availability than any alternative aircraft. There is currently no sign of any suitable alternative to EFA which could begin to offer the same level of performance at an acceptable cost, with anything approaching comparable technological benefits."

That is still true, and the House would welcome the Minister's reaffirmation that it is still the view of the Government.

There are obvious benefits from international collaboration in a military project such as EFA—the sharing of the burden of costs and technological co-operation between nations being two such advantages. Operationally, there are tremendous benefits if partners in a conflict are using the same aircraft—for example, common servicing, spares and training. The tragic events in Yugoslavia show that it is not fanciful to contemplate Britain, in alliance with other Western European Union countries, being involved in major peacekeeping activities in central and eastern Europe. We have only to look at the serious economic, social and political difficulties in the former Warsaw pact satellite states and in the former Soviet Union to understand that there may be a very real need for collective military action to prevent ethnic rivalries and territorial disputes from leading to the disintegration of states and civil war.

Control of the air is a key factor in any military conflict. The aim of Governments must be the avoidance of active service for the air force and other services, but long-term decisions on procurement must assume that planes will see real combat. The British Government should now tell our German ally firmly and publicly that we are not prepared to contemplate Royal Air Force pilots going into combat with planes which have a markedly inferior capability to those of the enemy.

The study commissioned by the four Defence Ministers in August to consider the feasibility of a plane 30 per cent. cheaper than EFA may suggest worthwhile economies, but everyone knows that the 30 per cent. saving will be obtained only at the cost of much inferior aircraft.

EFA is crucial to British industry. Without it, jobs would be lost in Germany, Italy and Spain, but the consequences for Britain's aerospace industry could be catastrophic. The United Kingdom's aerospace industry is world class, second only in turnover to the United States. Tragically, as a result of the collapse of manufacturing industry in Britain in the early 1980s, the elimination of about 25 per cent. of capacity and the further contraction of industry, more and more of our industrial base is associated with firms which have a military purpose and produce military products. The cancellation of EFA would result in the long-term elimination of some of the most modern engineering facilities in Britain. Almost all the developing technologies that will feature in tomorrow's aerospace business, both civil and military, are part and parcel of the EFA development programme. For example, the only military airborne radar capability that Britain now has is GEC Ferranti, based in Edinburgh. If the ECR 90 radar system—the system for EFA—is not developed and operated by EFA, that British airborne radar capability will be lost for all time. I am sure that the Minister is conscious of the importance of that radar contract.

GEC Ferranti now operates from plants in Edinburgh, Donibristle in Fife, Boreham Wood, and Milton Keynes. The company estimates that 905 jobs are directly dependent on EFA development work—570 with GEC Ferranti and 335 with sub-contractors.

Ferranti has a tremendous history in airborne radar. It provided the radar for the Lightning aircraft in the 1950s, and the Blue Fox radar, which performed well in the Sea Harriers during the Falklands war, and the Blue Vixen for the updated Sea Harrier is accepted by all to be performing well. All the evidence suggests that the ECR90 system which will go into EFA will be a world beater. After that we shall have Radar 2000, which will also be developed.

What I am saying is not unique to GEC Ferranti, but applies to other aspects of the project. We are at the forefront of technological development. If the ECR90 radar system does not go into service, GEC Ferranti will not be able to stay in business. It will not have the profits from that production to develop Radar 2000, and that capability will be lost for good. That will be a tremendous loss to the whole of British industry, not only to my constituents in Edinburgh.

The cancellation of EFA would have serious consequences for three of our most important companies —British Aerospace, GEC and Rolls-Royce. Many of the 34 main United Kingdom suppliers and 60 sub-suppliers are high-tech companies of strategic importance to manufacturing in this country. It has been estimated that 40,000 jobs will be lost in the United Kingdom if EFA is cancelled, but that does not take into account the fact that the supplying firms have a range of other engineering activities which would be put into jeopardy.

The Labour party wants companies heavily dependent on military contracts to diversify into civil production. It is our policy to set up a defence diversification agency to help secure that end. Many of the high-technology engineering teams involved in EFA have the capability to originate civil products which will create jobs and wealth for this country. The cancellation of EFA would lead to the disbandment of the high-technology engineering teams required for alternative products in the future. It is impossible to emphasise too strongly the fact that, especially in view of the state of British industry in the present recession, it would be absolutely devastating if the EFA project were not to go ahead. We can be proud of our aerospace industry. We must nourish and encourage it, and the Government should support it. It may be regrettable that it is still so dependent on EFA, but that is the truth, and not to face up to it would be damaging to this country.

As the Ministers knows, the four Defence Ministers last met in Madrid on 4 August. This is our first opportunity to discuss the outcome of that meeting. Eurofighter was commissioned to identify means by which the plane's production costs could be reduced. From reports in the press, I understand that significant possible cost savings have been identified; up to 20 per cent. has been suggested. I hope that the Minister will be willing to give us further information about that this evening. The air staff of each nation are re-examining their military requirements. Both studies were due for completion by the end of this month, and were to be considered at the meeting of Defence Ministers in December.

A third decision taken at that meeting, which has not been much publicised, was to impose a moratorium on all future development side contracts. I believe that the Secretary of State referred to the moratorium as symbolic, and I accept that all the main development work is going ahead and that the plane's production will not be significantly slowed down by the decision. But some important contracts have been suspended, and I am sorry to say that some of those should have been placed by GEC Ferranti by now. One significant example is the laser warning system, which will enable the crew to tell whether the plane is being tracked by laser.

It is important that a clear timetable be established for the development of the plane. It is not possible for the companies involved to put their engineering teams on hold. I hope that the Minister will give us an assurance that when the Secretary of State meets his counterparts he will make it clear that they must take practical decisions. It is no use pretending that we can put the decision off indefinitely. There must be a decision on investment for production within the next two or three months. Clearly, the companies cannot afford to maintain the staff unless the development and production programmes go forward.

The fundamental case for EFA is the British military requirement for an agile aircraft with modern radar. Nobody disputes that the RAF will require a new fighter plane by the turn of the century. It, or its variants, could be in service for 30 years or more.

The Government have three choices. First, Britain can go along with the German position, which means building a plane with a much inferior military capability. That could only mean asking our Royal Air Force pilots to operate in the next century with planes much inferior to those in service with the air forces of some third-world countries. As hon. Members know, when we talk about an inferior capability in air combat, we are talking about the survivability of the planes and their pilots. I am sure that no British Government would want to go down in history as having been responsible for equipping the RAF with sub-standard planes.

Secondly, the Government can buy an off-the-shelf new plane, possibly from Russia, but more likely from the United States. That would cost many thousands of British jobs and destroy for ever our capability in many areas of advanced technology, including airborne radar—not to mention the effect on our balance of trade.

Thirdly, the Government can do what is right for Britain and make it clear to our European partners that Britain is absolutely determined to press ahead with the European fighter aircraft.

10.15 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang), and even more so to the Minister, for allowing me to say a few words from the Opposition Front Bench in this important debate. As my hon. Friend said, Labour party spokesmen have on a number of occasions expressed their support for EFA on the basis that it offers the best capability at the best price to fulfil a vital military role.

[Mr. George Foulkes]

Equally importantly, as my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East said, the project will safeguard thousands of jobs and will help to preserve a United Kingdom defence and aerospace industry. As a Member of Parliament who represents a mining constituency, I point out that those jobs are just as vital in the areas in which they are situated as the pit jobs are in the coal mining areas, and the loss of those jobs might be just as devastating to the economy of the United Kingdom as the loss of mining jobs.

I am grateful for this brief opportunity to restate the Labour party's support for the project and our desire that the Government's priority now should be to keep this collaborative European venture together.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East, we believe that the alternative EFA Lite proposed by the Germans does not fulfil the requirements necessary for the next generation of British fighter aircraft, especially the need to have the ability to take part in United Nations operations and to compete effectively with the Mig 29s and the SU27s which, as my hon. Friend said, are increasingly available to countries around the world which are potential aggressors.

The need for the resolution of the differences between the four co-operating countries in the venture is all the more pressing. As that will be achieved only by a cheaper aircraft, we welcome, as my hon. Friend did, the suggested savings of up to 20 per cent. in cost and we should welcome any further potential savings, whether proposed by the United Kingdom, by Germany or by any of the other partners so long as they do not undermine the original operational capability and concept of EFA. As my hon. Friend said, our pilots must have a plane which is equal to or preferably better than that of any potential aggressor. We hope that the cost-cutting exercise can open a door to the continuation of a multinational project. We urge the Government to increase the diplomatic and other pressures—perhaps a little bit more diplomatically than Volker Ruehe did; I know that British Defence Ministers are likely to be a little more diplomatic than he is.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Even more than our Ministers?

Mr. Foulkes: Even more than our Ministers. I assure the Minister and all the other Defence Ministers that in those efforts they will have the total support of the Labour Front Bench and of the other Opposition parties.

10.18 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) on securing this debate and on initiating it this evening. I am also grateful to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) for the official support from the Opposition for the EFA project.

The interest in and support for the EFA programme of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East is very much appreciated, as is the presence here tonight of my hon. Friends the Members for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson), for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins), for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans), for Wyre (Mr. Mans) and for Woodspring (Dr. Fox). All have constituents who are very much involved in the future of the project and whose livelihoods very much depend on the project going ahead.

I know that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East has had two meetings, on 25 June and 9 September, with my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, who regrets that an official visit to Sweden prevents him from being present tonight. The eloquent defence of the EFA which we have heard from the hon. Gentleman underlines the measure of all-party support for it which exists in the House and the country as a whole. This was underlined also in the sixth report of the Defence Select Committee, which concluded:

> "there is currently no sign of any suitable alternative to EFA that could begin to offer the same level of performance at an acceptable cost with anything approaching comparable technological benefits".

The German Minister of Defence, to whom reference has been made this evening, has said that the project is too expensive and that an aircraft of this capability is an anachronism in the changed security environment that has followed the demise of the Warsaw pact and other radical changes in eastern Europe. We and the other partners, Italy and Spain, share some of Herr Ruehe's concern about the cost of the project. I will return to this point later, but first I would like to deal with the point about the military need for EFA.

It is true that the international security environment has changed radically since the EFA was originally conceived. The direct threat of a massive attack on NATO previously posed by the Warsaw pact and the Soviet Union has disappeared. That said, we plan that EFA will be in service throughout the first quarter of the next century. The world could be a very different place by 2020. That is why it is important to look at capabilities rather than intentions.

There is considerable and growing instability in areas close to NATO both within and outside Europe. There is ethnic and territorial conflict in eastern Europe and within the former Soviet Union. The middle east remains unpredictable. Despite the collapse of the former monolithic threat, there exist a number of risks to security. The United Kingdom could be involved in joint military action with our allies designated to promote stability or halt aggression.

There are a large number of sophisticated aircraft on the territories of the former Soviet Union. Some of those aircraft have been widely exported. The MiG29 Fulcrum has been delivered to all former Warsaw pact countries, except Hungary, and to a number of other countries, including Cuba, Iraq, Iran, Syria, North Korea and the former Yugoslavia. The SU27 Flanker has been sold to China. Improved variants of the SU27 and the MiG29 are being developed.

We need to provide an effective defence of the United Kingdom and British forces wherever they may be deployed. Our current air defence aircraft, the Tornado F3, was designed to intercept bombers at long range. It is not a suitable match for such hostile agile fighters as the MiG29 and the SU27, let alone future upgrades of those types or more modern aircraft.

We also recognise the need to provide an offensive support and tactical reconnaissance capability. Although they performed well last year in the Gulf, the Jaguars are aging and will become more difficult to support in the future. The Jaguar is unlikely to survive in combat against modern aircraft much beyond the middle of the next decade.

Thus the RAF has a need for an agile aircraft with a modern radar and a sophisticated electronic warfare suite to enable it to survive. Today's greater emphasis on NATO rapid reaction forces reinforces the case for a multi-role capability. Multi-role aircraft should offer economies in support and operational flexibility. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Defence Select Committee reported in April that there remains a requirement for a technically advanced multi-role aircraft.

As the aircraft that we procure will have to meet the needs of the Royal Air Force for the next 25 years, we must ensure that it is at least as good as the aircraft of any potential adversary that it might be called upon to face during that time. We owe it to our pilots to give them the tools that they need to do their job. An aircraft of broadly EFA's capability is essential to counter potentially hostile aircraft.

In summary, it is true that the risk to our security has reduced quantitatively, and that may have a bearing on the number of new aircraft we require. But, in qualitative terms, potentially hostile aircraft are as sophisticated today as was anticipated when EFA was conceived, and we face far greater uncertainty about the direction from which trouble might come.

Of course it is right to review the military requirement. That is why, in August, the Ministers of Defence of the four partner nations asked their military chiefs to conduct a full review of the original requirement and to report whether any relaxations might be possible. The hon. Gentleman referred to that point. We do not yet have that advice. We will take full account of it when we receive it at the end of this month.

Mr. Ruehe is right when he says that EFA is expensive. Indeed, what sparked off the present debate about the project was the fact that the quotations for the production phase which the manufacturers presented last April were higher than expected and judged by all the partner Governments to be unaffordable. When they met last August, the four Ministers of Defence therefore commissioned studies into ways of reducing the cost of the programme.

Those studies have looked at a wide range of options. They started by looking at ways to reduce the cost of the present aircraft through more efficient sharing of the production work between the partner companies, by savings in the logistic support arrangements and by generally sharpening their prices and those of the equipment suppliers.

They then looked at the savings that might be achieved by removing some of the more sophisticated equipments from the aircraft, either replacing them with cheaper alternatives, or perhaps leaving them out initially while keeping open the possibility of fitting them later when funds permit. Lastly, the studies examined seven alternative aircraft designs to establish whether a change of design would actually achieve the cost savings which the German Minister had suggested.

The report on the first of those studies was presented to the four Governments at the end of last week. It is an extremely detailed piece of work, and it will take some time for officials of the four Ministries of Defence to analyse it and to decide which of the many options it offers represents the best way forward for the particular circumstances of the four partner nations. The four Ministers plan to meet again in December to consider those conclusions and the review of the military requirement.

It is, however, possible to say already that the broad conclusions of the report were that substantial savings of between 12 and 21 per cent. were possible without any changes to the aircraft specification or its military capability. Greater savings are possible by deleting certain equipments, although that will lead to some degradation of performance. In all circumstances, retaining the present airframe and engine combination offers better value for money than changing course in mid-stream to a new design.

The effect of a new design would mean writing off most of the £5 billion which the four Governments have collectively invested in the development of EFA, and necessitate repeating much of the work already done. In consequence, any new design with an acceptable level of performance would have higher cost than the present EFA programme. Of the seven designs studied, only two could conceivably be marginally cheaper than continuing with the existing airframe and engine. Both would be single-engined aircraft inferior in performance to the present MiG29 and SU27. Going down that road would make no sense at all.

It is regrettable that the German Minister is continuing to argue in favour of a reorientation of the project in favour of a new smaller design when the facts do not support his arguments. We shall seek to convince him that he is wrong and to persuade the German Government that it is in their own best interests, as well as those of the other partners, that Germany should remain in the European fighter aircraft programme. On that point, as it seems not to be generally appreciated, I should make it clear that Germany is still participating in the project, development of EFA is continuing generally according to the originally agreed programme, and we expect the first flight of the aircraft around the end of this year.

The Government not only believe that the operational requirement for EFA remains valid and that continuing with the present programme is the best way forward but are very conscious of the enormous industrial importance of EFA to the United Kingdom aerospace industry. EFA is the only advanced fixed-wing military combat aircraft under development in the United Kingdom. If the project were to collapse, the design and development teams at British Aerospace, Rolls-Royce, GEC and the many other British companies working on the programme would be dispersed. That would probably be the end of military aircraft development in the United Kingdom. One cannot keep aerospace factories idle for up to five years and expect at the end of that time to find a skilled labour force ready and waiting to start work again.

EFA is also pushing at the frontiers of advanced technology. Many of the equipments being developed for EFA will find their way in due course into new civil aircraft, and some of the technology is capable also of being exploited for non-aviation uses. All that potential spin-off would be lost if the project did not proceed.

There are also a large number of jobs dependent on EFA. There are about 9,400 people directly employed on the development of EFA today, and, when the aircraft goes into production, the number will rise to 28,000. Those

[Mr. Archie Hamilton]

jobs directly related to EFA will also sustain a large measure of indirect employment outside the aerospace industry.

For all those reasons, the Government place considerable importance on the continuation of the EFA programme, if possible on a four-nation basis with German participation. If, however, Germany should decide to leave the project, the Government would wish to explore with Italy and Spain the possibility of continuing trilaterally. Neither of the other partners has ruled that out, and the conclusions of the cost reduction study to which I have already referred give grounds for optimism.

The Spanish Minister of Defence, for instance, told the BBC earlier this week, during the NATO Nuclear Planning Group meeting at Gleneagles, that he believed that, in the light of the substantial savings now available, EFA's prospects looked much better and Spain believed that it had a future.

The motion having been made at Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM SPEAKER adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.

Adjourned at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 23 October 1992

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Policing (London)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn:—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

9.33 am

Madam Speaker: I have to announce to the House that because of the great interest in this subject I shall have to place a 10-minute limit on speeches between 11.30 am and 1 pm. As we have a statement today, I hope that hon. Members will bear in mind the need for brevity.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): The basis for our debate on the policing of London is the Commissioner's annual report for 1991-92, which provides a comprehensive account of the work of the Metropolitan police service, the successes that it has achieved and the difficulties that it has encountered.

This is the last report to be made by Sir Peter Imbert, who will retire from his post as Commissioner on 31 January 1993. I am very glad to be able to announce that the Queen has appointed Paul Condon, the present chief constable of Kent, to succeed Sir Peter.

As Sir Peter makes clear in his report, he inherited from Sir Kenneth Newman a service that had decentralised operational decision making to areas and divisions, but Sir Peter recognised that cultural changes needed to be made if organisational changes were to be effective. The Plus programme resulted, with a complete reappraisal of the fundamental purpose of the service. The statement of common purpose and values was an early part of the process, which has continued through a series of initiatives, including, in February this year, the publication of the first five-year corporate strategy.

Those developments in the leadership and management of the service have placed the Metropolitan police in the forefront of the moves to develop quality of service as the main aim for the police throughout England and Wales.

Against that background, I suspect that Mr. Condon, as the new Commissioner, would agree with me that he has a hard act to follow, but he will be able to build on the firm foundations that Sir Peter has laid. The present Commissioner, who is admirably supported by his deputy and the rest of his top management team, has focused the attention of the Metropolitan police on the high standard of service that their officers must provide to maintain the trust that must exist between the police and the community. In my judgment, Paul Condon has shown the same commitment to similar ideals in his management of the Kent constabulary, where he has been hugely successful. I have no doubt that under his leadership the Metropolitan police will continue to make significant improvements in their relationship with the public and in their effectiveness in meeting the ever-rising demands placed on them. Paul Condon will prove to be a very forceful and dynamic successor to a distinguished Commissioner.

Part of the foundation on which Mr. Condon will be able to build are the strategic intentions of the Metropolitan police set out in the corporate strategy to which I have just referred. This reflects the commitment to increase consultation with the public and their representatives, to inform and to respond to their views. The Metropolitan police have therefore been moving towards a borough-based service, with divisional boundaries aligned to the London boroughs. This complements the service's move to sector policing.

Borough-based policing will make the consultative arrangements established under section 106 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 more effective and will enable the police to work more closely with borough authorities and community groups. There are now 41 consultative groups in the Metropolitan police district, and all 35 London boroughs have functioning consultative groups. This now includes the direct involvement of Hackney borough council.

There are signs that that is contributing to improved relations between the police and the community in the borough. I regret to say that Lambeth is now the only borough where councillors are not involved, although at least we have moved to the stage where meetings of the consultative group are being held in the town hall. I hope that councillors in Lambeth will soon make use of the opportunities which their colleagues elsewhere in London, of all parties, have found available.

There was a time when there was a tradition among the left of the Labour movement in London of positive hostility towards the police. As the Labour party has gone through a process of mild reconstruction, I think that I see that tradition vanishing slightly, and I hope that the last traces will disappear in Lambeth.

Ms. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I think that the Secretary of State slightly underestimates the speedy move taking place at the moment towards Lambeth becoming officially part of the police consultative committee. I am president of the consultative committee, and the Members of Parliament involve themselves. Next week, there will be a top-level meeting between all chief superintendents, the district commissioner and the leader of the council. Quick moves are being made now, and I hope that we shall move forward in Lambeth to ensure that the police service is responsive to the people there, and that our borough is involved in the process.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to the hon. Lady, and I am sure that all three Members of Parliament from the borough have been encouraging the council to develop proper links with the police. I am sure that the Metropolitan police, for their part, will respond by trying to build a proper relationship and to be better informed about the views of the borough and the style of policing required there.

I have been impressed by the obvious wish of the police service to develop a more open approach to its public responsibilities—the Plus programme is a good example of the work that has been done. All that came before our citizens charter initiative, but the Plus programme and the citizens charter are complementary and embrace many of

[Mr. Clarke]

the same principles—consultation with the public, openness and accountability, and the achievement and publication of standards of service.

The charter and the police service's quality of service initiative emphasise the importance of measuring performance and service delivery in so far as that is possible. After all, how can the police or the public know what quality of service is being offered if there are no means of measuring and comparing one part of the service and another? The standard of service will not in the end be measured by impressions, by anecdotes or by our individual personal experience. It is possible to devise clear and precise indicators that accurately measure the services provided and which way they are moving with regard to quality.

The Audit Commission, following the remit given to it by the Local Government Act 1991, has now published a formal consultation document containing proposals for performance indicators for policing. Those were prepared after consultation with the police service and Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary.

I am anxious that when we introduce performance indicators as a management tool they will be a useful way of measuring standards of performance which mean something to the public and to the average policeman. By the end of this financial year, a set of core indicators will be in place. They will be applied from the beginning of 1993, leading in 1994 to the publication of force performance in aspects which we will all be able to understand and appreciate, such as the time of response to emergencies, crime rates and detection, the composition of the police force—specifically, the numbers of police officers who are women or who are members of ethnic minorities—and complaints against the police, as well as the cost of providing a police service.

All that published information and performance indicator information made available to us will play an important part in stimulating an informed and intelligent dialogue about the police, setting out much more clearly than before what the police can reasonably be expected to achieve. I have made it clear that I expect the Metropolitan police to provide the same information as the other police forces in the country, and I shall ensure that it is all published.

The Met is, of course, only one force within the police service in England and Wales, although it is by far the largest. I should briefly say something about broader issues affecting the police service generally, which I shall be considering over the coming months and which, as I shall explain, will reflect upon the Met as well.

I shall look with especial care at the way in which police authorities work. They should be a key influence on the style of policing, because it is their job to determine, with the chief constable, how the funds available should be deployed locally. It is to the policy authority that the chief constable should be primarily accountable. At present, there is a strange balance between the local powers of a police authority and my central powers in the Home Office. I have total power over the size of the establishment —the number of uniformed officers—in each police force throughout the country and direct powers over capital allocations. On the other hand, some aspects are very decentralised under the control of the policy authority, and in different parts of the country there is a varying relationship between the authority, with its responsibilities, and the chief constable with his responsibility for operational matters.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way soon.

It is time to take a fresh look at my own powers and at the role and composition of police authorities, and to come to judgments about responsibilities and accountability. Chief constables should be clearly responsible for managing their forces effectively in the light of local needs. I expect them to be called to account by the police authorities, and on some issues by the Home Secretary, on how they do so. [HON. MEMBERS: "The Met?"]

I am about to relate that point to London.

In reviewing the role of police authorities, of course that has implications for the very different sort of police authority which we have in London. In the rest of the country, we have a tripartite system—Home Secretary, local police authority and chief officer of police. In London, we have what I suppose could be called a bipartite authority; the Home Secretary acts in effect as the police authority. Some features of the present structure for London may be right. There are bound to be some differences in the oversight of the capital city's policing compared with that of provincial forces.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I was about to say that, when I consider the arrangements for police authorities across the country and the proper accountability of provincial forces, I shall certainly not rule out the present arrangements for the Met and I shall want to see to what extent any measures that I may introduce in the rest of the country could usefully be applied or adapted to the Met and to London.

Mr. Soley: Many of us are puzzled by what the Home Secretary has been saying, because we do not have a police authority in London. This is supposed to be the half day in the year when there is some accountability. If the Home Secretary is telling the House that what happens is unsatisfactory, and that there should be some accountability through a local elected authority, that is welcome. We have been putting that idea to the House for 10 or 12 years. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman make himself clear? Will London have some form of elected authority for policing? That is what many people feel that it needs.

Mr. Clarke: The straight answer to that question is no. I do not agree.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Why not?

Mr. Clarke: We have just heard about the welcome progress being made in Lambeth towards having a dialogue with the police and being prepared to allow a consultative committee to meet in the town hall, but there have been times when I have doubted whether Lambeth was quite ready for self-government. It is improving all the time, but I do not think that we are yet ready to have an elected police authority for the Met. What I said was carefully phrased: I am undertaking a review of the responsibilities of police authorities and the accountability of chief constables to their police authorities, and I do not rule out the possibility of change in the Met. However, I was certainly not announcing a move to an elected authority. I propose that during the debate hon. Members give their views on the police authority——

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): We have been doing that for a decade.

Mr. Clarke: Yes, hon. Members have been doing that, and some have been putting forward the idea of the London branch of the Labour party that there should be an elected authority to share the running of the police with the Commissioner. I am not instantly attracted to that idea.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the vast majority of the people of London were delighted when the Greater London council was abolished and that in subsequent elections they have confirmed their faith in the party which got rid of it? They do not want to see it reappear under any guise.

Mr. Clarke: Yes. My one regret about the GLC was that we delayed so long before abolishing that totally ridiculous body. I certainly would not wish to see any feature of it being revived.

Hon. Members: Get on with it.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall indeed get on with it, but first I shall give way to the Labour Front-Bench spokesman.

Mr. Blair: With all due respect, it is a bit much for the Home Secretary to put that teaser into his speech and then refuse to answer questions about it. I am not sure whether we are getting a ministerial statement. I understand—perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman will tell me whether I am right—that he is making two points, the first of which is that he will review the procedures for police authorities throughout the country but that he will want to keep some form of elected police authorities in the rest of the country. Secondly, he seems to be saying that he wants to examine whether he will bring the metropolitan arrangements into line with those for the rest of the country. Is that right or not? If that second point is right, will he tell us what range and type of elected authority he is considering for London?

Mr. Clarke: Yet again, the hon. Gentleman has done what his hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) did, which is to rephrase and paraphrase my suggestions. All I said was that I was working inside the Home Office on the role of police authorities, the extent to which they discharge their present responsibilities, the extent to which the chief constable is properly accountable to them and the extent to which the system is working in the best way to produce a clear policy for policing. I wanted to tell the House that that was under way, as I have said publicly, so that I could invite the views of others. I have no doubt that the Labour party and chief constables have views on the role and composition of the police authorities, so I am flagging the fact that I am considering those matters and, no doubt, will in due course come to conclusions. I will welcome proposals from others.

The idea that I am making a statement announcing that I am instantly changing the nature of police authorities in London or in the rest of the country is wrong. I look forward to hearing in due course the views of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on police authorities.

Mr. Blair: We should have the matter cleared up a little. I am not suggesting that the Home Secretary has come to an instant view. I had always understood that his party had ruled out entirely any change in the arrangements whereby the Home Secretary has direct responsibility for the police in London. Is he saying to us that he is prepared at least to consider that the position will change and that there may be some form of police authority for London? That is not an unreasonable question.

Mr. Clarke: What I said was as plain as a pikestaff. I said that I was considering the role of police authorities, and, while I do that, I do not rule out thinking about the arrangements in London. At present, I am wholly satisfied with my role as the police authority in London. I will now proceed, if I am allowed to, to discharge that responsibility by making progress in the debate.

Mr. Boateng: Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Clarke: No. I want to move on to the subject of sector policing which is designed to enable the service to respond more closely to the needs of the community. It is now firmly in place in many divisions and will be introduced throughout the Metropolitan police district by the end of March 1993. Groups from all sectors of the community have been involved with the police in developing effective sector policing, and benefits can already be seen in the improved links with local communities.

The service recognises that it must be able to evaluate any improvements that are being made in the quality of service provided and the Metropolitan police are committed to developing and extending the use of performance indicators.

In 1991, the police have been trialling customer satisfaction surveys in part of the Metropolitan police district and, from 1 January 1992, the surveys have been introduced in all divisions. The surveys seek the views of the victims of crime, road traffic accident victims and even those who call at police stations for a variety of purposes. In most police stations in London, one now finds questionnaires on the counter which ask people to make comments about the service provided by the police in the course of their call. I am glad to say that early returns show that there is a high level of satisfaction among those completing the questionnaires with the quality of service provided to victims.

Those initiatives should not be seen in isolation from other work being done to ensure that we have a police service that can operate more effectively than ever before. They show the commitment by the police to demonstrating their desire to raise the quality of service to the public and I seek to reinforce that.

I see the work being undertaken by Sir Patrick Sheehy's inquiry into police responsibilities and rewards as part of a whole. The inquiry is considering rank structure, pay, allowances and other rewards, and relevant aspects of conditions of service. Recommendations will be made on

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what changes, if any, should be made to ranks, roles and rewards, and whether additional flexibilities are required with regard to pay and related matters.

I have made it clear that I expect the inquiry to have regard to the different circumstances in which police officers have to carry out their duties in different parts of the United Kingdom. I expect the inquiry to consider especially the responsibilities of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): I cannot understand the logic of why the Home Secretary has excluded from the Sheehy inquiry the much-valued and respected British Transport police and the Royal Parks constabulary who have an increasing role in the metropolis. On 1 January, they will take over responsibility for Hyde park, in addition to their other duties. It is an unnecessary affront to those police officers that they should have been excluded from the Sheehy inquiry, which we have not been able to debate in the House because of the inordinate and indefensibly long summer recess.

Mr. Clarke: I am glad to make it clear that their exclusion is not regarded as an affront to those police services. I do not regard those services as second-class services. They are at the front rank of police services in the country. The reason why I excluded them and others who might have been included was simply to make the inquiry manageable and able to deliver its report in a reasonable time. If one opens up questions of pay and rewards in any organisation, it causes great uncertainties as everyone gives their views and waits to see what will be arrived at. To sustain the high morale necessary in the police service, the inquiry should not be an extended and intractable process; it should be completed in a reasonable time.

I told Sir Patrick that I would like his inquiry to make recommendations by May next year. If the inquiry had investigated other police forces, as the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) suggests, the timetable would not have been practicable. The inquiry is obviously aware of the particular problems of people such as the Royal Parks constabulary and I have no doubt that the recommendations of Sir Patrick's team will be studied by those responsible for those police forces and will have some bearing on them.

I have asked Sir Patrick to bear in mind the particular responsibilities of the Metropolitan police. We all realise that policing in the capital has its own problems. I am sure that he will do so.

Each year there is a demand for more police officers. I referred earlier to two developments: the publication of the first five-year corporate strategy and the measurement of performance and service delivery. I regard the aims of the corporate strategy and the information about measurements of performance as critical in establishing the level of resources and manpower needed to deliver a service that meets the needs of the people of London at an acceptable cost.

The manpower position is that the Metropolitan police are now recruiting up to their authorised establishment and there are now more than 28,000 police officers, supported by 14,500 civil staff and 1,700 traffic wardens. Through a vigorous programme of civilianisation, more police officers have been released and made available for policing duties—operational duties. Some 1,326 posts have already been civilianised and a further 520 are planned this year. That means that there are now more than 6,000 more operational police officers in London than there were in 1979. There are 3,762 female officers and 580 from ethnic minority groups.

The Metropolitan police have begun a pilot part-time working scheme, I am glad to say, to provide greater flexibility, especially for working parents. As new shift patterns develop, the benefits of allowing part-time working become more apparent, especially when new arrangements such as sector policing place the emphasise on meeting needs rather than forcing them into the straitjacket of the relief system.

Mr. Boateng: Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Clarke: I want to get on, because we are having timed speeches in this debate. I do not want my speech to take too high a proportion of the time, as I am sure the hon. Member for Sedgefield agrees.

We should recognise also the valuable contribution made by the 1,440 members of the Metropolitan special constabulary, of whom 186 officers, or 12 per cent., come from ethnic minority groups. Between them, they performed more than 300,000 hours of operational duties in 1991.

Mr. Boateng: Does the Home Secretary recognise, in dealing with the role and numbers of police officers, that, increasingly in the capital and certainly in my borough, in the night hours the police are required to perform what is essentially a social services function in relation to not only battered women but increasingly, sadly, children? What steps does he propose to take better to equip them and to assist them in performing a difficult function which the social services should carry out if they were properly funded?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman's opening remarks are right. The demands placed on policing cover a wide range and go well beyond the investigation of straightforward crime. I am glad to say that on my visits to police stations I now frequently encounter officers who are specialising in domestic violence cases. I am sure that the police find increased numbers of child abuse cases. Again, their training and focus of operations are turning to such cases. I am sure that the process will continue under the new Commissioner and that the style of policing will be adapted to the varied demands that are made on the police nowadays.

There are, of course, huge pressures on the social services. I referred to the hugely increased level of resources available to the police over the past decade. That is matched by large increases in the resources available to social services departments, although demands in those areas always increase. Each year, the demands that we make on the police continue to grow. We expect them to work in a hostile environment, and rely on them to maintain the peace on our streets so that the people of London can live their lives without fear. The Commissioner rightly regards that duty as fundamental to his policing strategy.

There is a personal cost in all this. Since our debate 12 months ago, two officers have been murdered—Sergeant Alan King and Detective Constable Jim Morrison. Both acted in the highest traditions of the service, putting their duty before their own safety. Each day, officers in all parts of London are putting themselves at risk. Each day, an average of eight officers are assaulted, of whom nearly a quarter are placed on the sick list. Every day, a further 23 officers will be injured on duty, of whom six will be taken off duty as a result.

Recorded crime in the Metropolitan police district increased by 11 per cent. in 1991-92 to 945,300 reported incidents. It is worth recording the fact that the majority of those crimes were against property, with about a quarter of all recorded crime involving theft of and from vehicles. Twenty-one per cent. of crimes are burglaries. The total number of burglaries was 194,900, and in nearly 30 per cent. of cases, the perpetrator was able to walk into the property without needing to make a forced entry—something that I find rather extraordinary. Clearly the tradition of leaving the house unlocked is not confined to rural villages. We are now stressing the importance of taking crime prevention precautions to protect cars, and we should also stress the need to protect property.

Recorded crime is increasing at a slower rate in London than elsewhere—a state of affairs that has been maintained for a number of years. Offences of violence against the person remain only a small part of all recorded crime in the Metropolitan police district, and sexual offences remain at less than 1 per cent. of all notifiable offences.

A number of initiatives show that the dedication of police to specific areas of crime, with public support, can have a dramatic effect on levels of crime. I am impressed by Operation Bumblebee, which has continued to have an impact on residential burglaries in north London, where the increase of 2 per cent. compares with a force average of 11 per cent. and a national figure of 18 per cent.

Since the start of the campaign in 1991, there have been more than 3,300 arrests for burglary in north London. Support in reporting suspicious persons loitering in residential areas has greatly helped and more than 51 per cent. of the arrests were made as a result of calls from the public. Operation Bumblebee has been such a success that it has now been extended to south and south-west London.

I have pointed out that theft of cars and from cars accounts for 25 per cent. of recorded crime in London. The Metropolitan police are involved in a number of initiatives aimed at tackling the problem, and divisional crime prevention officers are encouraged to get involved with local prevention activities.

More than 20,000 Londoners are involved in "Vehicle Watch", a scheme whereby participating motorists may indicate to the police by means of distinctive stickers that their cars will not normally be on the road late at night. Labelled cars which are seen during the voluntarily established curfew period may be stopped and checked. The service is also supporting the secured car parks scheme which encourages operators and users to pay attention to the security of car parks, where about 20 per cent. of car crime takes place.

A bogus callers campaign has given extensive publicity to warning people about the dangers of callers posing as officials from the utilities, tricking their way into a house and stealing money or goods while the occupant is distracted. So far, nearly 3,000 offences have been cleared up in the fight against this scourge—a 58 per cent. increase. The campaign is now being extended across a wider area of London.

There is a tradition of community-based policing in London and I believe that sector policing will build on experience and increase the opportunities for officers to work in partnership with the community. It will also increase the opportunities for external agencies, local authority departments and community groups to work closely with the police.

The partnership approach to crime prevention is of particular importance for the inner cities where high crime levels, fear of crime and social deprivation seriously affect the quality of life. The police have been working closely with local authorities, voluntary agencies and residents through the Department of the Environment's city action and urban programme which has provided central funding to tackle some of the underlying factors which influence crime. This has helped with the refurbishment of estates in Enfield and Deptford: lock-fitting schemes for the elderly and vulnerable groups in Haringey and Hammersmith and Fulham; and lighting improvements in Kensington and Chelsea.

The Department of Trade and Industry's task forces also continue to play a very important role. They and city action teams have helped in a wide range of improvements ranging from increased security, to youth activities and employment opportunities.

The service now has 40 crime prevention design advisers—one for each borough—who are tasked with influencing the way in which car parks, subways, leisure centres, housing and so forth are designed so that crime is designed out and improvements are made to the whole environment.

The number of racial attacks continues to be a matter of serious concern to everyone and, in the corporate strategy, the Commissioner has committed the service to supporting initiatives to respond to attacks upon, and harassment of, all minority groups. The service has introduced a new procedure for recording all incidents in which there is any suspicion, however slight, of racial motivation. I am glad to say that that has resulted in an increase in the number of incidents reported—from 2,908 in 1990 to 3,373 in 1991. That could indicate an increase in the number of racially motivated attacks, although I very much hope that it does not. It probably signifies the increased willingness of victims to come forward and report such incidents to the police, and their increased confidence in doing so.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Will the Home Secretary comment on the case of my constituent, Mr. Natt, who was arrested, then physically abused and racially abused in the most outrageous manner? There is no dispute about the facts, because Mr. Natt happened to have a recorder in his pocket, as the Home Secretary knows. Those responsible were fined or one day's pay was stopped. Is that a satisfactory state of affairs? Would the Home Secretary care to apologise to Mr. Natt for that behaviour?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is not wholly satisfactory. I hope that the House will bear it in mind that I do not have the facts in front of me, but my recollection is that Mr. Natt was convicted of assaulting a police officer, and that it was after his arrest that that unfortunate incident took place. It should not have taken place.

Like many other people, I heard the tape recording on the radio. It appears that the officers admitted the disciplinary offence, and the matter was dealt with locally, as a result of which the full facts were not known. I do not

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think that those who imposed the penalty of one day's loss of pay had heard the tape recording. I have appeared on a platform with the Commissioner, Sir Peter Imbert, who also expressed his dissatisfaction with the outcome of the case. I repeat that I wholly agree with him. Such incidents are serious disciplinary matters, and I am sure that both the present and the new Commissioners will ensure that they are regarded as such throughout the Metropolitan police service.

I am happy to report—admittedly, somewhat hastily because time is pressing—on a number of the achievements of the Metropolitan police in 1991 and the first part of 1992. There is a sense in London that the Metropolitan police are making progress. There is increasing confidence in the effectiveness of policing in the capital and in the much better style of service being delivered.

Those achievements have been made in partnership with the people of London. Policing policy is emphatically not a matter for the police service alone. The strong tradition of policing by consent is important, and partnership between the police and the community that they serve is prospering.

The Commissioner and I are determined that, through the initiatives being taken both within the Metropolitan police and nationally, the force should provide an even better service to the people of London, and even better value for money. Sir Peter Imbert has provided an extremely firm foundation for future achievement. From February next year, we shall have a new and enthusiastic Commissioner to continue that work, and I believe that the public of London will give him, and all his force, their wholehearted support.

10.8 am

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): The purpose of the debate is to review the operation of the Metropolitan police over the year and to analyse with care the current state of the capital's policing. We welcome the appointment of the new Commissioner, Mr. Paul Condon, whose first challenge will be to prevent the number of crimes in London passing the 1 million mark this year, for the first time in the capital's history.

The challenge for the Government is not to pass the buck to the Commissioner, but to honour their promise to cut crime with the necessary action. Mr. Condon is highly regarded. He is experienced with the work of the Metropolitan police. Above all, perhaps, he can be relied upon to build on what are acknowledged as the achievements of the current Commissioner, Sir Peter Imbert, and of his deputy John Smith who I believe has played a very big part in the development of the Metropolitan police over the past few years.

Sir Peter Imbert arrived at a time when, according to chief inspector of constabulary Sir John Woodcock a few days ago, the problems in the Met had "come close to disaster." Sir Peter had the intelligence to realise that the Met had to change and the vigour and clarity of purpose to carry that through. However, the background of rising crime against which the changes in the Met have been carried through has not improved. In summary, as with so much else in London and the rest of the country, crime has become worse. However, at least it is possible to see the beginning of a clearer and better framework for the future.

The rise in crime has been rapid and seemingly inexorable. As the Secretary of State said, there was an 11 per cent. increase in notifiable offences last year. As I have said, it is possible that notifiable offences will pass the 1 million mark this year. Robberies have increased 21 per cent. Thefts are up 11 per cent., burglary up 10 per cent. and criminal damage up 12 per cent. None of that takes account of the numerous, but unquantifiable examples of harassment, abuse and petty vandalism which have become part of the daily lives of many Londoners. A few weeks ago I read a survey in an Islington local paper which found that more than half the women on a local housing estate would not use public transport at night for fear of being attacked and that an even larger number were afraid to walk down local streets after dark. Young people are routinely subjected to threats and assault and some elderly people are afraid to venture outside their doors or even to stay inside.

That situation is wholly unacceptable. The right of people to go about their business free from the threat of crime is an essential part of the civil liberties of this country and it is currently under threat.

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend has clearly read that survey with some care. Is he aware that a large number of the people who are afraid to go out at night or who have been attacked on the streets at night, particularly bearing in mind racial and sexual attacks, feel that there is no point in reporting such incidents to the police? That is one of the problems with the reporting of crime statistics in surveys and the statistics produced by the Metropolitan police. There is a problem in terms of the need to increase people's confidence in the ability of the police to do something about such attacks.

Mr. Blair: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. People's confidence to come forward to the police about such attacks is an essential element in being able to curb them. Partly because of the changes that have taken place in the Met over the past few years, I hope that people will feel confident and do that. Building up that confidence over time is essential so that they can enjoy the freedom from such attacks that they should be able to enjoy.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Will the hon. Gentleman please put his comments in context? Although it is right to refer to fears when those fears are genuine and justified, one section at least of London's transport has shown a dramatic reduction in crime. That section is London Underground. The hon. Gentleman should pay tribute to the management and staff of London Underground for their work with cameras and staff training to reduce crime on the underground which has reassured the travelling public.

Mr. Blair: I am delighted to do that and I welcome the changes. The British Transport police have been working very hard to ensure that that is the case, and that is perhaps one reason why they should be involved more closely in some of the consultations.

There was an air of complacency about the Home Secretary's speech. Of course the Met are trying hard to curb crime and in some areas they are being successful. I shall refer to those in a moment because it is important to balance the areas of success with the problems.

The figure which truly astonishes me—this may be merely the novelty of the position that I hold—is that the clear-up rate is still less than one in five. In fact, the clear-up rate is one in 10 for burglaries. We have a very long way to go. Some people might say, and the Home Secretary by implication hinted, that burglary and crimes against property are not in the same league as violent crime against the person. However, anyone who has suffered a burglary is aware that it is more than just the fact that one's home has been broken into: it is an invasion of what should be the sanctity of someone's home. An understanding of that is necessary if we are to realise the seriousness of the situation.

The police themselves do not escape the personal consequences of crime. It is worth recording that 12,000 officers were injured while on duty. Some 3,600 were injured as a result of assaults, 700 or more of them so seriously that they were off work. That is appalling and we must work very hard on that.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I agree with my hon. Friend right down the line about the fact that policemen are at risk. That was another area of complacency in the Home Secretary's speech. He moved on very quickly after referring to Sergeant Alan King, who was stabbed. We all agreed with his comments, but nothing has been done to improve the protection of the police against knife attacks. The Met has carried out a study into body armour, but nothing has been done and I understand that many policemen are having to buy such armour privately. Should not the Home Secretary have produced proper proposals to give policemen more protection against such attacks?

Mr. Blair: I entirely agree that such attacks are to be deplored and I hope that the Home Secretary has heard what my hon. Friend said about measures to deal with them. On behalf of the Opposition, I pay tribute to the bravery of Sergeant Alan King and Detective Constable Jim Morrison who died on active service last year. We remember them with gratitude and offer our heartfelt condolences to their families.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Working parties continually consider the protection and equipment which should be given to the police and all the police associations are involved. I want to make it clear that we all agree that policemen are seriously at risk all the time in London. That is why we do not neglect the constant problem of reviewing the protection available and we shall continue to do that.

Mr. Blair: I thank the Home Secretary for that intervention. He will be aware of the strong feelings on all sides of the House about the position of policemen.

As well as the normal duties of policing, the Met has been responsible for anti-terrorism work. That has been particularly difficult with the recent spate of bomb attacks by the IRA, which have been carried out with a total and callous disregard for the human casualties which have resulted and will inevitably result from such activities. The Opposition treat the IRA's recent attempts to shift the blame on to the police for not heeding warnings which in any event are often confused and misleading with complete and utter contempt.

Certain problems are especially acute in the capital. I was astonished to learn that 75 per cent. of the illicit drugs market is in the capital. That must be a matter of huge concern.

Under Sir Peter's leadership, the Met has developed considerably in the past few years. His two clear achievements have been the Plus programme and the introduction of sector policing. It is easy to dismiss the Plus programme as a series of platitudes and I do not hope, as the Secretary of State did, that it is to be equated with the citizens charter.

The Plus programme has been effective in two ways. First, it has carried through organisational changes which have benefited the force. Secondly, it has changed the ethos of the service. The very acts of publishing a statement of common purpose and values, holding seminars on it that each of the 44,000 staff has attended and holding it up as a standard against which the service is content to be judged affect and change the culture of the force.

It is as well to recognise that some of the criticisms about the police in London and their ethos and culture are by no means confined to those on the fringe. Sir John Woodcock, in his address to an international conference on crime a few weeks ago, made it clear that criticism of the police had gained increasing currency among all sections of the community and that it was therefore absolutely necessary that a change in ethos and culture should take place.

Mr. Dicks: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will refer to the terms of police manpower and the cost to the taxpayer of demonstrations. *[Interruption.]* This is important. There are costs in taking police off their normal duties to police the miners' rally last Wednesday and next Sunday's rally. This Sunday, police will lose time off and work overtime or be taken off their normal duties to police unnecessary demonstrations.

Mr. Blair: That is an absurd point. *[Interruption.]* Having intervened on me, the hon. Gentleman might at least listen to the reply. Of course they police demonstrations. They also police football matches. There is also activity in relation to the royal family. Unless one is suggesting that all those activities should be banned, they are something that the Metropolitan police will do.

In the end, if there is a lack of confidence in the police, that is not just bad in itself: it affects the efficiency of policing because it disturbs the relationship of confidence between the public and the police. That point has been made by some of my hon. Friends. If there is no confidence in the police and if any section of the public feel that they cannot approach the police with confidence, policing in the capital is likely to be less effective and detection rates are likely to be lower.

We know, for example, that there has been a 66 per cent. increase in the number of reported offences of rape. In a bizarre way, that can be treated in one sense as implying that, probably, more people are now willing to report the offence of rape than they were before. Also, it means that in the previous few years thousands of people have not reported the offence because they did not have confidence. That is not a matter for complacency. We must realise that there is still an immense distance to go in increasing the confidence which must exist for effective policing.

[Mr. Blair]

There are other ways, too, in which the force is changing. The Home Secretary mentioned sector policing. That should be fully in operation by April 1993. Again, the purpose is to bring policing closer to the local community. However, the Plus programme and sector policing are examples of what has been the fairly central shift in policing, not in government necessarily but within the police force itself in the past few years. There has been an abandonment of the notion of the police as sole custodians of policy and responsibility, and the adoption of notions of partnership based on shared responsibility. That concept is recognised by many police forces throughout the country. We must build upon that base and ask the Government whether the concept of partnership in the community—to which they pay lip service—is actually replicated in their arrangements for how policing is done. For instance, the police cannot earn the respect of young people unless they have the co-operation of schools and teachers. Members of one of the local London authorities talked about truancy rates the other day. At any given time thousands of children in the capital city may be engaged in serious truancy every school day. That is appalling and it will require co-operation between education authorities and the police.

Local business will often know better how to take crime prevention measures if it is involved with the police in formulating them. The voluntary sector, the youth service and local authorities have a vital part to play in reinforcing the community's ability to police itself. In February, the National Audit Office produced a study about reducing crime in London. It examined partnership initiatives in five of the 69 divisions. It found that there had been considerable success but that much more needed to be done. The programme is in its infancy, but what was not doubted at all by the National Audit Office was the clear conclusion that better partnership—the involvement of local people in policing—works, and that where proper evaluation takes place it is seen to work.

The Commissioner's report draws attention to some of the best programmes of crime prevention in the capital. Apparently there are now 40 crime prevention design advisers to help in the design of estates to try to screen out criminal activity. Some of the best schemes are at Chalk Hill estate in Brent and North Peckham estate in Southwark, where there has been a combination of policing initiatives and local authority improvements with the full co-operation of the local authority.

Partnership in the community then influences other considerations of policing policy. The Home Secretary spoke of the mix of ethnic minority police officers and how it had risen, but the proportion is still very low compared with what it needs to be. That, again, is bound to affect the confidence of the ethnic community in the police and the reporting and assisting in the detection of crime. My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) will deal with that matter in slightly greater detail. She will aslo deal with racial attacks in London. Those matters are still deeply serious and there is growing evidence that on certain estates in London such attacks are increasing.

John Smith, who is the deputy commissioner—*[Interruption.]* John Smith is an excellent name. At the recent Partnership in Action conference, the deputy commissioner of the Metropolitan police said:

> "There are many fine examples of individual initiatives undertaken separately by police, voluntary agencies, and local authorities. But if they were to be carried out simultaneously, as part of an overall strategy, I am quite certain they would have even greater impact, and longer lasting improvements would be achieved."

He made that comment shortly after dealing with the Morgan report, which was commissioned by the Home Office and entitled, "Safer communities, Local Delivery of Crime Prevention through the Partnership Approach". The body convened by the Home Office was charged with preparing the report, and it did so. Its findings were quite clear—that there had to be much greater involvement of local authorities in crime prevention work, that partnership is what would work and would reduce crime, and that there was evidence that, where those elements of partnership were present, crime was falling.

Ministers have still not responded to the Morgan report on crime prevention. It is their own report and it was published, I believe, in August 1991. We were told in the Metropolitan police debate last year that the reason for delay was that consultations were being carried out. I hope that we shall get some sort of answer today, at least from the junior Minister, if not from the Home Secretary, on the Government's attitude to the Morgan report. I suspect that the reason why the report has not been responded to is that its conclusion—that local authorities have a vital role in crime prevention—was unpalatable to the Conservative party.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does that not emphasise the tantalising half-revelation that the Home Secretary gave? Although accountability to public authorities is important—there is a gap in London—such organs of statutory accountability also provide for information and conversation, which fulfil the very partnership that my hon. Friend is talking about. The Home Secretary not only gave no intimation of whether the role of elected and responsible police authorities in the rest of the country might be changed drastically in one way or another, but in respect of London it was made just a tail-end remark. Does that not mean that his speech reflected much less responsibility than that office has?

Mr. Blair: I agree, and I will deal with that point in a moment.

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): Will my hon. Friend confirm that some of the best responses to the Morgan report were from London Labour authorities? In the London borough of Hackney, the council made a joint response with the police, whereas, surprisingly, in the London borough of Wandsworth the council made a separate response from the police.

Mr. Blair: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that piece of information, which undoubtedly tells us a great deal.

Mr. John Marshall Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the record of several London local authorities is such that we do not want them to have anything to do with law enforcement? Leading members of the London Labour party incite others to break the law. The thought of their being in charge of the police force is unacceptable. We read in the *Daily Mail* today how dotty Haringey council is. It could not run a booze-up in a brewery.

Mr. Blair: I seem to remember that the *Daily Mail* told us that we would have an economic recovery following 9 April, so it is not the best source. I assume from the hon. Gentleman's strictures on Labour authorities that he is attacking the police for co-operating with Hackney council in making a joint response to the Morgan report. The hon. Gentleman's bigotry is out of date.

The nub of the argument is that to accept that partnership is the way forward, that there should be policing in the community and that we require a multi-agency approach, throws into sharp relief questions about the best way of allowing local people to have an input in a proper elected police authority for London.

I was uncertain exactly what the Home Secretary said about partnership in his speech today. If he will not take it amiss, I appreciate that he has not read the Maastricht treaty, but I did not realise until I heard him this morning that he had not even read his own speech. He said that he intended to take a fresh look at the matter and seemed to imply that he was prepared to bring some semblance of uniformity to the arrangements outside and inside London. That is entirely right, provided that there is proper local accountability.

The argument for a proper police authority for London is now much stronger on the grounds not only of local democracy but of effective policing. If the consensus behind partnership in the community is correct, and if the Home Secretary believes what was written for him, surely a vital part of such a partnership is the full involvement of people through a proper elected authority which, of course, is what happens outside London. Local people play a valuable role in my police authority in county Durham. There is no question of a battle between police and local authorities. The police recognise that community involvement provides a focus for local feeling and a channel for local input, and that local people feel that their voice is heard and their priorities can be taken into account. That means that the authority can work better and more practically. It is not simply an abstract question of democracy. Partnership is at the heart of effective policing in the capital.

Mr. Mackinlay: I have listened carefully to the discussion about local authority involvement in London. Is my hon. Friend aware that the London borough of Wandsworth and the royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea have unilaterally sworn in police constables to look after their parks? London local authorities have sworn police constables and the Home Secretary does not know who they are. There is no central monitoring of their performance, qualities, training or recruitment. Both in London and elsewhere, there is a hotch-potch of non-Home Office constables. The Home Secretary refuses to recognise that they are a problem, but there are police officers in London within the control of two Conservative councils in London.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I draw it to the attention of the House that many hon. Members wish to speak in the debate and long interventions do not help.

Mr. Blair: I hope that the Home Secretary has noted my hon. Friend's remarks. All that stands in the way of a proper elected authority is the utter fixated dogma of the Conservative party. It has carried its particular prejudice, which was exemplified by the intervention of the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), against one or two local authorities into a generalised prejudice against all local government. I recognise that this point is controversial, but it must be made. It is the same with the Government's obdurate refusal to recognise the clear link between the environment in which people live and the way in which they behave—in other words, between the society and the level of crime in London.

I should make it clear that no one excuses crime. The first duty of any effective police system is to detect and punish those who commit offences. That is what our constituents want, expect and deserve. However, it is absurd to postulate a choice between individual responsibility for crime and the broader influence of society on criminal activity. It is not abstract sociology, but plain common sense. Not only Opposition Members make that connection; it is also made increasingly by police officers. For example, in February 1992 Commander David Stevens, head of the crime and community involvement branch of the Metropolitan police, said that crime was directly linked to what he called the "social and economic malaise".

Sir Peter Imbert said in a foreword last year:

> "the crime map fits all too closely over the map of disadvantage."

This year he said:

> "The continuing growth of crime is a fundamental concern which, in part, I attribute to the marginalisation of some elements in our society. The notion that there is a link between crime and social deprivation is a compelling one."

Mr. John Smith, the deputy commissioner, said in May this year:

> "Any comprehensive strategy to address the root causes of crime must not just embrace the contribution of police and the criminal justice system; it must also deal with the whole range of environmental, social, economic and educational factors, which so fundamentally affect its occurrence".

I cannot believe that the Government can turn a blind eye to all the evidence that is building up from those engaged in policing. Sir Peter Imbert put the matter correctly a few days ago, when he said:

> "Effectively then, society is not only more questioning but also more fragmented. Without true social cohesion it will be increasingly difficult for police to respond to the growing disparity and diversity of demands being made upon them."

In London, as elsewhere, there are signs that the police are trying their hardest to curb crime. Local people are desperately committed to the battle against crime, but the question is whether the Government are prepared to back the efforts and commitment of local people and police officers. We submit that they cannot do so unless they accept full responsibility not only for policing but for the state of the economy and, indeed, the state of the nation as a whole. The Government's failure to accept that responsibility, and their belief that inaction is always preferable to Government action, leaves us with no confidence that they can turn back the rising tide of crime either in London or in the rest of Britain.

10.38 am

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I wish to delcare an outside interest as parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation of England and Wales. This annual debate

[Mr. Michael Shersby]

provides the House, and the 84 Members who represent Greater London constituencies, with a valuable opportunity to discuss the policing of our area and to question the police authority's policy, which is uniquely vested in the person of the Home Secretary. It is also an important addition to the excellent opportunity that all London Members have, at least once a year, to discuss with the Commissioner and his colleagues operational policing matters in the area that we all represent. It is additional to the opportunity that all London Members have to serve actively on their police and community consultative committees.

I must express on behalf of my constituents their warmest thanks to the Commissioner, Sir Peter Imbert, and to the men and women of the Metropolitan police service, for the way in which they are policing London in 1992. They do so in the face of increasing criminal activity and of offences which were virtually unknown a decade, let alone a century, ago.

I join the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) in paying tribute to the Metropolitan police and to the deputy commissioner, Mr. John Smith. I take this opportunity to welcome the appointment of Mr. Paul Condon, the chief constable of Kent, to succeed Sir Peter Imbert. Mr. Condon is a distinguished police officer, who will bring new vigour to London and to the job of Commissioner. It is one of the most difficult and challenging jobs that anyone could be asked to undertake, and I am sure that, at 45 years of age and with considerable experience of London, Mr. Condon will make a great success of it.

One of the most serious crimes that the Metropolitan police have to cope with—a crime which affects every citizen who lives in London and the hundreds of thousands, if not millions more who commute in to the capital every day—is Irish republican terrorism. Last year, London was the scene of 21 bombings by the Provisional IRA, including the first use of a mortar in our country when 10 Downing street was attacked. I am sure that the House will join me in paying a warm tribute to Commander George Churchill-Coleman for the outstanding service that he has rendered to the people of London as head of the anti-terrorist branch. His work places us all in his debt. He is also greatly admired by the Police Federation and its members in the Metropolitan area. I am sure that I speak for the whole House in wishing him well.

The range of crime prevention operations and investigative activities described in the Commissioner's report places a heavy responsibility on the Home Secretary, as the police authority for London, and on the House to ensure that most up-to-date preventive measures are available to the police. Those include DNA testing, where evidence obtained from human body fluids could greatly assist in obtaining convictions for serious offences such as rape and murder.

I suggest to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary that the police need the right to seek the authority of a magistrate or a judge for the compulsory taking of sample body fluids when a suspect refuses to supply them. There is a curious anomaly whereby a suspect believed to have an excess of alcohol in the blood, who refuses to supply a blood sample, can be charged with an offence as severe as not giving the blood sample in the first place. Why does that not apply in a rape case when the suspect refuses to give a sample to the police?

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): That is an important issue. My hon. Friend may recollect that during the previous Parliament the Select Committee on Home Affairs recommended the creation of a DNA database, which is essential to the efficient working of the police service. There is one other important reason, with which my hon. Friend may wish to agree: in rape cases or other sex offences, DNA testing eliminates suspects and thus saves police time.

Mr. Shersby: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his important intervention and I entirely agree with his remarks. In serious cases, involving murder and rape for example, samples of body fluids can often prove the guilt or innocence of a suspect. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will give further serious consideration to the recommendations of the Home Affairs Select Committee and will consider amending the law on that matter.

Mr. Jim Dowd (Lewisham, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shersby: I shall not give way, as Mr. Deputy Speaker has urged hon. Members to be brief.

The Police Federation also believes that the law on recorded interviews should be changed. Audio-taped interviews have to be transcribed by the police and supplied to the Crown prosecution service and to the courts. I understand that they listen only to extracts from the transcribed tapes. That consumes large amounts of valuable police time. The police want video recordings of all interviews at police stations, which can be viewed by the Crown prosecution service and the courts. I was therefore glad when my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said in reply to my supplementary question yesterday that

> "one day the courts will be able to see the relevant part of a video interview without any paperwork in between, but that depends as much on technology and on changes in court procedure as it does on progress on our front."—[*Official Report*, 22 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. 552.]

I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will be able to give the House some idea of the time frame for making such progress and for equipping the courts with the necessary equipment.

The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) and I have long campaigned for action to deal with the serious problem of knives, which are all too frequently carried by many young people almost as a matter of course in London. Since I have been parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation, I have become increasingly concious of the problems faced by officers in dealing with that problem and detecting those carrying knives. I call on my right hon. and learned Friend to set up a working party with the police staff associations to review stop-and-search powers.

Powers were conferred on the police by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which replaced powers under the Vagrancy Act 1824. In the eight years since those powers were replaced, they have proved to be inadequate. I wonder whether the House knows that the 1984 Act does not give a constable the power to search a person, vehicle or anything in or on a vehicle, unless he has reasonable grounds to believe that he will find a stolen or prohibited article. That restriction has resulted in police officers not being able to search a person or vehicle without firm grounds, which constitute a virtual certainty. It is frequently impossible for officers to be certain. If they search a person or a vehicle in the belief that a knife will be found and prove to be mistaken, increasingly they face civil action in the courts. So people who carry and use knives are free to slash, stab and kill without much risk of being detected or apprehended. The law should be carefully considered and we should obtain a better balance between the liberty of the citizen and that of those who seek to uphold the law on our behalf.

There is a piece of equipment that the police need in order to protect themselves and others from serious assault, whether from knives or other weapons—the side-handled baton, which is longer than the standard truncheon and thus has a greater range. It is available in a fixed version, worn externally, or a telescopic version, carried by a police officer in the standard truncheon pocket. It has a considerable advantage over the existing truncheon. The police need that equipment because the existing truncheon, which has been in service for many years, is so short. As a result, an officer using the standard truncheon has to get close to an assailant before the truncheon can be used. In those circumstances, the assailant is often able to grab the truncheon, and the officer can find him or herself being beaten with his or her own truncheon.

Trials of the side-handled baton have been postponed, following the unrelated but nevertheless sensitive events in Los Angeles last summer. There is concern that the adoption of a longer baton worn externally may have implications for the image of British policing. However, I know that the Police Federation and other staff associations are to give evidence to the Home Office on how trials might proceed. Whatever reservations my right hon. and learned Friend may understandably have about the introduction of the side-handled baton, I know that he does not have a closed mind on the subject. I hope that those on the Opposition Front-Bench team also have an open mind and will consider the matter most carefully.

Action must be taken to help the police to defend themselves from the frightful number of assaults on both men and women officers each year, which the hon. Member for Sedgefield mentioned. Traditionally, police in Britain do not carry side arms. London, like the rest of Britain, is policed with the consent of the people. The Police Federation wants to keep it that way and does not want the British bobby to carry a pistol, but at the very least we should give our bobbies a baton more in keeping with the requirements of modern policing.

We owe it to those who protect the citizens of London, and other towns and cities throughout the country, to allow them to protect themselves. I know that only too well, because one of my duties as parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation is to attend the funerals of officers who have given their lives serving the public. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary referred to Detective Constable Jim Morrison and Sergeant Alan King, who both lost their lives in the past year. I attended both funerals, with my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), and they were the most moving occasions that I have ever witnessed. Hon. Members should reflect that it is not only the life of a young police officer in his or her prime that is lost; the death is a terrible tragedy for the officer's parents and families, who have lost everything for which they have worked throughout their lives. One has to attend one of those funerals to realise the tremendous sense of loss that is felt. I bring a message to the House from the parents and relatives of those officers. They ask, "Please do something more than you are doing now to protect our wives and husbands." It is a long time since the Metropolitan police were equipped with standard truncheons. It is time that the Government and the House took a grip of the situation and gave every police officer better protection.

Only two weeks ago, the policing of the borough of Hillingdon in which my constituency of Uxbridge is located changed over to the new sector policing system. It is going very well: more officers are being seen, and both the public and the police seem satisfied that sector policing is bringing an improvement. There are eight sectors in my borough, and each team operating in those sectors comprises an inspector, six or seven sergeants, and 30 to 36 constables. Each sector is responsible for policing its own district 24 hours a day. The concept is that the inspector is the team leader. He or she attends residents' meetings and gets to know the people in the district being policed. I welcome that devolution of police powers and believe that it will help the police and the community to work together in a more focused manner. Two officers in the village of Harefield in my constituency have taken the initiative and are running youth activities in their spare time at no expense to the taxpayer. A women officer is running a disco and a male officer is running an angling club. I hope that other members of the community throughout Greater London will do likewise. If young people are not to engage in criminal activities, they must be given leadership and the opportunity to enjoy worthwhile leisure pursuits.

The media concentrate on the crime of rape in London —the hon. Member for Sedgefield cited a 66 per cent. increase—but the media do not always tell the public about police success in clearing up such cases, which deters others from offending. There were eight rapes in the Uxbridge division last year, all but one of which have been cleared up. At least two of the parties were known to each. This year there have been seven rapes, in which at least three of the parties were known to each other and all of which have been cleared up. That is what I call first-class policing. When considering rape, it is necessary for the House and the community to acknowledge that very often the parties are known to each other.

Ms. Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shersby: No, I shall not give way. I wish to finish my speech so as to allow as many hon. Members as possible to speak.

I have great confidence in the Metropolitan police. They are doing a first-class job in difficult circumstances and they deserve the confidence of all hon. Members. They certainly have my full support.

10.57 am

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): In the few minutes left, may I say how much the Opposition welcome the Home Secretary's apparent willingness to reconsider the issue of police accountability in London. He seems to be offering us a review. We must hope that it is full and open

[Mr. Paul Boateng]

—a Clarke review rather than a Heseltine mark 1 review, although a Heseltine mark 4 might do in the circumstances.

It is important to win recognition of the fact that an elected police authority for London is a means of ensuring, first, that we have an effective system of crime prevention which involves local authorities and does not turn its back on them; secondly, that because there is an accountable, democratically elected forum, the police and the community come together. That forum should be the police authority for London, elected by the people of London. It can tackle the problem of growing crime on the estates, and of racial and sexual harassment.

The authority can also make constructive proposals for police training. I say that because nothing is more important than ensuring that the constables on the beat —and we need more of them—are trained to ensure that they are responsive to the needs of the community. That is particularly important in respect of residential burglaries. There is increasingly a perception among those who have suffered the personal, emotional and psychological invasion of burglary that they do not enjoy the response that they need from the police officers who first come to the door.

Added resources are also required for the valuable victim support scheme, which often operates on a shoestring—its funding undercut by local authority restrictions on financing. Those involved in that scheme want to work with the police, and the police want to work with them, but neither is able to do so.

An elected police authority for London is long overdue. It would provide a forum for those issues, and the Opposition will press the Home Secretary to give London just that.

It being Eleven o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings).*

Health Service (London)

11 am

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the publication of Sir Bernard Tomlinson's advice on the future of London's health services.

The House will recall that a year ago the Government asked Sir Bernard and a small team of experts to carry out an inquiry into health services, medical education and research in London. The inquiry had a wide remit and addressed complex and long-standing issues. The central problem is that, over a period of decades, London's health service has become increasingly poorly matched to the needs of Londoners. The Government are determined to tackle that problem, and with that in mind we asked Sir Bernard to proceed.

He was asked for a strategic view of London, working with the grain of the new NHS, and to look not only at the hospital service, but at primary health care and the organisation of medical teaching and research.

Sir Bernard has now submitted his report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and myself. We are publishing it today. Copies have been placed in the Vote Office and sent to health authorities, the university of London, and to the many professional and other bodies having an interest in its findings.

I place on record our thanks to Sir Bernard and his team for the very considerable effort that has gone into the inquiry and for producing so thorough and comprehensive a report.

The report does not offer any easy solutions to problems that have bedevilled policy makers and professionals for years. It is wide ranging and contains many detailed recommendations. Its key findings are that the current pattern of acute hospital provision in London is both undesirable and unsustainable and that it requires substantial modification to meet the current and future health needs of Londoners; that medical education and research need to be organised along different lines, to maintain and to strengthen London's status as a major national and international medical centre; that primary and community health services are comparatively poorly developed in London and that resources need to be reinvested from the hospital sector into these services to bring them up to the standards common in other places.

The Government welcome Sir Bernard's broad conclusions, which are in line with earlier reports—such as that from the King's Fund. I must stress, however, that his report is advice to the Government, not Government policy.

I am sure that the report will be widely and keenly debated. We welcome that. We will listen carefully to the views expressed. Indeed, I have asked my hon. Friend the Minister for Health to visit the institutions potentially most affected to discuss at first hand the ideas set out in the report.

When we are satisfied that we have heard all points of view, we shall respond by setting out our detailed proposals on changes in the NHS. I anticipate that that will be early in the new year. In bringing forward proposals, our prime consideration will be to safeguard and improve health care for Londoners.—*[Interruption.]* These are important matters, and I shall be grateful if Labour Members will listen to the detail.

We shall ensure also that full account is taken of the implications for NHS staff working in London, and of the need for joint planning with education and research interests of NHS changes that affect them. I can assure the House that no major decisions will be taken without proper consultation using the well-established, existing NHS procedures. However, the Government accept the widely accepted view that London has too many hospitals and too many beds. Change is essential if we are to avoid the risks highlighted in the report of a spiral of decline in London's hospitals, and if we are to secure the benefits of a switch to more primary and community care.

There are, in addition, some immediate issues concerning the four trusts—Bart's, King's, St. Mary's and St. Thomas's—which have already been constituted, but which do not come into full existence until April 1993. Sir Bernard's report makes specific recommendations about those trusts.

In order to put ourselves in a position to decide their future configuration in the new year, I propose that consultation in respect of the Bart's, King's and St. Thomas's trusts be initiated in line with Sir Bernard's recommendations. The report raises no major issues relating to St. Mary's, and that trust will proceed as planned from April 1993.

In the case of St. George's—an applicant for third wave trust status—we will initiate consultation on a revised configuration, separating acute and community services. Again, that is in line with Sir Bernard's recommendations. I stress that those will be consultations about the future configuration of the management of the hospitals. They do not imply prior acceptance of the report's recommendations about sites.

The report makes a number of important recommendations about medical education and research, and they centre on improving the quality of medical education and research by amalgamating London's medical schools and, in the longer term, postgraduate institutions into four multi-faculty colleges of London university.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and I believe that the broad principles underlying those recommendations will remain valid whatever detailed pattern of NHS change emerges after the statutory consultations. He has therefore written to the chairman of the Higher Education Funding Council for England indicating his broad support for the report's conclusions on medical education and research. My right hon. Friend has invited the HEFCE, working with the university of London and the other bodies concerned, to take forward implementation of the proposals.

The Government intend to act immediately on two of the report's other recommendations. First, we have decided to establish as soon as possible a special London implementation group to carry forward work arising from Sir Bernard's report. The group will be part of the NHS management executive and will involve the HEFCE. It will be chaired by Mr. Tim Chessells, who will, of course, give up his current post as chairman of North East Thames regional health authority. Mr. Chessells will co-operate closely with the four Thames regional chairmen. Further details of its remit and membership will be announced in due course.

I stress that the group will be concerned with implementation of the policy, not policy-making. I decided that it would be wise to establish the group beforehand, so that it does not start cold from the date that I announce my decisions. There is work it needs to do before then—*[Interruption.]* These are important issues and, although I hope that Opposition Members will be able to give their views, it will be helpful if I may be allowed to complete my statement.

We accept also the report's advice that urgent further work is needed to review the disposition of several specialist services across London. I shall be asking the implementation group to set in train those specialty reviews as its first priority. In carrying forward that work, we shall ensure that London's world-class centres of excellence in treatment, teaching and research are clearly identified and safeguarded.

It is perhaps inevitable that attention will focus on the report's recommendations about hospitals, but it would be wrong to concentrate on those to the exclusion of the recommendations about primary and community care, and about services for the mentally ill and those with learning disabilities. The decisions taken on Sir Bernard's report must be seen as a whole, as part of a new and better approach to the provision of health care for Londoners.

Many people, across political parties, and including the British Medical Association and the King's Fund, agree on the need to improve and restructure London's health services. Achieving the changes necessary will mean some difficult choices. The Government's overriding aim is to improve the health services in London and for Londoners. It is on that basis that, after careful consultation, decisions on Sir Bernard's report will be taken.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): First, let me thank the Secretary of State and her office for arranging for the statement to be transcribed into braille.

The statement represents a lost opportunity. It is the first real challenge that the Secretary of State has had to take on since she took office earlier this year, and I regret to say that it fails according to every criterion. Why does it contain no reference to paragraphs 30, 48 or 227 of Sir Bernard's report, which deal with the investment that is needed in London's health care—hospital and primary care—to bring it up to an acceptable standard? The report and the statement, by implication, accept that the present standard is unacceptable.

Why is there no reference to ring fencing the existing resources that are being spent in London? Why is there no commitment to protecting London's health care—London's investment—from the ravages of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the autumn statement on 12 November? We can only assume from the statement that the Secretary of State has already given in on the question of resources, and that her proposals—her interpretation of Sir Bernard's report—will be an excuse for cuts, rather than for the future investment that is needed.

Does the Secretary of State accept that the reversal of the internal market and the commercialisation of the health service are a prerequisite for the ability to put London's health care back on its feet? Does she accept that the protection of the specialties mentioned in the report and the statement cannot be achieved by their integration in the internal market—that it can be achieved only by their integration in a planned and coherent health service for the future? Does she agree that the establishment of a

[Mr. David Blunkett]

health authority for London is a vital prerequisite for the planning of changes, and for future investment in primary and community facilities in the capital?

Why is there nothing in the statement—bar a passing reference to "primary health care"—that would make anyone at all confident that the Secretary of State really believes that it is necessary to invest new resources in building up those inadequate facilities? Why does the statement make no mention of the need for improvement in accident and emergency facilities in the community, and in out-patient departments? Why has it nothing to say on such vital issues as how we are to invest the resources, and the time scale over which the changes will be made? Why was the Secretary of State unable to outline to the House the terms of reference of the implementation group, or its membership? The Secretary of State has had Sir Bernard's report for a long time, and the terms of reference are crucial to whether anyone in London or the country as a whole can believe a word that she says about good intentions towards the health care of the capital.

Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that the Government's actions over the past decade have turned a problem into a crisis for London's health care? Does she accept that consistent underfunding, lack of planning and gross neglect of primary and hospital investment lie at the heart of the problem with which the statement deals? Will she extend the totally inadequate consultation period to allow real participation by the people whose voice is seldom heard in the clamour of professional experts and vested interests—the voice of the people of London themselves?

Does the Secretary of State understand that, although Opposition Members understand that the status quo is not an option—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"]. The inadequate health care of the people of London is not an option, and that is what the status quo would mean.

The protection of the health service, the jobs of health workers and the safeguarding of any promises that are made will be the Opposition's absolute priority. We have set out our criteria. We have countenanced no closure and no change in service, unless and until those criteria are met. This morning's statement meets none of them; it achieves none of the goals that have been acknowledged by many people to be a vital part of putting London's health care on its feet and building confidence in the future.

We are here not to dig the Secretary of State out of a hole of her own making, but to protect the well-being, the health care and the health workers of the people of London; and that is what the Opposition will be doing in the months ahead.

Mrs. Bottomley: What we have just heard is the ranting of a NUPE-sponsored spokesman.

Sir Bernard's report—which I hope all hon. Members will read in great detail—identifies over-provision that has taken place in London for many years. There are, for instance, more acute beds in London—3·9 per 1,000 people compared with 2·5 per 1,000 in other parts of the country. Spending on London's acute services amounts to £260 a head, compared with £173 in other cities. Some 20 per cent. of health service resources are spent in London, which contains 15 per cent. of the population.

The Opposition always come up with the same knee-jerk reaction that nothing can be solved without a larger cheque book. In the report, Sir Bernard states:

> "In 1992-93 spending per inner London resident on hospital services, *after* weighting for morbidity and mortality (which adds about 5 per cent.), and *allowing* for excess London costs, will be 20 per cent. greater than the average for England. The problems of the inner London hospitals are plainly not due to overall lack of resources."

What we are considering—and it is a sensitive and complex matter—is how we can ensure that London services are matched more effectively to the needs of Londoners. The great institutions—the teaching, post-graduate and acute hospitals, which go back for many years—are no longer appropriate to a health service where hospitals all over the home counties are able to offer advanced and sophisticated treatment. At the same time, the community services have not been adequately developed.

Clearly, the proposals have resource implications. When I return to the House in the new year to inform hon. Members of the decisions that we have made in regard to implementing the recommendations, I shall of course make the resource elements clear. At this stage however, the proposals constitute Sir Bernard's advice to the Government; they are not yet Government policy.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): My right hon. Friend will know that the news that St. Mary's hospital trust is to proceed is welcome news to my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) and myself. The good work of that hospital is already widely recognised.

Will my right hon. Friend confirm that her statement is not about cuts in London's national health service provision, but about restructuring and improving the service? What action does she intend to take to bring home to the people of London the nature of the review, as opposed to the disinformation that will undoubtedly flow?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and also to my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke). I was able to make that announcement about St. Mary's, but I know that many of their constituents use other hospitals in the capital.

It is important for us to take this opportunity to engage in an enlightened discussion of the challenges contained in the report. It is about the 20th report on London's health services to appear over the past 100 years. I am encouraged by what so many commentators, from the British Medical Association and even the NHS Support Federation, which is a politically motivated group that supports the Labour party, have said. Julia Schofield the director of the NHS Support Federation, said:

> "It probably is the best decision to close one or more hospitals."

It is important we have a reconfiguration of services, making it clear that the aim and the objective is improved health services for Londoners.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Is the Secretary of State aware that her grandfather, who was a medical student at Bart's, is today turning in his grave because of the extraordinary act of betrayal by his granddaughter in the House? Does she not understand that Londoners will not let her close Bart's and that she has engaged upon a battle that she cannot win? If she does not believe me, will she go to the hospital today and see the tears of the patients?

Mrs. Bottomley: My grandfather, who trained at Bart's and then went on to be a single-handed general practitioner in Chester, would have been enormously impressed by the developments in primary health care all over the country. There is concern, however, about London, where still more is spent, officially, per head on family health service specialties but where there is not a sufficiently advanced service available for Londoners. We have more GPs who are over 65, more single-handed GPs, fewer practice nurses and poorer community services, with fewer district nurses. I have no doubt that my grandfather would support the proposition that we should not hold on to institutions but should think of health services—but, of course, patients first, also education and also research.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): My right hon. Friend will know that the proposal to change the nature of or to close Charing Cross hospital will be met with considerable suspicion and much opposition. It will be hard to convince people that the closing of that hospital will improve health care in west London. When my right hon. Friend reviews the Tomlinson report, will she take into account the vital need to maintain, at the very least, the accident and emergency and primary health care facilities on the Charing Cross site?

Mrs. Bottomley: I well understand the great loyalty that every individual constituency Member of Parliament has to his or her own particular institutions, but, with 45 acute hospitals serving 250 beds or more and with 12 major undergraduate teaching hospitals, it is clear that there has to be change. My hon. Friend has made some extremely important points about Charing Cross. When my hon. Friend the Minister for Health visits the hospital to discuss the proposals and to consider the way forward, I shall make sure that he takes particular note of those points of concern that have been raised by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Nobody doubts that the health service in London needs a shake-up, but I am sure that the Secretary of State is aware that some of the things that she has said will cause concern rather than comfort, not just to those who live in London but to those who work in London and visit London and use the health service. All services across the public sector cost more in the capital city than elsewhere, per head of use. I am sure that the Secretary of State is aware that there is a great need for the transfer of resources to primary and community care, but unless the reforms mean that when people who live in London need a hospital bed they can get one, and that when people who live in London need an ambulance they can get one and do not have to wait six hours for it, and that when people who live in London have an accident they can be admitted to an accident and emergency department, and that when people who live and work in London find that instead of a statistical analysis of how many beds are needed there is a proper working out of how to meet the daily needs of that part of the country which, paradoxically, serves its people least well, the people whom the Secretary of State seeks to serve will be caused the greatest worry. At the moment we have worry. It is up to her to make sure that she listens and ensures that the resources are there to improve services, not to make them worse as a result of these radical proposals.

Mrs. Bottomley: There is nothing that the hon. Gentleman has said with which I do not heartily agree. They are all very important points. All of them are aspects which we shall consider when we hold our consultations on the proposals. However, the hon. Gentleman knows full well that his constituency is served by three outstanding hospitals—King's, Guy's and St. Thomas's. He knows as well as anybody who is remotely informed about the health service in London that it is not possible for all three to continue without changes. The sense of uncertainty is very damaging for morale. It is right that we should grasp the nettle and consult and that we should take decisions. There is no one who, in any half-informed way, thinks that the situation can or should continue as it is. Propping up the acute services often starves the community services. We have to take decisions that will bring an end to the uncertainty for staff and which, above all, will lead to a better health service for Londoners which meets exactly the criteria that the hon. Gentleman identified.

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): After many weeks of uncertainty, speculation and rumour, I am pleased that at last the Tomlinson report has been published. There is no doubt that during the consultation period my right hon. Friend will be lobbied by those who are affected by the proposals. However, I ask her to bear it in mind that in my Hertfordshire constituency there has been concern for many years that our local hospitals have been disadvantaged because London hospitals have been demanding too great a share of the resources available. *[Interruption.]* We are all looking after our constituency interests. That point must be made. I remind my right hon. Friend that my local hospitals are treating former Londoners who have moved out of the capital. They also deserve to be considered.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is exactly right. There are hospitals throughout the home counties that wish to treat patients who traditionally were sent to London. In the home counties we have encouraged those health authorities in the outer London ring to continue this year with the traditional patterns of referral, but it makes no sense to continue with a pattern of referral, unless it is what the patient wishes, simply to prop up institutions because nobody has been brave enough to make the necessary decisions. My hon. Friend speaks for very many throughout the home counties who say, "Please can we now reorganise the health service to meet the needs of the population today and tomorrow, not those of the last 50 or 100 years?"

Ms. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): May I tell the Secretary of State that the report and her statement will be received by the users of London's health services with anger, horror and fear—fear in the area that I represent, where some 728,000 people who work and live in the area served by St. Thomas's know about the waiting lists in that area and cannot, therefore, see any justification whatsoever for even contemplating closing or merging St. Thomas's and Guy's hospitals. If St. Thomas's accident and emergency service

[Ms. Kate Hoey]

closes, the Secretary of State will make Londoners move around in ambulances and die in ambulances in London's traffic jams on their way to hospital.

Mrs. Bottomley: I do not accept what the hon. Lady says. When she studies the report she will see that it makes special mention of the Lambeth community hospital, which she has brought to my attention in the past. The report makes it clear that, for that small area to have such an intensity of acute services, without sufficient community services, is inappropriate. She will know how her constituents frequently use an accident and emergency centre instead of using a GP resource; there is a need to bring forward development in that area.

As I told the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), knowing the area well, I believe that the staff know full well that the situation cannot continue and that, above all, what people want is a decision. In an editorial, *The Guardian*, said:

> "Only political ostriches would refuse to recognise these facts. London's health service consumes more money than anywhere else but provides its citizens with a worse deal."

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the inevitable, if uncomfortable, logic of her argument. Decisions on these matters have been postponed for far too long. Will she assure the House that alternative medical use of Bart's, which has been a centre of international medical excellence for the past nine centuries, will be explored before the recommended disposal, to ensure that its long-standing traditions can continue, consistent with today's changing health needs?

Mrs. Bottomley: I can only assure the House that our decisions will be determined, above all, by the needs of patients. Their needs must come first, but the Tomlinson report makes it clear that education and research occupy a similarly important position. We must make decisions according to those criteria. There is no doubt that hospitals in locations where the population has moved away are having great difficulty matching their activity to their resources. Bart's is certainly one such institution. Nobody will make decisions on any of these matters lightly. My hon. Friend the Minister for Health will visit Bart's and the other crucial sites to discuss the way forward. I have already announced that we shall consult on the merged management of Bart's and the Royal London hospital, but that does not prejudge long-term decisions on the sites.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The right hon. Lady's failure to mention in her statement the crucial question of resources and her subsequent quotation of the opinion of Sir Bernard Tomlinson that London was over-provided in terms of finance will be greeted with dismay and cynicism throughout London. No adequate evidence has been produced for that assertion, and almost everyone who has hospital connections fears that the Government will use the allegation that there are too many hospital beds in London to cut basic health services under the guise of switching resources to primary care. She placed much emphasis on the centres of excellence. Will she assure us that at least one of the centres of excellence in postgraduate medicine that deals with heart and lung disease, which is a high priority in the nation's health—the special health authority which includes the Brompton and the London chest hospital in my constituency—will be preserved and not forced into an unwanted merger with adjacent hospitals?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am saddened that the right hon. Gentleman should present the report in that context because he is well informed about the long-term dilemmas facing the London health service and about the excessive provision of institutions. I am sure that he is well aware of the independent King's Fund report, which considered even more dramatic changes than those outlined in the Tomlinson report. I cannot make any announcements except that we shall consult on the proposals. These are Sir Bernard Tomlinson's proposals, not Government policy. It is proposed that the London chest hospital should work with the Royal London because of the view that single-specialty centres increasingly benefit from a close association with a hospital where all the other specialties are available. That, again, is a matter on which there will be further discussions.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): When considering provision in outer London, will my right hon. Friend take full account of the very important links between, for example, a community such as Ealing and Ealing hospital and do all that she can to shake up the emergency and ordinary sections of the London ambulance service, which are causing enormous distress to many people and which need enormous improvement? If such improvements resulted from the review, it would be most valuable.

Mrs. Bottomley: The health care needs of my hon. Friend's constituents and those across London will be a high priority in reaching decisions. My hon. Friend asked about the London ambulance service, which was not considered by the Tomlinson inquiry. There has been much investment in a new computer system and vehicles and increased resources. Like my hon. Friend, I am determined to see an improvement in the standards that are achieved.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East): Would the Secretary of State like to comment on paragraph 125 of the report, which deals with St. Thomas's and the Guy's and Lewisham trust? Sir Bernard makes it quite clear that, in his view, Lewisham hospital should have a secure future. I hope that the Secretary of State agrees with that. Where does that leave Lewisham hospital if the amalgamation of St. Thomas's and Guy's goes ahead? What will be its status?

Mrs. Bottomley: The proposal in the Tomlinson report is that Lewisham hospital should become a NHS trust on its own, leaving Guy's and St. Thomas's to be managed jointly. We shall consult on the report's proposals, and no firm decisions will be taken until we are satisfied about the outcome of that consultation. I remind the hon. Lady that, before the establishment of any NHS trust, the primary conditions must be that the trust will lead to improved services for patients.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that we are talking about a reallocation of resources in London and not a reduction? Does she accept that many people in London want to see better general practice and more resources put into the care of mental health patients? Does she accept that there has been a movement of population out of central London to the surburbs and that outer London boroughs want more and not less?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend puts the case correctly. An editorial in *The Times* said:

> "Londoners need basic, unglamorous health care from GPs, nurses and community health centres. That can only be paid for with the money raised by making London hospitals better suited to the needs not of their doctors but of their patients."

That has been known for decades.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): The Secretary of State must be aware that, week by week, every London Member receives ongoing complaints from constituents about the lack of services and about waiting times and waiting lists. So much for her comments that we are overprovided for in London. If the proposals that she has announced today are implemented, they will be disastrous for the people of London. She specifically mentioned St. George's hospital in my constituency, which is not threatened with closure, but yet again faces reductions in expenditure and bad provision. I take very much the point that was made by the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) about Charing Cross hospital: hospitals such as St. George's are being expected to take over from hospitals that are being closed, yet they cannot provide sufficient facilities in our constituencies.

Mrs. Bottomley: The point is that health care in London uses more resources to less good effect in terms of bed usage and the number of consultants per patient than health care elsewhere in the country. All the indicators show that in London there is a great investment of resources without the same output in terms of patient care. Take, for example, varicose vein surgery. In one London teaching hospital the cost was about £1,300 compared with £210 at one hospital outside London. Resources are inappropriately used.

I made it clear that we shall go forward with the consultation on the separation of the community services from the acute services at St. George's. Time and again, acute hospitals dominate the agenda, and the community services are under-resourced and not given the autonomy and priority that they need. Many independent experts have made the same comment, and I have no doubt that the changes will lead to improved services for the hon. Gentleman's constituents.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement about St. George's, with its long-overdue approval for moving ahead with the application for hospital trust status. That will enable the hospital to meet the extra demand referred to it.

I also ask my right hon. Friend to do two things on behalf of my constituents. The first is to explain to Puzzled of Lavender Hill the relationship between the recommendations of the Tomlinson inquiry on transfer to the community and the improvements to waiting lists. The second is to ensure that when her ministerial colleague goes round London, and especially when he visits St. Thomas's hospital, he has in his back pocket a map of London bus routes, so that he can see where patients come from and whether there are alternative bus routes to other hospitals that may be asked to take them on.

Mrs. Bottomley: I can certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance. Clearly, travel times and transport routes to hospitals are fundamental to hospital usage. That was considered by the Tomlinson inquiry and will form part of our deliberations when we consult on the proposals.

Health waiting lists in London have been substantially reduced over the past year—by about 10 per cent.—but my hon. Friend is right to say that his constituents want an ever better service. When hon. Members have time to study the report they will see that many aspects of it identify the way in which difficulties have emerged in London—for example, the different relationships with GPs, and the difficulties they often have in securing a bed; people often use admission through accident and emergency departments as a route into hospital. All sorts of inappropriate patterns have developed in London, all revolving round an inappropriate use—indeed, a misuse—of the substantial resources put into London's health service.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): May we take it from the tenor of the right hon. Lady's remarks that she contemplates closing either St. Thomas's hospital or Guy's hospital? In those considerations, what part will the development value of the site, as well as the costing of London's services, play?

The right hon. Lady recently had on her desk a report on King's College hospital which showed that the conduct of its accident and emergency department was a shambles in terms both of management and of facilities. How is that hospital supposed to cope with accidents and emergencies if one of the adjoining hospitals with similar facilities is closed?

Mrs. Bottomley: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will have detected from the tenor of my remarks that I regard that as a serious matter, and as a problem which must be tackled. It has existed for generations, and now is the time to take a view on how we can improve health services for Londoners. That is exactly what I intend to convey. No decisions have been made, and no decisions will be made until my hon. Friend the Minister for Health has had the opportunity to visit the institutions involved, and we have had the opportunity to examine the report, the costings and the resources, and to think carefully of how decisions will affect patients, what the implications are for health service staff, and what the issues are with regard to education and research. The subject is complex, but the needs of patients will come first.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman is aware that I have placed in the Library a copy of the report mentioning the accident and emergency services at King's College hospital. To King's College hospital's credit, it has already provided the service recommended by Sir Bernard Tomlinson in that it has a general practitioner available at the accident and emergency department, because A and E services in London are often used in the way in which people outside London use their GPs.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I thank my right hon. Friend for coming to the House on a day when there is the maximum number of London Members present. It is good that she should seek to share the benefits of Sir Bernard Tomlinson's advice with us in that way.

Am I right in my optimism that the consequences of Sir Bernard's recommendations for community hospitals, which do an outstanding job, will be that St. Vincent's

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

hospital at Eastcote, and Northwood Pinner and district hospital in Pinner, in my constituency will have an even better future?

Thirdly, will general hospitals, such as Mount Vernon in my constituency, which takes patients across the borough boundaries from the home counties, such as Hertfordshire, have a better future, too? Demographic trends suggest that their catchment area will become more populous.

Mrs. Bottomley: Community hospitals are strongly advocated by Sir Bernard, because of the inappropriate use often made of acute hospitals and a relative lack of nursing home care in London. There are fewer district nurses in London, too. The report raises a number of issues in which, although the resources spent are way above the average elsewhere, the service delivered is not appropriate to the needs of Londoners today and tomorrow.

My hon. Friend will want me to give him an absolute assurance that his hospital stands to do nothing other than benefit from Sir Bernard's proposals, but, of course, I cannot give any hon. Member such an assurance, because it is only right to take forward the proposals by consulting on them and thinking about the detailed implications. However, I can say to hon. Members whose constituencies are outside the inner London ring that although they have traditionally sent patients to the costly inner London teaching hospitals, increasingly they want to treat them within local facilities, where treatment can be given more cost-effectively.

I suggest that those who argue that the quality of service in such outer London hospitals is not of the highest standard should have that argument out with some of the clinicians at those hospitals.

Ms. Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): What the Secretary of State has said about the London ambulance service shows that she greatly underestimates the scale of the crisis in public confidence now besetting it. Does she agree that it is unacceptable for GPs to have to wait for many hours for ambulances for sick people? GPs see getting through to the ambulance service as an endless problem—often they have to deal with answerphones. Does the Secretary of State accept that urgent steps must be taken to restore safety levels to the London ambulance service, and that before any improvement in London's health service can be secured she must give urgent attention to the improvements needed in the ambulance service?

Mrs. Bottomley: The Tomlinson report is not about the London ambulance service, but I am happy to say that I expect to see improvements in the service which it delivers. The issues involved are complex. For example, the absentee rate in London is much higher than in other ambulance services. There has been a great investment in technology and equipment, and I have made it clear that I expect to see an improvement in the standard of service available to GPs and patients in London.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the over-provision for London hospitals has been made at the expense of hospitals in the region, and that at St. Helier hospital, in my constituency, the changes proposed by the Tomlinson report will be welcomed? Does she agree that habits have now changed, and patients get the best possible care at their local hospitals, so that is where the resources should be concentrated?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is exactly right. In the past, many patients might have travelled from the outer London areas into London, partly because London was the centre of all the expertise and also, frankly, because from the point of view of the local health authorities, the teaching hospitals were effectively a free good.

The whole point about the health reforms is that the local districts now have to make informed decisions about where to send their patients. They will also want to take into consideration the cost effectiveness and the quality of that service. The patients concerned would rather be treated near to home than have to get on a train and go to London for the benefit of medical students or anyone else who might want to see them. There is a different pattern of health service available today. The Tomlinson report seeks to ensure that we take the decisions to ensure that in the home counties generally, as well as in London, we can have a service that is more appropriate to the needs of today and tomorrow.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): It is no good the Secretary of State coming here like Florence Nightingale fresh out of charm school and expecting us to swallow this garbage that she has given us today. No one in the country trusts a word that this lying, incompetent Government say these days——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am not having those remarks. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will withdraw them—*[Interruption.]* Order. I think that I am fairly capable of dealing with this matter if hon. Members will allow me to do so.

Mr. Banks: If it upsets you, Madam Speaker, I withdraw the remark of course.

It is no wonder that Bart's cannot compete, given that its services are based on tremendous skills. The Secretary of State is just creating a squalid market in the national health service. Will she give a guarantee that every penny saved from hospital closures in London will go into primary and community care?

If the Secretary of State has not made up her mind, what is the implementation group under the chairmanship of a Tory party member doing?

Mrs. Bottomley: I shall pass over the hon. Gentleman's earlier comments. On the implementation group, many hon. Members who have constituents who work in the health service know that they will be concerned about their job prospects. If there is to be redeployment from the acute side into the community side, there will need to be changes. Some of the consultants will need to think about their future. There are complex issues around the redeployment of staff.

Complex issues are also involved in ensuring that we have a proper provision of accident and emergency services. Sir Bernard in his report identifies 14 cancer services and a similar number of cardio-thoracic services. There is much duplication of specialist services, often on isolated sites. We need a review of those specialist services.

Tim Chessells and the implementation group will do much of the ground work, so that when recommendations are made in the new year, he is able to take forward the proposals. He will, for example, discuss matters with the BMA and with the Royal College of Nursing—with all those who are saying that we need to take decisions, but that we need to treat the staff and services properly.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): May I remind the House that in the final four years of the previous Labour Government, they proposed to close five of the six hospitals in the borough of Greenwich, so there is not much new in this? In terms of the implications for services, may I remind my right hon. Friend that within four miles of the House there are six neuroscience units? The previous system led to the proposal that more than £50 million should be spent on getting another neuroscience unit at the Brook hospital.

May I specifically ask my right hon. Friend that the implementation does not take place until it is clear from the Ministry of Defence whether there is a long-term future for the Queen Elizabeth military hospital? That may have implications for the future of the Brook services and for the Greenwich district hospital services.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. and close Friend makes a good point. He is an extremely diligent and dutiful constituency Member whose constituents are extremely well served by his championing of their interests. I can ensure that at every level of my Department, the particular needs of the constituents of the hon. Member for Eltham will be properly recognised and understood.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): The Minister will know that it is suggested that the proposals for Queen Charlotte's and Charing Cross hospitals in my constituency and the neighbouring one will save considerable money. I want to be assured that if any money is saved, either by selling sites or as a result of other changes proposed in the report, it will not be used simply to mop up the existing deficit. If the Secretary of State uses the money for that purpose, she will not be able to stand at the Dispatch Box and say that the changing patterns, which are necessary in many respects, are being used to provide the services necessary for existing patients, for those in queues waiting for operations and for those needing community care.

Before the Secretary of State answers, may I remind her that the reason why no one trusts the Government on such issues is that when they closed the long-stay psychiatric units, the money from the sites was supposed to go into community care. It did not; it went to subsidise the Government in other areas. As a result, the changing pattern of health care in London and elsewhere has not been financed properly and that is why we are in trouble. I want a guarantee, please, that money saved will not be used to mop up the existing deficit, but will provide the new services to which the report refers.

Mrs. Bottomley: For the hon. Gentleman to question the Government's commitment to the health service is bizarre in the extreme. After all, we are the Government who have increased funding for the health service to the tune of well over 50 per cent. in real terms. We have a record of which we can be proud, unlike the Labour party. Every time we discuss funding, there is no doubt that this party can hold its head high and that the Labour party has to retreat from the statistics.

It is also the case that we need to ensure that resources are used effectively. I cannot make detailed announcements about resources at this stage. However, I accept the point made by the hon. Gentleman and by many hon. Members that to take forward the changes, we need to ensure that the patients are safeguarded. Patients' needs come first. We want a more appropriate and, frankly, more cost-effective service which meets patients' needs. As well as the needs of patients, there is also the need for education and research.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that for some time there have been proposals to bring the Queen Charlotte's unit within the main Hammersmith hospital, although it would still keep its identity. It is part of the general movement in health care to realise that single-specialty hospitals are an area in which improvement can be gained by bringing them into the site of a hospital where all the disciplines are available.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Speaker: Order. We must now proceed with the Adjournment debate—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I will take the House into my confidence. If questions and answers were shorter, I should be able to accommodate more hon. Members.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I remind you of Speaker Weatherill's regular comments in the House when hon. Members were not called during an important statement such as this? He promised to take them first when there was a subsequent debate on the issue. Will you adopt the same procedure?

Madam Speaker: I do not give such hostages to fortune. However, I have a very good memory for faces. The hon. Gentleman had better leave it to me when I go back to my office to remember the faces that were here today.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am sure that you will not forget beards either.

Madam Speaker: Or badges.

Mr. Corbyn: Or badges. Thank you. Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), will you tell us whether you have had a request from the Government for a special debate on the Tomlinson report so that those of us who were unable to ask questions today can develop our arguments in defence of London's health service?

Madam Speaker: I have not had such a request from the Government. As we heard the Secretary of State say today, we shall come back to the matter on another occasion when I hope that we shall have a full debate. As I said, I remember the friendly faces around me today.

Policing (London)

Question again proposed, That this House do now adjourn.

11.58 am

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I welcome the annual review of policing in London. This is a general debate and it is not possible to be specific—only to refer to a number of key points about the state of policing in the capital.

I shall comment on the four police forces that serve the people of London and make some remarks about police strategy and the Metropolitan police. The Royal Parks constabulary serves Regent's park in my constituency, as well as part of the City of Westminster and London as a whole. The constabulary performs a useful role for the royal parks, and I warmly welcome the standard of service that it gives both to the residential community and to a large number of visitors to London. I would, however, ask my hon. Friend the Minister to pass to the Treasury my view that the employment of expensive Royal Parks constables on what amount to car parking duties needs to be reviewed, especially as the constabulary is to become responsible for policing Hyde park, for which the Metropolitan police have been responsible since 1866.

The other constabulary that performs an invaluable service in London is the British Transport police. That very efficient police service has shouldered a large part of the burden unwelcomely brought to London by the Provisional IRA's mainland terrorist attack on the capital. Every day, the British Transport police have to decide whether to close down part of the underground system or mainline railway stations. It is worth placing on the record the excellent job done by the chief constable and his officers. They make an often unseen but most commendable contribution to the safety and welfare of the travelling public in London. The 400 British Transport police officers on the London underground system, working with the management of London Underground, have continued with their three-year success story in reducing the fear of crime as well as the incidence of crime on the London underground system. Their work shows that crime can be controlled.

It is important to note that crimes of violence against the public travelling on the underground fell by more than 20 per cent., against the figure in the comparable period last year. The London underground is believed to be the only urban transport system anywhere in the world on which crime is falling. That is important news, because it means that people can travel on the underground system without a sense of fear and because it will encourage visitors to come to our capital—something which we warmly welcome.

London's second largest police service is the City of London police, with a strength of about 800 officers and nearly 400 civilians. That force is also in the front line in the fight against terrorism. I need only refer to the appalling incident at St. Mary Axe in April this year, which left three people dead and another 100 injured. The cost to property has been estimated at about £2 billion. The City of London police and the lord mayor responded to that awful incident magnificently. We should remember that the City force also has responsibility for dealing with major fraud and, in recent times, the force has accepted no fewer than 105 investigations into fraudulent activity. They have a very good record.

The largest of the four police forces serving London, and the one that is traditionally the subject of our annual debate, is the Metropolitan police force. The funding of the work of this, the largest of our 52 United Kingdom police services, costs more than £1·6 billion, of which 84 per cent. goes on personnel costs. The costs of policing in London are certainly very high.

I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's establishment of the Sheehy inquiry into aspects of the structure of the police service, especially in relation to police ranks and how they should be rewarded. That review is important.

There is an urgent need to re-examine the way in which resources are deployed within the Metropolitan police. I do not believe that there should be an increase in the authorised establishment for the Metropolitan police in London. That may seem a curious statement to make, but I make it because I believe that we still have a long way to go in improving the deployment of resources in the Metropolitan police. In that context, I refer to a written answer that I received to a question that I tabled earlier this week about the central command complex at New Scotland Yard, the 69 divisional control rooms and the 11 other specialist units, which employ a total of 726 police officers as well as 477 civilians. There seems to be massive duplication in the provision of control rooms. That is unnecessary and not efficient. I should like that to be reviewed as a matter of urgency so that we can deploy those expensive uniformed police officers to the front-line police duties in which the people of London want them to be engaged. We should employ civilians—including, perhaps, retired police officers with knowledge and expertise—in duties that do not require fit young men and women.

Let me refer to the problems of policing in London. I, too, thank Sir Peter Imbert, the retiring Commissioner, for his outstanding service to the people of the capital. I extend those remarks also to the excellent contributions made by police officers of all ranks and their civilian support services. There are many bright, able, talented people in the Metropolitan police eager to serve the people of London and to create the new style of policing that we have discussed today—sector policing. They recognise that it will be a real challenge in terms of management and the use of resources, but they are willing to take up that challenge.

Sir Peter has laid the foundations for sector policing through the implementation of the Plus programme, which has clearly shown that the police are willing to encompass change, however painful it may be. I wish that other elements of the criminal justice system—particularly the lawyers—would be as willing as the police to consider new ideas about their working practices and the way in which the criminal justice system should deliver its services.

The poor listing of cases in the courts consumes police manpower at an alarming rate. It is probably one of the biggest wastes of police time and money in the criminal justice system. I repeat: let us have no more police officers, but let us have better deployment of those we have. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to consider that point in consultation with the Lord Chancellor and his Department. If sector policing is to be a success, the police managers on the ground will increasingly complain about the waste of their resources that result from the poor listing of cases. Modern technology can improve that system, and we look forward to the development of those arrangements.

I am, alas, prevented by constraints of time from referring further to the problems of crime control. I hope that other hon. Members will deal with them in their remarks.

12.8 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Since I was elected in 1983, I have attended and spoken in every one of the debates on the policing of London. They all follow the same pattern. The Home Secretary comes in, makes a speech and disappears. [HON. MEMBERS: "He is here."] The right hon. and learned Gentleman has just returned; he must have known that I was about to speak.

I thought that the Home Secretary conceded that there was now an argument for a democratically run police force in London. He did not agree with the argument, but at least he conceded that a valid argument was being made. Many of us have advanced that argument year after year. It is unacceptable that what pertains elsewhere in the country, where there is a degree of democratic involvement with the running of police forces and the local authorities, does not apply to London.

A vast amount of public expenditure goes to the police force in London which impinges on the lives of every citizen in London in some form or another. They surely have a say in the overall policing policy and there should be some form of real accountability. In a debate on a Friday morning on a motion for the Adjournment of the House, there can be no detailed questioning of the police authority for London; we cannot question the Home Secretary in detail on specific aspects of the report. That is simply not acceptable.

The Home Secretary probably concedes that argument in his heart of hearts. Labour Members meet the Home Secretary at least once a year and I imagine Conservative Members do the same. We also have meetings with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. As Members of Parliament, we have many other duties to fulfil. We need an open police authority for London so that the public can see what is happening and what is behind the policing policies for London. If that happened, there might be more support or less support for those policies, but at least they would be in the open.

The question about the part that the police play in the justice system has become more urgent. The Birmingham, Guildford and Tottenham people who were wrongly convicted have been released. That has exposed major flaws in the judiciary and serious problems in the way in which the police undertake investigations in the first place. Those issues must be addressed.

The policing of London is obviously in part a reflection of the social conditions in the capital. In the constituency that I have the honour to represent, unemployment is now about 20 per cent. and rising fast. Last year, fewer than 12 school leavers succeeded in getting a job immediately after leaving school. The disillusionment, depression and anger among young people who are growing up in a society in which they know that it is very unlikely that they will find a job leads to a high degree of alienation. Unfortunately, many of those young people are tempted into crime, drugs and an underworld existence. They feel forgotten and ignored by the rest of society. The police must deal with those particular problems.

I am glad that the report mentions crime prevention. However, we will need to know how many more safer cities projects there will be, whether the money available for those projects will be increased and whether the Home Secretary recognised that there is a serious social link between the increase in crime in some parts of London and growing social deprivation.

The local police force in my constituency is centred around Holloway police station. In common with the rest of London, it has developed sector policing. I should be grateful if the Home Secretary or the Minister would tell us when the regional system is to be abandoned in London and when we will adopt borough-based policing with sector policing underneath it, because there would then at least be the possibility of better relations with the local authorities and the local communities.

The police in the Holloway area clearly recognise that there are serious problems about the lack of youth provision and growing unemployment among young people. It is very much to the credit of Chief Superintendent Matthias and the other officers in the station that they were prepared to devote great effort to running a summer youth project this year. That took up a great deal of police time and cost a lot of police money. I am not complaining about the fact that the project was run. I applaud it, and I visited it twice. However, it is reflection of the cuts in local authority expenditure and general social provision that the police are forced to spend time and resources on what is in effect a social provision to cut street crime and the number of young people who are bored and have nothing to do, particularly during the school holidays.

The problems in London with traffic and transport are enormous and absolutely horrendous. The Home Secretary referred to the way in which the police try to deal with traffic problems, but I should be interested to know what advice the police have given him about the way in which they have been pushed into implementing red routes at the expense of other traffic areas in London. I should like to know whether they support a rational transport policy in London that does not develop a road system which encourages yet more cars and commuters to go motoring in and out of London or whether they support the idea of an integrated public transport system which would free police resources for better uses.

In the Home Secretary's speech and in the report, there are references to the increase in sexual and racial violence. Those increases are demonstrated in the number of cases reported. Surveys have been carried out in Islington and elsewhere into the incidence of street crime particularly where it is sexually or racially motivated. They have found that many people are frightened to walk the streets at night because they fear attack and fear that they will not be able to get home safely. If people are attacked, abused or treated badly by others, that is frequently not reported to the police; therefore, those cases do not appear in the statistics.

The Home Secretary should not underestimate the fear felt by many people, particularly in respect of the increase in racial violence and the activities of the far right and ultra right. Such activities stem from the British National party and its office in Welling. Racist violence is increasing in London just as it is in other cities in Europe. Those

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activities, including the incitement to racism, are illegal. Many Asian shopkeepers and black families are afraid because they have received excrement through their letter boxes and seen their children abused on the streets. They are frightened by the degree of racial abuse and intolerance. They look to protection from the police and to the strongest possible condemnation of the activities of the far right.

The report refers to the number of police operations over the past year involving the use of firearms. Such operations have risen from 147 to 191. However, it is unclear from the report how many policemen and policewomen carry firearms as a matter of course. We have a tradition in this country of not having an armed police force and I support the idea of an unarmed police force. If we have an armed police force, the criminal elements will increase their use of firearms and we will end up with the gun law that has developed in many American cities.

I raise that point because the report refers to the issuing of firearm and shotgun certificates. I found it frightening that 751 new firearm certificates were granted last year. Only 14 were refused and only 15 refusals to renew were granted. Some 3,618 shotgun certificates were issued. A total of 39,991 shotgun and firearm certificates have been issued. Nearly 40,000 people are legally carrying guns around London. Obviously, many other people may be carrying such weapons illegally. I hope that the Home Secretary will consider that point and reduce the number of firearms certificates and tell us the truth about the number of occasions when the police carry guns.

One section of the Commissioner's report relates to the tragedy of deaths in police custody. Some of those deaths are suicides although the causes of some of those deaths are not yet fully known. The Secretary of State is aware of the problem and I have raised the matter with him previously. A most serious investigation of the matter must be undertaken. When the police have carried out their own internal inquiries into suicides or other deaths in custody, there is a need to make public the Police Complaints Authority report and the internal inquiry reports into the reasons for the deaths and the actions that have been taken to ensure that full care is given to everyone in custody and that there is constant surveillance to prevent such tragedies recurring. There have been too many unexplained deaths in the past. If there is to be confidence in the police force in London and the form of investigation, those reports should be open so that we can discover the causes and prevent the recurrence of such terrible tragedies.

12.18 pm

Mr. Piers Merchant (Beckenham): I am sure that I speak for the vast majority of my constituents when I begin by praising the everyday work of the Metropolitan police force which provides a dedicated, professional service of the highest standard. That has been recognised by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and his predecessors with more than just words. Resources and manpower have been increased dramatically. Across London, policing strength has risen by 27 per cent. since 1979—6,000 more officers—to a record level of more than 28,000. Pressure on uniformed officers has been eased, too, by the civilianisation programme. Of course, both factors have had a direct impact on crime levels. Although, regrettably, crime is still rising in the London area, it is rising at a markedly lower rate than elsewhere in the country.

There is, however, some imbalance in the allocation of the new resources within London, and the position in the Bromley borough in which my constituency is located causes some local concern. For example, in the Beckenham division today there are 188 uniformed police officers, compared with 221 three years ago—a reduction of about 15 per cent. in the direct police strength. Despite sterling work by the local chief superintendent, Ted Fullelove, and his officers, the extra strain on manpower has been shown in the most recent local crime statistics. In the first six months of this year, total recorded crime rose by 1,182 on the year before, to a level of more than 6,000. House burglaries were up by nearly 30 per cent., to a figure of 1,294, and joyriding was up by 45 per cent. It is of particular concern that only about one in 20 house burglaries and one in 35 joyriding cases are now being cleared up.

Another cause for concern is the identifiable growth in drugs-related offences, which I suspect is probably greater than the figures show. In a sense, drug use is a victimless crime and, therefore, not often reported by those who are involved. Some figures can illustrate the seriousness of that form of crime—for example, about £43 million in seizures across London. The police certainly believe with good evidence that drugs can be a causative factor in many other crimes that do not show up as directly drug related.

Clearly, the police are hard pressed. In my borough they do not have enough men on the ground to deter and to detect at the levels that the public expect. I make no criticism of the police. They do a wonderful job in very difficult circumstances. They protect the community, comfort victims, defend the innocent against lawbreakers, and risk personal danger, abuse and threat to keep society safe. But we cannot expect them to perform all their duties to the highest standard that they want if they are depleted of their most valuable resource, manpower. We owe it to them and to the whole community to put right that shortfall.

Police manpower should not be falling in any borough; it should be rising to match whatever increases are showing in the crime figures. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend, along with the Commissioner, will look closely at that genuine problem and the request from my constituents on the distribution of resources.

I am not asking my right hon. and learned Friend for vast extra funding for the Metropolitan police as a whole, I am asking him to look at the particular problems that come about from the allocation of manpower. I understand the pressure on the Met in other areas, particularly in central London, but the needs of outer London boroughs must not be forgotten in the concentration on problems in the centre of the area.

I close, because I want to leave time for the many hon. Members who wish to speak, by briefly recording my enthusiasm for the sector policing concept which is being introduced across London and which is already bearing fruit in the Bromley borough. It is bringing the police force closer—visibly closer—to the man in the street and it is already manifesting itself in the greater use of police on the beat in the Beckenham area—a long-time request of residents in that area. That is giving them greater confidence that the police are present and protecting them and making officers visibly available at local level to deal with emergencies as they arise.

Backing up sector policing are the new sector community consultative groups which are already operating well, having been set up recently in my area. They, too, bring the police into greater closer contact with local people. Bringing the police closer to the community has to be good. I have never heard that criticised as an objective, and I have seen many benefits flow from it. Putting the interests of victims and potential victims first must not be questioned. It is essential to give the police the flexibility to choose how best to do that at local level and the resources to do it well.

12.24 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Home Secretaries come and go and shadow Home Secretaries come and go, but some of us keep on battling on similar issues in this debate every year. We welcome the Home Secretary and his Labour opposite number to their new responsibilites.

On behalf of those whom I represent, although they may not know him personally, I offer a tribute to the outgoing Commissioner. He has not only been a good personification of the force but extremely popular and effective within his force and outside it. His force welcomed his time in office. It is also with optimism that we greet the appointment announced today of the chief constable of Kent to come back to London, where he served his apprenticeship.

The other word of thanks should be more general. We should be grateful—I certainly am grateful on behalf of my constituents—to the police force in London. I go further than that. In terms of individuals and structure, I believe that there are fewer things wrong with the police force in London than at any time since I have been in the House. There are always complaints about the police, but I have had fewer complaints recently than I used to have in the first years after I was elected. I hope that that shows new sensitivity to the issues and concerns.

I hope that we can also soon move to general use of the term "police service" rather than "police force". Much of the concept of policing has changed and the words that we use should reflect that. I have one little criticism of the Home Secretary. We should call the police either the police or police personnel, not just policemen. There are many policewomen.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay: Police officers.

Mr. Hughes: Or police officers. It is important that all police officers are valued. That may be regarded as a pedantic point, but it is not pedantic to them.

I welcomed the Home Secretary's announcement that he is looking at police authorities around the country, including in London. I did not expect him to leap into a new structure straight away. He was perfectly fair with the House when he made his announcement. When Lambeth finally gets its act together, which we hear is on the way, and the consultative structure at borough level is therefore completely organised, I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will have an open mind about a structure for London as a whole. It is not realistic for me to bid for a directly elected police authority from the Tory Government in the few years, but it might be realistic to have an indirectly elected authority—representatives of the boroughs of London—to debate police matters along the lines, for example, of the police consultative groups. At present there is only one forum per year to debate such matters—this debate—and self-evidently that is not enough, and it cannot be, because many issues relate to matters outside the constituencies that we represent.

I hope that the Home Secretary realises also that the bit of the police service to which most people relate is their local police station, and the division or borough in which they live. Areas may in theory be useful concepts in terms of organisation, but I am not persuaded about that. However, people do relate to the more local levels of organisation. I hope that the Home Secretary realises that we must strengthen the local police structure rather than continue building up the numbers of people at area level. Within the local structures, the key individuals are the senior officer in each division and the home beat officers. Whatever happens, I hope that the idea will persist that one person should have responsibility for one patch and should be in the job for a sufficiently long period—that means a significant number of years—to know the community and be part of it. That person must also have a deputy so that when he or she is away on leave or for other reasons, someone else who knows that community is on duty.

I am not quite so enthusiastic as others about sector policing. Clearly, it is not a good idea to divide personnel equally among the three shifts because the level of work arising is not equal. But there is a great danger that each sector will become top heavy. Some of the police to whom I have spoken, both privately and in public, are also not so happy about sector policing as the general consensus today suggests. I shall be meeting the Home Secretary soon as part of the annual political round and I should be grateful if we could talk further about sector policing. We must be careful how we develop this policy.

The hon. Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant) referred to police personnel and deployment. If he thinks that he has a problem with crime in Beckenham, he should try being Member of Parliament for Southwark and Bermondsey. We are in different leagues. It is all about what people expect. We must not assume that we can shift more police to the Beckenhams of the world when the Bermondseys have many more problems, and I would say that even if I were the Member of Parliament for Beckenham.

The key issue is deployment of personnel. I accept that the establishment has been increased. That is good news, but there are two problems. I am not persuaded that the complex method of assessing how many police officers there should be in each area is correct. I have examined it, and I admit that I do not entirely understand it, although I have seen the formula and read some of the papers. The formula does not take the variables into account accurately. The most important variables are resident population, working population, visiting population and crime. Those are the four major contributory factors. We must re-examine the way in which we assess the number of personnel allocated.

Even more importantly, the great problem at present is that however many police officers per area we have in theory, many of them are never in the area because they are taken out through what is called "AID" for central resource use. The figures that I have been given for October for my patch are as follows: Southwark was

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committed to supplying AID on 23 occasions, including seven football matches, 11 central London reserve occasions—anti-terrorist activities—one royal visit, one party conference and for three charge centres. That took out 121 police constables, 24 sergeants and four inspectors for, I gather an average of eight hours each. We must think again about how we meet central demands because we denude the local police services on a regular basis, often making the service that is left unmanageable.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hughes: I will not, because I am limited to 10 minutes, but I am grateful to be adopted as the hon. Lady's hon. Friend.

I welcome the Home Secretary's refreshing approach to looking at the issues anew from outside. Performance indicators are a good idea. We must address the problem of detection and clear-up rates. People in London are not happy about that. By objective standards, clear-up rates are poor. We must make sure that everyone is alert and that the police are not complacent.

It may sound odd for me to say this, but it is right to accentuate the responsibility of individuals—above all that of parents for their children. Much crime is committed by relatively young or even very young children, for whom it appears that the parent takes no responsibility whatever. That is not adequate. People cannot expect other agencies to deal with problems if the immediately available agency —the family—makes no attempt to deal with them.

It is no use the Home Secretary and his Ministers telling us, as the Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) told me yesterday, that the Commissioner's analysis that there is a link between unemployment and crime is invalid. Both recent Commissioners have said that there is a link. As the pattern of unemployment increases, so crime increases. It is no use the Minister of State saying that a report by Dr. Simon Field disproves the case. Dr. Field may say that links in individual circumstances of crime are not clear, but the pattern is clear.

I will give two examples. Many unemployed youngsters in my constituency will make money out of drugs if they think that they can do so. They burgle to obtain the money for drugs. Many people who are out of work in my constituency and elsewhere will handle stolen goods if they think that they can get things more cheaply that way. That is because the economic circumstances are dire. We must accept that, on a macro scale, economic policy is the most important thing that can reduce crime.

Please let me continue to give high priority to dealing with the drugs menace. The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) said that he was astonished that 75 per cent. of drugs-related crime came from London. I am not astonished, and I hope that the Home Secretary would not be astonished if I took him around my constituency to see drug dealing in the daytime on the streets and estates in front of everyone. It is a social menace and it needs to be tackled.

Finally—I see that I am in my last minute—please let us protect the youth service, because unless we have a proper youth service we will not succeed with other agencies. Let us keep up the battle against racism; Southwark has had a successful campaign recently. Let us develop links with local communities to secure community safety, keep up the pressure for better victim support and speed up the work of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. Lastly, let us ensure that fewer police have to work on traffic, domestic or other issues which could be handled by other services or by special constables.

12.34 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the House and to the Minister who will be winding up the debate for the fact that I must leave shortly for a long-standing constituency engagement.

Mr. Corbyn: No problem.

Mr. Marshall: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his unfailing courtesy.

I listened with interest to the speech by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), and noticed his comments on the awful activities of the IRA. I hope that that presages a change in the official Opposition's attitude to the prevention of terrorism Acts, which were first introduced by a Labour Government, but which the Labour party now constantly votes against.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield talked at some length about crime in Islington and people's fears about it. One problem that we have faced in London during the past two or three years is that a number of law makers have become law breakers. Members of Parliament have boasted that they would not pay the community charge. Surely it is wrong for Members of this House and leaders of local government in London to say that they advocate selective obedience of the law. If one tells people which laws one is going to break or keep, one cannot be surprised if some people decided to break the law.

One of the most dangerous comments made by the hon. Member for Sedgefield concerned the confidence of ethnic communities in the police. Members representing London constituencies know that the majority of police in London are completely colour blind; they seek to preserve law and order, which is essential for everyone living in London, and they seek to ensure that every complaint is fully investigated.

Of course, concern has been expressed about certain policemen following the events of Broadwater Farm, the Birmingham Six and other similar cases, but it is as well to remember that all those cases took place before the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 became law. I do not believe that under the present legal system it would be possible for those offences to be committed by policemen trying to take a short cut to ensure that certain people were convicted on false evidence.

I agree with the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) about police manpower. Under the Government, the police have been given an extra 6,000 policemen, additional civilians to do work previously done by policemen and huge extra resources. One of the things that we discover in life is that if one gives people huge additional resources there is slightly less pressure on them to use the resources as efficiently as they might. I believe that there may well have been some misallocation of resources in the fight against crime in London.

I sometimes suspect that certain officers in the Metropolitan police are anxious to wage war against motorists. Sometimes, I drive to the House along the Finchley road at 7 o'clock in the morning. There is a spot on that road where it is not unknown for two policemen to be lurking at 7.5 am, trying to trap people driving on the bus lane.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Quite right.

Mr. Marshall: The hon. Gentleman may say that that is a good thing, but I think that citizens would be happier if the police were trying to solve the 80 per cent. of unsolved burglaries rather than seeking out motorists who are not behaving in a particularly antisocial way at 7.5 am. The other evening I was driving along Millbank and I saw a not very svelte policeman hiding behind a lamp post, trying to catch one or two motorists in the bus lane. When the police want the public's co-operation they should seek to behave in a way that will generate it.

It is unfortunate that individuals in police stations sometimes leak stories to newspapers—doubtless for no fee. Some of us were appalled when details of the difficulties of the previous hon. Member for Hexham were clearly leaked from Hampstead police station to a local newspaper.

I was also appalled at the suggestion made by Sir Peter Imbert of the existence of middle-class crimes. If one talks to ordinary Londoners one finds that they regard some crimes as imporant and believe that they should be dealt with as a matter of priority.

I accept that police sometimes have to tackle crime in London with their hands tied behind their backs due to the too-frequent willingness of magistrates to grant bail against police objections. It is terrible that some of our magistrates are excessively naive; there are normally good reasons when the police object to bail.

I know that the previous Home Secretary spoke of introducing a new offence of committing a crime while on bail. However, the trouble is that those who commit further crimes while on bail do so partly because they think that they may not be detected. The magistrates should take a much more robust attitude. As I said, the police normally have good reasons for their objections and the magistrates should be less willing to concede defence applications.

During discussions about crime in London we are frequently told that we are talking about reported crime, but such an argument is often offensive. When it is said that reported crime has increased, the apparent implication is that there has been a sudden change in individuals' propensity to report crime. I do not believe that people's willingness to report burglaries has changed massively during the past 20 or 30 years. Anyone who has been the victim of a burglary, as I have, wants—and always has wanted—to claim against insurance and report the crime. I am somewhat cynical about those who say that we are merely talking about reported crime, not actual crime.

If the police are to succeed in defeating crime in London, it is important that they should receive maximum co-operation from the public. I heard of a case in my constituency where a burglary took place, a next-door neighbour saw it happening and witnessed the goods being moved from the house to a car. But the neighbour did nothing, and said that she did not want to become involved. Our fellow citizens in London who seek to behave like the Pharisees and pass on the other side of the road should recognise that they may be the next victims. If the burglar, rapist or assailant gets away with one crime, his or her appetite will not be satisfied and they will return to crime time and again.

The war against crime in London involves not only the police against crime, but everyone in London against crime. I welcome the growth in the neighbourhood watch scheme, and I hope that every law-abiding citizen in London will continue to help and support the police. That is the only way to reduce the amount of crime—actual and reported—in the capital.

12.43 pm

Ms. Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): I feel sure that the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) did not mean to imply that rape ceases to be rape if the victim knows her attacker. I and, I am sure, the majority of hon. Members would find that entirely unacceptable. I am delighted to see the hon. Member for Uxbridge nodding his head in confirmation of my presumption.

The hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) issued a clarion call for no more police officers. That call would not be echoed in my constituency or by my constituents. They believe, as I do, in the deterrent power of a uniform. While they welcome sector policing, they are concerned that some eight-hour sector policing shifts will have only six police constables.

Despite the Home Secretary's claims, my constituents are deeply worried at the increase in crime, particularly on the estates. We realise that no matter how many officers are employed, there will always be a hard core of criminals who break the law, and that stiff sentencing is only of value after a crime has been committed. London and the nation as a whole need a strategy for preventing crime—particularly that committed by juveniles and the young.

About 15 per cent. of all indictable offences in London are committed by juveniles, and a further 23 per cent. by young adults under the age of 21. In London, those figures are accentuated by the problems of poverty and homelessness—factors that have always been with us but which are being exacerbated during this long recession and —at least in respect of the young homeless—by the Government's policy of removing 16 and 17-year-olds from the benefits system.

Tackling crime committed by juveniles and the young is vital because of its sheer scale and because, despite the relatively petty nature of such offences—though they are petty only in the legal calendar, not to those who are their victims—they still provide a doorway through which their perpetrators may pass into a lifetime of more serious and repetitive offending.

The benefits of confronting crime immediately it manifests itself are obvious. In my constituency, local youth and community officers estimate that of all first-time offenders who enter the young offender programme, 75 per cent. never reoffend. Imagine a 75 per cent. clear-up rate across the whole of London—that really would be cracking down on crime. My constituency, with a population of 60,000 has only four centres where the problems of young offenders can be addressed, and none of them is statutorily organised. One centre that four years ago employed four full-time staff must now rely on

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volunteers and is about to lose its premises. Local youth services in my borough have been cut by 45 per cent. since 1990, and will shortly be cut even more.

The Secretary of State referred to increased police resources, but that again reflects the Government's short-sighted, one-dimensional attitude to solving the nation's problems. They are prepared to spend billions of pounds dealing with the effects of the problem, but not one penny on preventing it in the first place. In a debate on Wednesday, the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) —in a different context—made that point most tellingly:

> "I want more investment front-end in success and opportunity, not investment back-end on redundancy and failure."—[*Official Report*, 21 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. 484.]

It also makes eminent sense to apply that sentiment to crime prevention. It appears that we would rather accept the price that is paid by the victims of crime and the price of apprehending the perpetrators and of trying, convicting and incarcerating them, than pay the small price of giving offenders opportunities and guidance that would have prevented them committing offences in the first place.

If the Government really are committed to tackling crime, prevention should be made a statutory responsibility for local authorities—and that means that the provision of youth services should also be statutory. The Child Care Act 1980 states that all interested parties must liaise in the provision of adequate youth services, yet when it comes to being given hard cash to provide those services, youth provision is not included in standard spending assessments.

The Government should also finally and clearly turn their back on the short, sharp shock policies that characterised Mrs. Thatcher's Victorian renaissance, and are still beloved by many members of her party.

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): Hear, hear.

Ms. Jackson: Between 70 and 80 per cent. of juveniles leaving prison custody reoffend within two years. Does the hon. Gentleman say "Hear, hear" to that? Such sentences do not provide a short, sharp shock but a short, sharp training course in how to become a more successful criminal.

The Government must also provide the resources for the youth, community and leisure services that are so vital in preventing crime. The country's taxpayers do not wish to save money on youth schemes at the expense of being afraid to go out of their own front doors at night.

Actually working with young potential offenders, or first-time offenders, is not a soft option. It is not some wishy-washy liberal attempt to spare those who offend from the consequences of their offences. It is a practical and proven way of combating and solving the growing problems of crime in our society, and in London in particular. It is about giving people back a sense of responsibility; it is about showing them that society has an interest in them and an obligation to them, and that they in turn are obliged to take a constructive interest in their society.

As the chief superintendent of one of the police stations in my constituency said:

> "We should be seeking to give people back some self worth, self esteem and self respect. That is the way to begin to tackle crime.

I believe that is it high time the Government began to recognise that fact.

12.50 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): First, let me echo the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), who recalled the tribute paid by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) to police efforts to counter IRA bombings and other atrocities. Let me also repeat my hon. Friend's wonderment at the sheer gall of the hon. Gentleman's comment, in the face of the fact that, each year since 1982, he and his party have failed to support the renewal of the prevention of terrorism Act. That, I think, should be said over and over again.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) spoke of the difficulty of combating crime committed by young men wielding knives. In my capacity as deputy chairman of the "Why" campaign—founded by Bill Dennison, whose son was knifed to death—I see the difficulty very clearly. Young men going out on a Friday evening will put into their pockets their keys and a knife, knowing perfectly well that they are very unlikely to be stopped and searched. I entirely support my hon. Friend's concern about the failure of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 to plug the loophole. A policeman may see a young man walking along the street, having come out of a pub in the company of people who are likely to be dangerous to the community, and he can do nothing about it. I hope that the Home Secretary will look into that.

I welcome the Home Secretary's encouragement of consultations between the police and the community. It is a great source of pride to me that Sutton, in my constituency, has a very active police consultative group, which enjoys an excellent rapport with the police and meets them regularly. The group came to London yesterday to meet me at the Home Office.

The leafy suburbs of Sutton and Cheam should not be seen as completely quiet and peaceful. There is anxiety in the area about the serious increase in burglary and auto crime, and a general increase in crime that is disproportionate to the increase in police resources. It is important to retain a sense of balance in regard to how we deploy our police, especially when a crisis or a mutual aid programme is in progress in the centre of London. Too many police officers may be drained from the outer to the inner areas, leaving problems elsewhere.

In Sutton, burglary is the number one issue on locals' minds, because the district is largely residential. Not only has the incidence of burglary risen all over the London area—it is up by 200,000 since 1976, doubling that 1976 level—but burglars seem to gain entry far too easily, through open windows or open back doors. Doors get kicked in. Householders can do nothing about it. Burglars use jemmies. We should mount an education campaign for householders so that they know how to protect themselves.

I give my total support to Operation Bumblebee, whose aim is to reduce burglary to pre-1960 levels. I support also the fact that it seeks to change attitudes to burglary. Burglary is not listed as one of the serious arrestable offences in the Criminal Justice Act 1984. That is because burglary is an offence against property, not against the person, but any person who has been burgled feels that their home has been raped and violated.

We should remember what happened in Edmonton earlier this year when the house of an elderly person was burgled. Nothing much was taken, but the old lady was so shocked and distressed by the burglary and the invasion of her privacy that she died two days later. We should pay far greater attention to the trauma of burglary and to the sentences that are passed on burglars. The public feel that at the moment burglars get away with it too easily.

We should also pay greater attention to the age of those who commit crimes, particularly those who commit burglaries. I support what was said by the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson) and her concern about juvenile crime. Nevertheless, I take issue with the hon. Lady on one point. She tends to blame poverty and homelessness for juvenile crime, but the great majority of children who come from low-income groups and who live in accommodation for the homeless do not break the law. They do not commit offences. They know how to lead a law-abiding life. Children have to be taught discipline, but I fear that we have got out of that habit.

The problem was highlighted in Lord Elton's inquiry in 1989 into discipline in schools. It would be worth updating the findings of that inquiry. If children are not set a proper example by their parents and are not properly supervised, they go off the rails. One of the most disturbing cases that my local police station in Sutton keeps telling me about is that of youngsters being found roaming the streets late at night. When the police contact the parents, they do not seem to be at all surprised that their children are running around town. We should put more pressure on parents to act responsibly, to supervise their children and to know where they are.

I support the provisions in the Criminal Justice Act 1991 that require parents to appear in court and pay a fine on behalf of their children. The Act came into effect on 1 October. I should welcome a report on the success of its implementation, or otherwise, as soon as possible.

There is also the question of school discipline. Schools help to set the tone. Although discipline is not part of the core curriculum, I believe that it ought to be. There should be closer liaison between the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Education and an effort made to see how school discipline can be improved. I have visited schools where there is a very sloppy atmosphere, litter in the playground and sloppy teachers, as well as graffiti and broken windows. Teachers ignore bad behaviour in those schools. Such a tone leads to children believing that lawlessness is acceptable, with the result that the community has to pay the price.

I believe, therefore, that it is enormously important that we ensure that children have a proper, structured atmosphere in which to grow up. I do not accept their coming from a low-income background as an excuse for them breaking the law.

Children are committing not only burglary but auto crime. Such crime is very much on the increase in Sutton. I support the Government's endeavours to ensure that car parks are better lit and better supervised and hope that they will carry on their endeavours.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Hon. Members will be aware that the 10-minute rule is now lifted, but I appeal to them to keep within that limit so that all those who wish to speak may do so.

1 pm

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): May I say how glad I am, as a new London Member, to be called to speak in this important debate?

The issues of crime and policing are of much concern to me. I know from talking to my constituents, wherever they live in Hornsey and Wood Green, that crime is a major issue for them. Rising crime and the fear of crime worries and concerns all of them.

I was pleased to hear the Home Secretary say that he might think about the consultative arrangements for London. I urge him, when conducting his review, to take into account the views of senior police officers. In the past few years, it has become clear that many senior police officers, including members of the Commissioner's management team, now support a police authority for London, for which Labour Members have been pressing for many years. As it now appears that there is agreement in many quarters of the Metropolitan police, I ask the Home Secretary to consider it.

May I dwell on one issue in particular and then deal with a couple of other issues briefly? In the recess, I spent a great deal of time considering the issue of domestic violence in preparation for the investigation of the Home Affairs Select Committee that will begin shortly. I spent some time talking about the problem to police officers in my constituency and elsewhere and to refuges and women's groups. One of the important aspects of domestic violence is the police's response, in which I am glad to say —and I do not think that this is unduly chauvinistic— London has led the way. There are now 62 domestic violence units in London. We have an excellent domestic violence unit in Hornsey which is well regarded by local people and local refuges. The response of people who have had contact with the unit and who have come to see me at my surgery about tragic domestic violence cases has been positive.

I do not wish to sound complacent about the policing of domestic violence. Domestic violence is often a hidden crime, committed behind closed doors. We still have very little idea of the extent of it. We know that there has been a huge increase in incidents reported to the Metropolitan police. The number of reported cases increased by 8,660 between April 1991 and March 1992—a 45 per cent. increase on the previous year's figures.

That increase was in part caused by the fact that more women are reporting such incidents to the police. It also reflects a change in police practice. In the past there was a regrettable tendency for police officers to "no crime" such cases—that is police jargon for not reporting them and not counting them as crimes. I am glad to say that in London the situation is changing and, as a recent victim support report recommends, the police are treating domestic violence with the same seriousness as other forms of violence.

I understand that the Commissioner sent a superintendent to Ontario last November to examine the progressive approach of the police there towards domestic violence, and that a pilot project along similar lines will be set up in Islington in the new year. I hope that I and other London Members of Parliament can obtain progress reports on that project. If, as I hope, it develops well, we shall want to adopt the best practice model in the rest of London.

There is still much anxiety among women's groups and other organisations concerned with domestic violence

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about the policy of policing domestic violence in London and elsewhere. Many groups call for a central co-ordinated policy for all domestic violence units. Although there are practice guidelines for such units, there can still be great variations in the way in which the police operate. In some areas the units are properly equipped and resourced and, for example, police photographers are provided to photograph women's injuries. Women can then use such photographs in any civil, as well as criminal, proceedings which may be brought in such cases. But in other areas of London the provision is not as good.

Many groups are also worried about the definition of the primary role of police domestic violence units. Do they have a social work role—counselling, and so on—or should their role be, as I think it should, that of an arm of the police, which exists not only to tell people their rights but to act as criminal investigators and to ensure that domestic violence is treated with the seriousness that it deserves? It would also be a step in the right direction if we ensured that in all crime prevention initiatives domestic violence was treated with the same seriousness with which we treat other forms of assault.

The way in which we treat domestic violence in ethnic minority communities is also important and I have had discussions with a number of ethnic minority women's groups on this issue.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East): My hon. Friend has made some clear points about the role of domestic violence units, and those units are to be welcomed. It is excellent, for example, that in Lewisham the police work in partnership with the council to deal with racial attacks. However, is there not still a great deal of work to be done to ensure that the police realise that domestic violence is not acceptable in any culture or community? Just as it is not acceptable in general terms, it is not acceptable in any society in London.

Mrs. Roche: I thank my hon. Friend for that interesting observation. It is true that we must not allow cultural stereotypes to prevail. It must be appreciated that everybody has the right to the same protection under the law, and police officers must ensure that they receive it.

Sector policing has been mentioned by hon. Members on both sides of the House. In my constituency the Hornsey police division went over to sector policing on 14 September. I welcome sector policing. It is an extremely interesting idea and it is right that we should consider changing the shift system, the form of policing used since Sir Robert Peel invented the service. When we do so, however, we should take on board some of the concerns felt by police officers on the street who are concerned that there are resource implications in sector policing. I support my hon. Friends who have asked for there to be more police officers. We must have those extra officers in London.

I also ask Home Office Ministers to evaluate sector policing properly. I know that the Hornsey police will evaluate it, but it is important—and I note the Home Secretary's comments that he would study performance indicators and customer satisfaction surveys—that we have a system to study the experience of sector policing, not just in one division, but by making comparisons with other sectors.

Sector policing has implications for consultative arrangements. It is right and welcome that there will now be sector-based consultative arrangments. That is a step in the right direction, because it will bring decision-making to a far more local level. I also urge Home Office Ministers to appreciate that the process may need more resources. There are many consultative arrangements in London which receive Home Office funding to ensure that their business can be conducted properly. If sector policing consultative arrangments take off as they should, there may be claims for funding for sector-based consultative arrangements. I suggest that that should be supported.

I turn briefly to crime prevention and the partnership approach. I am pleased that in my area the local police, under Chief Superintendent Trevor Harvey, have been active in working with Haringey council to ensure that there is tremendous co-operation between the local police and the council. A good example is the initiative to prevent burglaries in south Hornsey, to which the Home Secretary has referred. Such crime prevention initiatives need money; they cannot be done on the cheap.

We do not need a moratorium on the safer cities project; we need its extension. I should like more money to go into crime prevention. It is not good enough for the Government to shirk their responsibilities and to expect the police and the local authorities to use their meagre resources as best they can.

We also want the implementation of the Morgan report. It is disgraceful that the report has been mothballed for so long. Crime prevention is an area in which local authorities, especially in London, can make a real contribution in the fight against crime. I urge the Government to put more money into this valuable area.

1.13 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I will try to stick to the roller-coaster of Madam Speaker's request about time by briefly echoing the tributes paid to the police of London on their work in the past year and on the way in which they have been reforming themselves and their practices and achieving the breakthrough on crime that we seek.

I will briefly resist the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) who referred to police hiding behind lamp-posts stopping cars going into bus lanes. I hope that they will continue to do that. If we are to have public transport flowing freely, my complaint is more that the police do not always go up to the drivers of coaches parked in bus lanes and remind them that bus lanes are for moving buses and not for stationary ones.

I echo what has been said about sector policing. In Battersea, we have shown that it works. Despite preliminary doubts, it is now popular with police and public and is achieving results. I am sure that it will contribute greatly to London's policing.

There are certain areas in which the police alone cannot achieve a breakthrough; they need the support of the public. First, they need the support of the people who leave their doors unlocked. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said, 30 per cent. of burglars do not have to force entry because the door is left open for them. Locks should be fitted and used. We need the support of the insurance industry in this; where claims are made in respect of burglaries, the industry should take into account the actions of policyholders in fitting locks and any contributory negligence that there may have been.

The same goes for car crime. We need the support of motor vehicle manufacturers, who should make their vehicles secure against crime. We also need the support of architects, designers and town planners, who should ensure that they design out crime when planning new estates and improving existing ones.

We also need the support of British Rail. We have heard how successful London Transport has been in getting rid of crime on the underground. A pro-active management has worked with the public and the transport police to get rid of crime. Sadly, British Rail has not taken the same view. When I have sought to have measures taken at Clapham Junction and Wandsworth Town stations, where constituents of mine have been assaulted and even stabbed, British Rail has said that it is not its task to prevent such incidents. I say that it is, indeed, British Rail's task and that it has as much of a duty as anyone else to help the community to fight crime. I hope that the Minister will put pressure on British Rail, through his colleagues at the Department of Transport, to play its part with staffing measures and through the installation of cameras and emergency telephones.

I ask, too, for the support of the cycling community. I am a great supporter of cycling in London because it is one way of improving London's environment. I am always battling for better cycling routes, and I urge the boroughs to deal with the pot holes which make cycling dangerous. I do not know the figure for London, but nationally there have been 24,803 cycling casualties in the past 12 months. Some accidents are caused by motorists and the cycling environment; others are caused by cyclists cycling without lights, through red lights, the wrong way down one-way streets and across pedestrian crossings. We had this argument last time the issue was raised, but we have yet to see a definition of pedestrian crossings which makes it clear that one may wheel but not ride a bicycle across them. Motorists and cyclists seem unaware of the law on that. I hope that it can be made clear to them.

It would be helpful if my hon. Friend the Minister would talk to the cycling organisations about the possibility of some form of cycle registration. The registration of bicycles worked when I was a student at Oxford, although I suppose that in those days there was a bit more metal on bicycles on which to paint the number. Perhaps bikes should carry a number plate on the back, as motor scooters do. We need a system whereby we can both identify bad cyclists and restore lost or stolen bikes to their owners. Cyclists would welcome consultation on that.

I urge the Minister to consider two of the ways in which the powers of the police to help the community can be improved. First, they should have the power to confiscate equipment belonging to people who perpetrate the crime, as I call it, of neighbourhood noise. The police have that ability in Scotland, but, despite the Liverpool case a few months ago, it is not clear whether they have it in England. That power would go a long way towards making the public more co-operative and the police more effective in stamping out one of the nuisances of our society. It is better for the police to have that power than for it to be exercised by the local council; a police officer who goes to confiscate equipment has a standing that a council officer does not and should not be expected to have.

We must also consider the licensing of amusement arcades, which are not simply unpopular with residents but can attract the kind of element which is attached to crime. They can also attract young people into that environment. At present, local authorities have very few powers over the licensing of such arcades, and the police therefore have few powers to advise them. I urge the Government to introduce a law which will make it much easier to resist applications for amusement arcades.

The police should do more with ex-offenders to bring them back into the community and to improve their relationships with the police. Lastly, I agree with what has been said about young offenders. So often the burglars of today are 11 and 12-year-olds. From time to time they are caught and sent to court. In no time at all, after receiving a very small fine or a warning, they are out of court and back up the drainpipes. We must do something to protect society from those young villains. If necessary, we must take them out of circulation. They should not be placed in the rough, tough prisons referred to by the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson). We should train them to be good citizens as they grow up and protect society from them. Never has so much been owed by so few to so many—and that is because the very few have pinched it.

1.20 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): This is our annual five-hour debate on policing in London. That alone shows the ineffectiveness of accountability in London. If this debate were taking place under a local authority structure, we should have several annual debates, and senior police officers and other officers would be here to answer questions and to discuss policing with us. In that context, we would develop a much better crime prevention policy, better policing and deal with some of the problems that emerge from time to time between the police and the public. That is why accountability is so important.

If the Home Secretary's opening comments were an indication of the beginnings of a U-turn on the matter, I should be delighted. It has always struck me as odd that the Conservative party seems to believe that democratic policing is bad and that undemocratic policing is therefore good. The Home Secretary suggested that Lambeth council, which was criticised in the old days, was now changing some of the old things that it had said and done. In the early 1980s local authorities said and did some things that were wrong and bad. However, I should place on the record the fact that they also did and said many good things.

The problem is that the other side of the same argument is that policing in the 1970s and the 1980s failed badly because there was bad practice in policing. The Home Secretary and the Minister should read carefully the speech made by Sir John Woodcock, the chief inspector of constabulary. He went far further than any policeman has gone so far in accepting the responsibility of the police for the malpractice of those years.

I have a long history of involvement in these issues as a probation officer and as a senior probation officer in London and as an inner London Member of Parliament. I warned the House and other people that if such policing continued out of control, the criminal justice system would

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come into serious disrepute. That happened and it took the Birmingham, Guildford and Broadwater Farm cases to bring it out.

Sir John Woodcock was right to say that such things could not have happened unless there was a culture that supported them. He was right to be critical of the rest of the criminal justice system. I would include the forensic service in that criticism and there is a very strong case for distancing it from the Crown prosecution service. The courts should also take some responsibility.

When the Government passed the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, I was one of the first to claim that some aspects of that legislation were unworkable for a police officer on the street. The Government achieved the worst of both worlds. They imposed restrictions on the police when they did not have the right structure to prevent innocent people being wrongly convicted. We have still not got that balance right. Inasmuch as the 1980s were a tragic period of lack of trust in the police, so also they reflected growing anger on the streets among people who felt that they could not trust the police.

After many years, I am much more encouraged by the way in which policing has turned around in the past five or six years. I have has some involvement in training and there have been significant changes. The onus is on the House to begin to change some of the other things that might help the police to do their work rather better.

It is no good the police saying that accountability means political control. It has come to our notice, to use that favoured term, that frequently Home Secretaries have been card-carrying, paid-up members of the Conservative party. That, to my mind, means that they are politicians. I would far rather have police forces under the control of a local authority, because a local authority does not impose duties on the police that are contrary to what they must do by their duty, any more than a local authority does that to its social workers. No councillor is allowed to say, "You will take this child into care," or, "You will make a restriction order on this person who is mentally ill and take him in under the Mental Health Act." One cannot do that in respect of education or housing, either.

The argument has never been that operational decisions should be under the control of a local authority or the Home Secretary. In fact, under this Government operational decisions have frequently been made by the Home Secretary. That is political control of the worst type. If the Government want to go down that road, they should recognise that they are on the road to a national police force under the Home Secretary's control, which is the control of a politician. That is unacceptable. Policing needs to be as near to the public as possible. Operational policing decisions need to be made by the police under a proper structure, just as they are in social services, and so on. Overall policy should be discussed with elected representatives because that is how we have crime prevention and victim support.

We will not deal properly with the confidence of the public until we give greater support to victims. I welcome the comments by the police and Sir John Woodcock in recognising that victims are often the last ones to be considered. If I am burgled, it is a problem for me. I have to contact the insurance company involved, list lost property and so on. That problem pales into insignificance when I compare it with that of someone in a low-income area in my constituency, frequently a pensioner living alone who cannot afford insurance. When their television set is stolen, it is not just that their home is invaded; they also cannot afford to replace the television.

That is why people at the street level in areas that are hit by crime feel very angry about the criminal justice system and the way in which it does not seem to give enough attention to victims and, in their eyes—wrongly, I often think—gives too much attention to offenders.

That brings us to crime prevention. Conservative Members still seem to think that crime prevention equals stronger locks on doors and windows. I am very much in favour of stronger locks on doors and windows. Indeed, if the housing proposals that Opposition Members have been making for many years had been followed, we would have had rolling programmes for public housing, housing association and council housing and, indeed, on my proposals, for private sector rented housing, too, in order to strengthen doors and windows. However, it is not just that, nor is it the concierge system which can dramatically reduce crime in high-rise flats. That is important, too, but even more important is the social and economic structure that we provide; that can make a difference between crime going up or going down.

The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) always seems to live on a different planet from the one that I recognise. If she believes that disciplining or putting a bit more stress or pressure on parents would make the difference between their teaching their children to offend or not, she is 100 per cent. wrong. As my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) accurately said, the police say that crime fits the pattern of poverty. They are right. This matter is not about imposing greater pressures on families; it is about recognising that the pressure is already too great. The probation penalties that I knew were already very toughly disciplined. It was the sort of toughness that neither I nor, I suspect, the hon. Lady would approve of.

I give the hon. Lady one example. A young lad is clouted round the ear when he is caught lying by his mother. She says, "Do not lie to me", and whacks him round the ear. That is a normal pattern of behaviour. However, some time later the doorbell goes and it is the milkman calling for payment of his bill. The boy's mother says, "Go downstairs and tell him I am not in." That example is a double message—it is all right to lie to some people but not to others. The message is not about discipline but about consistency. The two things that matter in parenting are love and consistency. The hon. Lady shakes her head. She should think about it for a while. Discipline will be effective, whether it is tough or soft. It is the consistency and the love that go with it that matter. We may not be able to legislate for that in the House of Commons. However, we can increase the structures that support a family under stress.

The other day I heard the Minister deny that there was a link between unemployment and crime. We all know that there is such a link. But no one who knows anything about the matter has ever argued that it is a direct, statistical, one-to-one relationship. It is not suggested that because someone is unemployed he or she is more likely to be an offender. That is not the argument. The argument is that as factors such as unemployment add to the stress on either an individual or a family, the chances of behaviour which is not the norm for that person or family increase.

The result may be mental health breakdown—hence the increased suicide rate for people who are unemployed—or, more likely, family problems. If a father becomes unemployed it is likely that his children will offend. That is because frequently a family is operating at the margin of coping. The family does tolerably well and just about manages. It may offer sufficient love and just enough consistency to get by. But then society fails to provide the necessary props for that family, whether in the form of employment, education, income or whatever. Society withdraws the safety net and the family, which previously just about coped, tips over and fractures.

The two factors that are most important in crime prevention are family structure and support, and community support. Those factors lead to lower crime rates in both older traditional societies and societies such as ours where there is a well-established community and families are reasonably well supported.

One measure that would do more for crime prevention than almost anything else is the provision of nursery education for every child. We could also offer support to families and communities by providing more services in other areas of education in low-income, high-unemployment areas. To get that support going and make the community operate as one that supports families will do more to cut crime than any number of locks on doors and windows. We do not want to be forced to live behind bars.

The Government have an appalling record on crime and a bad record on crime prevention and policing. We can crack crime in Britain but only if we put crime prevention first and ensure that policing is close to the community.

1.32 pm

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): I have no doubt that few in my constituency of Monmouth will read the annual report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. That is not surprising as it costs £20. London is much more than simply the vested interest of London Members; it is the great capital of the United Kingdom. I rise to speak in the debate because my constituents are absolutely horrified and puzzled by what they see on the streets of London.

I have no doubt that my chief constable in our excellent local force in Gwent will read the report. He will be glad to see the extra police resources that are provided in central London. We are puzzled in Gwent that the Home Office considers that we do not need more police officers. In a generous mood my constituents will take the view that that reflects priorities where more needs to be done.

What do my constituents see when they come to London to go to the theatre, to shop or, indeed, to commute? They see that the area of central London from around the Strand has become the home for scores, if not hundreds, of homeless people who have formed encampments in every doorway. If one is there, not during the working and shopping week, but to go to the theatre in the evening, one finds that every air vent has been occupied and people are bedding down. Before the recent events in Lincolns Inn Fields, a bidonville had been set up —apparently with impunity.

My constituents are saying that, judging by the appearance of central London, it is no longer the great capital of an empire but a third-world country. They charge the Commissioner with seeming to have lost control of the streets, at least in a limited areas of central London. It is the law of the land—and ought to remain the law—that to sleep rough when directed to a reasonably accessible shelter is a criminal offence.

Mr. Tony Banks: There are not any such places.

Mr. Evans: I heard what the hon. Gentleman said and I will come in a moment to the analysis of how that has come to pass.

Beyond any shadow of doubt, it is an appalling social problem. there are a mixture of social factors, which apparently include care in the community for former occupants of mental hospitals—the most wicked form of care in the community imaginable, tossing them on to the streets to sleep rough. As the winter comes, anger is mounting among my constituents when they see people —*[Interruption.]*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) must not intervene between the Chair and the Member speaking. She has done that twice.

Mr. Banks: She is only trying to crawl her way to the top as a parliamentary private secretary.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not need a sedentary contribution from the hon. Gentleman now and he may wish to catch my eye later.

Mr. Banks: That is probably the only chance to contribute that I shall get.

Mr. Evans: I shall be brief, to encourage the hon. Gentleman.

In winter, it is appalling to see people bedding down in the gateways of the Strand, likely to die of exposure in horrific circumstances. If nothing else, it is an issue of law enforcement. My constituents tell me that they find it funny that this only happens in a limited area of central London.

Mr. Banks: It happens all over London.

Mr. Evans: The hon. Gentleman is ignorant as to London. If one passes Temple Bar and enters the district controlled by the City of London police force, one will see no such problems. Mr. Commissioner Kelly and his excellent force are to be congratulated on enforcing the law.

The statistics are dramatic. Those for the most recently available year show that there were no convictions for sleeping out in the City of London and that there were 12 convictions in the Metropolitan police district. There were five convictions for begging in the City of London and 1,251 in the Metropolitan police area. I assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the air vents and the emptiness of the streets in the City make that a much more attractive place to sleep out in central London than the Strand. People do not go there because they know full well that the law will be enforced. Why is it not being enforced by the Commissioner? I suggest to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary that that needs proper examination.

Is it a case of an operational decision? There has been a lavish and expensive advertising campaign on the underground depicting some homeless person—to whom the Metropolitan police rightly owe duties—which states

[Mr. Evans]

that the Metropolitan police are obliged to enforce the vagrancy laws. The report which the House is considering states:

> "My officers have faced a difficult task"—

That is readily accepted and respected—

> "in balancing the wishes of all sections of the community. We have worked in conjunction with voluntary agencies to help those at risk or in genuine need."

There is no mention of the enforcement of the law by the Commissioner in that regard, and the statistics clearly show that he is not attempting to enforce it. Everyone's experience of walking along the Strand or Temple place shows that to be the case.

If the problem is not due to the Commissioner, does it occur because the discretion to prosecute has not been exercised? My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary should tell us. However, it does not lie in the mouth of either my right hon. and learned Friend or the Commissioner to suspend and dispense with the laws of the land because certain aspects of fashionable opinion do not wish those laws to be enforced. The rule of law cannot be broken selectively. The Commissioner is obliged to enforce it.

A more reasonable explanation for what has happened may well be the lack of reasonable places of shelter available. But the problem with that explanation, if I understand the statements made by Ministers, is that they are rightly pleased that the number of such places has recently been dramatically increased. I note from the Commissioner's report that there is no suggestion that that is the basis for his decision or his practice of failing to enforce the law in that regard.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman should talk to the people who know.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must ask the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) to contain himself. I know that that is difficult, but perhaps he could try a little harder today.

Mr. Evans: I know that I may shock the sensibilities of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), but great numbers of voters and my constituents feel strongly about the issue.

It may be that the Commissioner could rightly say that as a result of the legislative changes in 1982 and 1984, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam referred, the law is defective and has been unnecessarily weakened in relation to such problems on the streets. However, there is no mention of that in the report and the latest Government statement that I can trace in *Hansard* shows that there is no intention to review that sector of the law.

In selected parts of central London, evidence can be seen of immense personal individual tragedy which must not be allowed to continue and which can be explained only by the practices of the Metropolitan police. It is an outrage and a disgrace that such tragedy has been allowed to continue for so long. But to my constituents coming to London, the position in the capital seems an inner-city urban equivalent of the curse of new age travellers.

Such people are a threat. One does not know when approached by a beggar in the Strand whether that person is perfectly harmless and amiable or dangerous. The person may have a knife or be seriously mentally disturbed. Those who returned Conservative Members of Parliament and elected a Conservative Government did so primarily because Conservatives believe in security and the rule of law. The rights of my constituents to wander central London during the pre-Christmas shopping season are being gravely diminished by the present state of affairs. I should be grateful for a specific reply from my hon. Friend the Minister on this issue. I warn him that there is a silent accumulation of disgust at the inhumane situation that has been tolerated and a growing outrage that the rule of law has been suspended and dispensed with in a way that seems, on the face of it, unconstitutional.

1.42 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I wish to describe two serious problems affecting my constituency—street prostitution and the scourge of drugs.

It is impossible for the majority of hon. Members whose constituencies may not contain the problem of street prostitution to appreciate the concern and outrage felt by those living in residential districts suffering from it. The resulting difficulties include the harassment of women walking along, who are taken to be prostitutes. There are a number of small schools in Stamford Hill, an area where the problem of street prostitution exists, and prostitutes ply their trade night and day. Women bring their children to school and find that there are prostitutes outside.

At night, there is noise nuisance when sometimes as many as half a dozen prostitutes congregate at street corners, squabbling and disturbing residents. In the Stamford Hill district there are a number of blocks of flats, some of which are sheltered accommodation for the elderly. Elderly people sometimes wake up in the morning and emerge from their doorways to find the corridors littered with used condoms and broken syringes—signs of the prostitutes' activities. We experience all the problems of crime related to the prostitutes, such as drugs and violence.

At any given time only a handful of hon. Members suffer from that problem in their constituencies and, as a consequence, the House does not take the matter seriously enough. The residents in Stamford Hill and those in the northern part of my constituency, around the Seven Sisters road and Amhurst park, have had enough of the problem. It causes them misery, is an environmental nuisance, and it gives rise to crime and related activities. My constituents want more resources devoted to the police, and by the police, to taking prostitution off the streets, and they urge a serious review of the law. More could be done to strengthen the law not necessarily on prostitution but kerb crawling. It takes two to create a nuisance, and the men who kerb crawl all night are just as much to blame as the prostitutes. People throughout the country share that concern. It is hardly fair that prostitutes can be charged and imprisoned while their male customers, who are just as culpable, get off scot free. I am sure that Members in all parts of the House take that matter seriously.

Surprise has been expressed at the scale of the drugs problem in inner London, but those of us born and brought up there have seen that transformation, with the introduction of hard drugs on to inner city streets—particularly crack cocaine. Drug abuse is itself an illegal activity, but it also creates violence. Many of the shootings and killings which occur in London are directly connected with the drugs trade, and crimes are committed by addicts trying to get money to pay for their daily fix. That is the motive behind many of the mindless and vicious assaults that we read about in the London newspapers.

Drug abuse is not, unfortunately, a crime which is committed behind closed doors. Housing estates are ruined when flats are taken over and used as retail outlets for drugs. Even in Clissold park, in which I walk my baby most days when I am not in the House, the sandpit cannot be used because it is full of crushed syringes. The drug menace is a sword at the heart of the inner city. Those of us familiar with the changing nature of that threat want the Metropolitan police to devise a serious strategy against drugs. In some parts of London, the belief is that their strategy is one of containment—but for the citizens of Hackney, that is not enough. We want the drug menace taken off our streets altogether.

The specific issue that I want to raise concerns serious allegations made against officers at Stoke Newington police station, which has developed an unfortunate reputation over the years. Earlier this year, thousands of pounds had to be paid to people who had been falsely arrested, harassed, or been subjected to violence by Stoke Newington police. I refer to a particular allegation—now the subject of an internal inquiry—that over the years, police at Stoke Newington netted tens of thousands of pounds by running their own drug dealers, planted drugs on people who were not drug dealers, solicited bribes, offered drugs to people if they would testify, and assaulted and racially abused suspects, almost all of them black.

Conservative Members, and perhaps even some of my own colleagues, may comment, "People would say that, wouldn't they?" However, the current major investigation into alleged corruption at Stoke Newington was triggered not by the fantasies of drug dealers or the complaints of local people, but in another way. Time and again when Customs and Excise officials planned VAT raids in Stoke Newington jointly with the local police, they arrived only to find that the suspects had gone. Customs and Excise began to believe that Stoke Newington police were on the take, as when they planned raids without involving the police, the supects would be there when they arrived. As a result of the notion that so long as they did not involve the police they would hit the jackpot, the investigation into corruption at Stoke Newington was dubbed "operation jackpot". These may sound like the kind of allegations that suspected drug dealers would be bound to make, but the investigation arose not because of complaints from my constituents but because Customs and Excise believed that the police must be "on the take".

In April 1991, the Russell inquiry into operation jackpot began. Since then, PC Roy Lewendowski, a policeman at Stoke Newington, has been arrested and charged with theft and VAT fraud. Another Stoke Newington policeman, PC Palumbo, was heavily censured by Judge Pitman in the case of Crown *v.* Noel. Eight police officers have been transferred from Stoke Newington police station. Another Stoke Newington policeman, Sergeant Gerry Carroll, shot himself in a cell at Barkingside police station. PCs Palumbo and Galbraithe have been suspended from operational duties. In a case involving Stoke Newington police—the case of Dennis Bramble—the prosecution offered no evidence because of "the unreliability of police evidence".

In July this year, Pearl Cameron, a Hackney resident, was sentenced to five years imprisonment in relation to drug dealing, but the judge commented:

> "I sentence you on the basis that your dealing stemmed from the advances of a corrupt police officer."

The police officer involved is at Stoke Newington police station. Since the inquiry began, 27 officers at Stoke Newington police station have been served with regulation 7 notices in respect of allegations that they have been involved in drug trafficking.

The inquiry is not based simply on rumour, or on allegations made by suspect sources. This is one of the most serious allegations of corruption involving the Metropolitan police for many years. Senior officers within the Metropolitan police have said that the level of corruption suggested by the inquiry rivals that discovered in the West Midlands police force.

I remind the Home Secretary that the Russell inquiry has been in progress for nearly two years. It is a matter of urgency for the inquiry to report, so that the shadow hanging over Stoke Newington police station can be dispelled. Until it reports, no one will know the truth of the allegations, and the trust and co-operation that Stoke Newington ought to receive from the community will remain in jeopardy. We were promised that the inquiry would report in the autumn. Where is the report? These are grave allegations, and it is not fair either to the Stoke Newington community or to honest policemen to delay the process in this way.

According to the allegations, there appears to have been a ring of corrupt policemen at Stoke Newington police station. A number of people have been convicted and have served sentences on the basis of evidence from officers at Stoke Newington who are now being investigated by the police. What steps are being taken to establish how many cases may be involved? What steps are being taken to inform the solicitors of the people concerned? A number of cases are currently going through the courts on the basis of evidence from Stoke Newington officers who are now under investigation. What steps are being taken to ascertain how many such cases there are?

As I have said, these are grave allegations, and I do not repeat them in the House lightly. I put it to the Minister, however, that if we are to succeed in a crusade against drugs on the streets of London, the police must have the co-operation of the community. Such allegations, constantly repeated, cannot help that co-operation. The Russell report is long overdue. We in Stoke Newington —and everyone who trusts in the Metropolitan police— must urge the Minister to encourage the Metropolitan police to produce that report speedily.

It has been a common ploy of Conservative politicians over the years to accuse Labour Members of Parliament and Labour councillors of being soft on crime. It is an easy charge to make and it is often made, but there is no way in which any genuine representative of the people of inner London could be soft on crime. If there is any group of people who suffer from crime, be it street violence, crimes against property or the terrible menace of drugs, it is our constituents. During the five years that I have been a Member of Parliament one of the issues that has caused most concern to my constituents has been the effects of crime, and their perception in some cases either that police strategy is not appropriate or that it is difficult to understand.

[Ms. Diane Abbott]

No one suffers more from crime than the people that Opposition Members seek to represent. If we raise allegations of malpractice and complaints about the incidence of corruption, it is only in the long run to increase the chance of improving confidence in the police and co-operation with the police. That will be the basis for a successful war against crime in the Metropolitan police area.

1.55 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): After three months preparation for this debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am grateful that you have called me to speak. I am sorry that there has been so little time to discuss the policing of the metropolis. The genesis of my interest in the subject is that in my constituency I have the Port of London police authority, the second oldest police force in the country, which is justifiably proud of its reputation. It is a very professional body, but recently it was privatised. I deprecate its privatisation.

Had there been more time, I should have liked to spend longer on that subject. However, the privatisation of the Port of London police authority has been referred to in earlier debates by my hon. Friends the Members for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). All I wish to do today, therefore, is to pay tribute to the officers of the British Transport police authority, and in particular to its small federation which fought vigorously to guard the independence of the police authority and the office of constable.

Earlier this year, it took the authority to court to resist privatisation. I refer in particular to the chairman and secretary of the Port of London's police federation, Harry Johnson and Martin McGrath. I have the utmost regard for the way in which they defended the interests of their members and tried jealously to guard the independence of those police officers. The privatisation of that police force has implications for other forces. British Transport police are deeply anxious about the threat of privatisation of their services, particularly when legislation to privatise rail services has been passed, and they have not been sufficiently reassured.

Members of the Metropolitan police are also anxious about the fact that the Government are contemplating the privatisation of some Metropolitan police functions. We know that there are predators about. Security firms would like to be able to police London's orbital road, the M25. I hope that the Minister will give a categorical assurance that the Government are not contemplating privatisation of highly regarded police functions in both the capital and elsewhere.

As for the flawed nature of the Sheehy inquiry, the Home Secretary has again refused to include consideration by that inquiry of forces not under the control of the Home Office. It is nonsense to set up an inquiry to look into the role of the police but to exclude British Transport police, the Royal Parks constabulary and many other professional constabularies which are under the jurisdiction of other Ministers. It is offensive to those police officers. By refusing to include the British Transport police, the Home Secretary snubbed his colleague the Secretary of State for Transport. We were told by the Minister for Public Transport, the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), during the Committee stage of the Bill that seeks to privatise coal and rail that the Secretary of State for Transport had asked the Home Secretary to include the British Transport police. The Home Secretary confirmed that he had turned down the request of his ministerial colleague the Secretary of State for Transport. That is something that I very much regret.

I endorse the comments of the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) about the Royal Parks constabulary and British Transport police. Those two important law enforcement agencies should have been considered more in the debate. I invite the Home Secretary to consider whether the two forces should have co-jurisdiction with the Metropolitan police. If British Transport police officers were outside St. Stephen's entrance, as they were a few nights ago, they would have powers of arrest only as citizens and not as police officers. That puts them in some difficulty, causes embarrassment, and is misunderstood by the general public. Similarly, if the Royal Parks constabulary were in the vicinity of a royal park but outside its curtilage, they would be frustrated and embarrassed if they tried to act as police officers. I hope that that difficulty will be taken on board.

Given more time, I should have liked to discuss many other issues, such as the lack of employment protection for many non-Home Office police officers and the fact that the Home Secretary has no control over a plethora of minor police forces. I very much regret that he has no way of controlling the recruitment or considering the suitability of those policemen.

In preparation for today's debate, I spent a morning with the traffic division of Essex police, who share responsibility for policing the M25. When I arranged my visit with the assistant chief constable, he urged me to do as his officers instructed because of the danger of the M25. He said, "Stand where we tell you and exercise great caution because we have lost some police officers". The police officers who came to collect me were subdued because the previous evening a colleague of theirs in the traffic division had been killed on the M25. I pay tribute to police officer Chris Wiggins and extend to his family and colleagues in the Essex traffic division and the Metropolitan police my condolences and, I am sure, those of the whole House.

The traffic division should have received greater consideration today. It is not the most glamorous aspect of policing, but it is probably the most technically and professionally skilled aspect of it. In the final speech from the Back Benches in this debate, I am pleased to pay tribute to the police officers who try to maintain mobility and enforce the law in dangerous, hazardous and sometimes stressful conditions on and around the M25.

2.2 pm

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): We have had an extremely interesting debate, in which many hon. Members have spoken on a wide range of topics.

Every issue is important and I propose to raise a few of my own, but the debate is a deeply inadequate substitute for the proper analysis, goal-setting and shared policy making that would be the function of an elected Metropolitan police authority. We welcome the Home Secretary's apparent new attitude to the issue.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) set out our approach to policing, which recognises the need to tackle crime effectively and seeks to address the underlying reasons for its continued growth. I have special responsibility for community and race relations, and it is perhaps in those two areas that the Metropolitan police have been most sorely tested in recent years.

We need to ask what the people of London want from their police service. They want a police service that they can trust and which will uphold the law and people's rights. They want a visible police presence where officers know the local area and a service that acknowledges that it is part of, and accountable to, the community. They want to be sure that if there is corruption or malpractice it will be rooted out. They want a service that is open about its activities, not secretive and defensive, and they wish, as we all do, to have a service that is honest, efficient and respected. The police themselves could surely wish for nothing less, and there are signs that they are listening.

The Metropolitan police under the leadership of Sir Peter Imbert has been in the vanguard of those trying to change police culture. As we have heard today, new management policies have been introduced under the Plus programme in an attempt to tackle the over-bureaucratic nature of the service and to develop a sense of corporate identity. Change at ground level, through sector policing, will be equally profound, but will it deliver the service that Londoners want and stem the increase in crime?

Theoretically, sector policing should result in closer co-operation between the police, the community and other agencies, but there is a real concern about the level of cover, which has been expressed today by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). One experiment in community and estate policing with which I am familiar led to a reduction of 60 per cent. in serious crime—but it involved increasing the number of home beat officers from one to six. Undoubtedly, it is feared that nothing like that level of cover would be maintained under sector policing. The Met still has some way to go, not least among some police constables on the beat, in winning the argument that resources will be more effectively deployed under sector policing.

The composition of the new local sector working groups will be vital. A truly dynamic relationship between the community and the police requires a high level of public participation, especially from the more sceptical sections of society. I have no doubt that we shall not stem the rising tide of criminality in our cities unless we greatly increase trust and co-operation between communities and the police.

There has been much recent criticism of the sensationalising of crime statistics. The fact remains, however, that London is the crime capital of Europe. We can be thankful that we do not head the league table for crimes against the person, but we have the highest overall rate of crime—specifically, at 60 crimes per thousand population, we have the highest rate of burglary and car crime. As we have heard repeatedly today, overall crime rates increased by 11 per cent. last year, having increased by 10 per cent. the year before.

Those crimes are primarily the activities of individual young men, often still in their formative years. They are not mature conspirators controlling large fortunes, whose hands are on the levers of power. How is it that we have so signally failed to create a more law-abiding and socially responsible community?

Of course, the person who commits the crime must bear the responsibility for the damage and hurt that he has caused. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott), I am all too conscious of the appalling price paid by many of the victims of crime in London. Nevertheless, we ignore at our peril the wisdom of Sir Peter Imbert's words which have already been quoted, attributing the growth in crime in part to the

> "marginalisation of some elements in our society".

Sir Peter continued:

> "There is a need to offer hope to the most disadvantaged".

When the Home Secretary spoke at the Tory party conference about those same young people, he threatened more punitive and draconian measures against those who offend. Perhaps his words were merely a sop to his audience, for he did not refer to those threats today—but neither did he offer a strategy to deliver new hope to our inner cities. I join my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson), who made an excellent speech, in asking how the Government aim to deter young people from a life of crime.

Does the Minister honestly believe that destroying the youth service and cutting training, amid record levels of homelessness and unemployment, will have a neutral effect on crime rates? Most Londoners do not believe that for a minute. They want an effective programme of crime prevention, and nothing that the Home Secretary has said today amounts to such a strategy.

Will the Minister tell us the rationale behind continuing to fund one-off and piecemeal projects rather than having an overall strategy? Surely the Home Office has enough information on the success or failure of individual projects in London to be able to sanction a comprehensive crime prevention strategy. I can offer the Home Secretary plenty of evidence from my constituency where the safer cities campaign, a task force, the drugs prevention unit, Lewisham council and the police have all been involved in a number of positive initiatives.

One example is Hawke tower, a 23-storey block of previously highly unpopular council flats with a high crime rate. Today, after the installation of a comprehensive security concierge system, there are no burglaries and a high level of tenant satisfaction. Which London authorities can find the money similarly to treat all their tower blocks? We also have the Ilderton motor project which is tackling car crime, one of our biggest crimes, and helping young people to overcome their own deviant behaviour. Where is the money to run such projects across the capital?

Even more seriously, where are the programmes and expertise to analyse local data, to predict local trends and to take preventive action? Despite police computers systematically recording burglaries throughout the area, it was only tenants' action, followed by help from the safer cities campaign, which revealed that one estate in Lewisham had a burglary rate twice the national average. Clearly, there is a need for making much better local use of crime data being collected Londonwide.

Safer cities has been a success, but there are only five projects in London. Will the Minister tell us whether they will end in 1994-95? What is their future? As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) asked, what will happen about the 20 new projects promised in the Conservative manifesto?

[Ms. Joan Ruddock]

Surely the Government must see that implementing the proposals of the Morgan report is the only way foward. Or is there, as my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield suggested, an ideological block? Central to the recommendations of the Morgan report is an endorsement of a local, multi-agency approach with proper status and funding. Morgan recommended:

> "local authorities working in conjunction with the police, should have clear statutory responsibilities for the development and stimulation of community safety and crime prevention programmes, and for progressing at a local level a multi-agency approach to community safety."

I repeat that there is widespread support for Morgan throughout the crime prevention community, including strong support from the Metropolitan police. I ask the Minister to tell us clearly today when the Government propose to act on the Morgan report.

I turn now to another specific and highly sensitive area of police-community relations—racial violence. One of the most sickening recent developments in Europe has been the rise of neo-Nazi and extreme right-wing activity. Historically, racism has flourished in times of economic hardship and London today appears to be no exception.

Over the past few years, there has been an horrific rise in racial attacks. In London last year, tenants reported more than 1,700 racial harassment cases to councils, but, because of the difficulties of testifying, only eight perpetrators were evicted. In Greenwich, racial attacks are now running at about 20 a month and there have been three racially inspired murders in the area.

The Home Secretary will know that the Commission for Racial Equality considers existing legislation to be inadequate to deal with the increasing incidence of racial crime. I am sure that the House wishes to know whether the Government have considered making a new criminal offence for racially motivated violence.

It is clear to us that many senior officers in the Met share our concern about the increasing scale of racist attacks and that they are taking the appropriate initiative. The new system of reporting, to which the Home Secretary referred, whereby the police officer no longer decides what is or is not a racist attack, but accepts the statement of the victim, is to be commended.

There are many other important initiatives, which I am unable to mention now because of lack of time. I commend the establishing of the racial incident unit in the Plumstead division, which is undoubtedly accounting for the increased reporting of the number of incidents in that area of south London. I make no apology for again mentioning Lewisham, where the police consultative committee, in consultation with the police, safer cities and the council, recently launched a poster campaign encouraging people to contact the police if they were racially harassed or attacked. That is an important initiative. I hope that it will be repeated elsewhere, giving a clear message that racism is not tolerated in this city.

The Met must also crack down hard on racism within its ranks. I note that, last year, there were 50 reported complaints about racially discriminatory behaviour. Sometimes as a result of their own work, the police may gain a distorted view. For example, a recent Goldsmiths' college report found that 79 per cent. of known drug users in Lewisham were white, yet 50 per cent. of those arrested by the police were black. Of crack users known to the police, 95 pr cent. are black, whereas 85 per cent. of crack users known to other agencies are white. We would all do well to reflect on those findings, especially the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall).

My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) referred to domestic violence. Like her, I congratulate those involved in the establishment of the 62 domestic violence units in the Met area. Although I agree with my hon. Friends that there is much more work to be done in developing the units—in particular, working closely with local women's groups—I think that the DVUs represent a considerable achievement.

I have been glad of the opportunity to acknowledge the good work done by the Metropolitan police as well as to highlight some of its difficulties. I join all those who have commended Sir Peter Imbert on the positive steps that he has taken while in office. I congratulate Paul Condon on his appointment and wish him well in continuing the process of improving the Metropolitan police. I must emphasise, however, that while the Government continue to turn their back on the social problems that they are creating by their own policies and while they refuse to invest appropriately in tried and tested remedies, crime will continue to increase. Until we give the people of London hope and a sense of their communities' value, the Metropolitan police and many other agencies will continue to pick up the pieces of the Government's broken policies.

2.17 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): The range of issues covered in the debate is an indication of the extent to which we all look to the police for help and support. They are in the front line to help our constituents when they are the victims of crime. They pick up the pieces in times of emergency. They advise on crime prevention and they work in the community to help our young people avoid crime.

There have been a number of common themes in this interesting and varied debate. There has been widespread praise for Sir Peter Imbert for his contribution to the Metropolitan police and the leadership that he has given. An equally widespread welcome has been given to Paul Condon, as he contemplates his new appointment with effect from 1 February.

Many hon. Members have emphatically condemned IRA bombings. The Government remain unshakeably committed to the defeat of terrorism in all its forms throughout the United Kingdom with all the means at our disposal. There have been 13 incidents in London since 7 October, resulting in the death of one man and injuries to 18 other people. It is only good fortune that has prevented further casualties. The current campaign of Provisional IRA attacks in London shows yet again that the organisation has no regard for the safety of the public. The public need to be alert at all times and to report anything suspicious to the police immediately.

Hon. Members have paid tribute to the memories of Sergeant Alan King and Detective Constable Jim Morrison. I add my tribute to those already voiced.

The other theme in the debate has been that of partnership, referred to first by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary who said that there had been a long tradition in this country of policing by consent. Police work and the campaign against crime depend on a partnership that involves not only the police but local authorities, voluntary agencies, businesses and the whole community. Sir Peter Imbert's strategy makes clear the commitment of the Metropolitan police to provide a policing style which has that objective at its root, deep in the community. Sector policing is a key element in ensuring that the service strengthens its links with local communities and builds on the benefits gained from working in partnership.

As has been the case in such debates in previous years, the large number of hon. Members who have spoken have raised many questions. Inevitably, the time available for me to respond has run short. I will cover what ground I can on the points that have been raised and will write to those hon. Members whose points I cannot answer before the debate concludes at 2.30 pm.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) referred to the role of police authorities. It is clear that there is a strong welcome for what my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary had to say about that subject. We are looking at the role of police authorities generally, including the rather different arrangement in London. No decisions have been taken yet, but we welcome the contributions in the debate. Changes for the provinces or for London would involve legislation and there would, of course, be consultation before they were introduced.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield, the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) and other hon. Members mentioned the Morgan report. The recommendations in the report have taken longer to consider than was originally anticipated because they were more wide ranging than had been expected under the working group's terms of reference. Several of the points raised went beyond the realm of central Government and they are still being considered. We hope to be able to respond to the main recommendations fairly soon. We are considering the views of the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Association of Chief Officers of Probation and the local authority associations on the report's recommendations.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield and several Opposition Members also referred to crime and economic conditions. Recorded crime has risen steadily over the past 40 years. Since 1970 there has been an average annual increase of 5 per cent. There are many possible explanations for that, not least the fact that increasing affluence has increased the opportunities for crime.

Low incomes or unemployment do not cause crime. There are no excuses for lawlessness and hooliganism. It would be wholly wrong and highly condescending to suggest that people on low incomes are bound to be criminals. There is no single cause of crime and many people with problems or disadvantages do not offend.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The House has paid tribute to the outgoing Commissioner. Does the Minister agree with this sentence of the Commissioner's report:

> "There is a close correlation between the map of crime and the map of deprivation"?

Mr. Wardle: I have made my views absolutely clear. I do not believe that there is a direct link between deprivation and incidence of crime.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) made an excellent speech in which he made it clear that he represents the Police Federation. He raised a number of important points. He asked about video recordings of interviews. There is tape recording of interviews in virtually all serious cases. That provides important protection for suspects and the police. The Home Office has commissioned independent research into video recordings on the basis of three pilot schemes where suspects' interviews were recorded on video tape. Professor Baldwin's report on that subject, which was received and published last summer, is now being considered.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge also mentioned DNA testing and its possible greater scope. He referred to the recommendations of the Home Affairs Select Committee that wider powers of DNA testing could be introduced with a DNA data base built from such samples. That would undoubtedly be a powerful investigatory tool. However, taking samples without consent and retaining samples of innocent suspects eliminated from inquiries would raise major ethical and legal inquiries. That issue falls squarely within the terms of reference of the Royal Commission on criminal procedure and no doubt will be considered in that fashion.

My hon. Friend and other hon. Members referred to those who carry knives. I can appreciate the widespread concern at the recent knife attacks on police officers, but it would be impractical to impose further restrictions on the sale of knives that have legitimate everyday uses. That is why the Government's approach has been to tighten the law on the possession of knives in public. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, as amended by the Criminal Justice Act 1988, allows a constable to search any person when he has reasonable grounds to believe that that person is committing the offence of carrying a knife in public without good reason. We fully appreciate public concern regarding the misuse of knives, but we do not think that there would be any advantage in amending the law at this stage.

Mr. Cohen *rose*——

Mr. Wardle: I think that the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), who has not been present throughout the debate, wishes to intervene. Provided that he is very brief, I shall accept his intervention.

Mr. Cohen: I was present for the opening and closing speeches. The passage to which the Minister referred is not popular with police officers. They feel that it does not give them proper search powers. Although a general search power is not acceptable, a specific search power in connection with knife carrying would have all-party support. Will the Minister review that aspect?

Mr. Wardle: I will certainly bear the hon. Gentleman's comments in mind. The House has also heard my views.

My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), who has great experience in all matters relating to policing, talked about civilianisation of the control room and the best possible deployment of police officers. I hope that he will accept first and foremost that, of course, it is the Commissioner's operational responsibility to decide how officers are deployed, but we are committed to a programme of civilianisation, as my right hon. and learned Friend has highlighted.

It is a waste of resources to use police officers for duties that do not require police powers or experience, and control room duties have been identified as suitable for

[Mr. Wardle]

civilianisation. That matter is proceeding at the moment. So far, 520 posts are being civilianised, with similar programmes to follow in 1993 and 1994.

The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) spoke about the safer cities programme. The Government are currently considering the future of the safer cities programme and its possible expansion, subject to available resources. The hon. Gentleman also mentioned borough-based policing. At present there are 69 Metropolitan police divisions compared with 35 London boroughs, plus the home counties districts that are policed by the Met. The Metropolitan police are in the process of reducing the number of divisions, deliberately to align them with borough boundaries. That reflects the intention of the Metropolitan police to develop closer partnerships with local communities to ensure that policing policy is as responsive as possible to local needs.

Several hon. Members, including the hon. Members for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and for Deptford, talked about racist attacks. On this occasion, there was not much in the speech of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey with which one could disagree, but he highlighted the importance issue of racist attacks. Racial attracks are wholly unacceptable to the Government. They cause pain and anxiety to victims and greatly harm race relations. The Home Office has issued guidance to forces on the response to such crimes, promoting the multi-agency approach.

In December 1991—these points were mentioned by the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott)—the interdepartmental racial attacks group published a follow-up to its 1989 report. The follow-up report concentrated on good practice already established in some agencies and made recommendations for further progress. The Government make it absolutely clear that that progress has the highest possible priority.

As the hon. Member for Sedgefield said, the police cannot tackle the problem on their own. I agree with him about that. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary made the same point. It is important to involve other agencies in partnership, where necessary. One useful example is the project called "Southwark Challenges Racial Abuse", which was opened in March 1992. It is a multi-agency programme aimed at tackling racial abuse. It involves, among others, the local borough, British Rail, London Transport, the British Transport police and the Southwark police community consultation group.

The hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson) referred to juvenile offenders. She said that a relatively small proportion were persistent offenders.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

EUROPEAN STANDING COMMITTEES

Ordered,

That European Community Document No. 6132/92, relating to Community action on the environment, shall not stand referred to European Standing Committee A.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Point of Order

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Remaining order of the day No. 26 is the Second Reading of a private Member's Bill. I should be grateful for your guidance as to how my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) can ensure that the Bill is not lost.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I suggest that the hon. Member goes upstairs to the Public Bill Office or the Table Office.

China

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): I am grateful for this opportunity to draw to the attention of the House the continued denial of human rights in China. It is a timely debate because of Lord Howe's forthcoming visit to China to investigate and discuss the issue on behalf of my right hon Friend the Prime Minister, following my right hon. Friend's own visit to Beijing last year. The debate today will provide the House with probably its only opportunity to record its current anxieties, make proposals and obtain a response from my hon. Friend the Minister.

Now that Hong Kong has fewer than five years before its return to China, it is appropriate that we should become less tolerant of China's performance on human rights, in the interest of preserving those rights for Hong Kong. British policy on China in recent years has been one of hypocrisy and double standards. Our response to what took place in Tiananmen square was nothing to what our response has been or would have been to other communist countries and totalitarian states perpetrating less transparent atrocities on their own people.

For example, our refusal to recognise Taiwan is a betrayal of those Chinese who fought and fled communism and are now moving into a competitive, multi-party democracy. Our response to the continued occupation of Tibet and the clear persecution of its people should have been no different from our response to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Instead, we continue to be almost indifferent to the plight of Tibet. The Chinese Government recognise that policy of appeasement not as one of strength or principle but as one of weakness, and it can only send the worst possible signals about what our response would be if China ignored the Basic Law after 1997.

The atrocities of Tiananmen square a little more than three years ago should have been the last straw for the free world. For more than 40 years we have turned a blind eye to what a few evil men have imposed on 1 billion people in a country which was a civilisation when Europeans lived in caves. All the evidence has been forthcoming of a totalitarian state as bad as that of Hitler or Stalin, of the genocide of millions, the forced abortion of millions, the incarceration of millions and the slavery of millions. There is state control of the media, labour, property and religion. There are prisoners of conscience, labour camps and torture chambers.

Whatever inhumanities mankind has perpetrated elsewhere in the world appear to have been applied in China with perhaps greater excess than ever before. Yet it has been expedient for us to ignore it, excuse it or accommodate it, in the hope that humanitarian reforms would follow the evident economic reforms. Why is that? Is it because China is the world's largest nation, with one fifth of the world's population, because it is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, because of the indefinite status of Hong Kong? Whatever the reasons, the Chinese authorities knew that they could commit the massacre of Tiananmen square with impunity, and because the world did nothing of note in response to Tiananmen square China continues to persecute, incarcerate and murder its citizens.

I hope that our noble Friend will take with him all the knowledge and information available on those atrocities to impress on the Chinese leadership that such behaviour, which was never acceptable, totally contradicts the spirit of the new world order as well as the universal nature of the UN declaration to which China is a party. I shall refer to some of the abuses, before concluding with measures that I believe that our noble Friend should seek during his visit.

As we know from the reports of Asia Watch and Amnesty International, the effects of Tiananmen square are lasting and continue to this day. Between 10,000 and 30,000 people have been arrested, many have been tried and executed in secret, and others have been tried and convicted without proper trial or defence. Amnesty reported that 960 death sentences were imposed and 750 executions were carried out in 1990, and that more than 1,000 Chinese were executed in 1991, with unofficial sources suggesting that up to 20,000 executions may have taken place last year, according to a ministerial reply to me on 12 March. While it is true that some prominent leaders have received more lenient sentences to placate international opinion, in the provinces, away from the mainstream, many people have been gaoled for up to 20 years for making speeches in support of democracy and reform.

The Chinese communist party has reinforced its authority by bugging, video taping and tailing its citizens in Beijing and elsewhere in a way which is scarcely credible today. The practice that prisoners awaiting execution are paraded at public rallies is particularly inhuman and uncivilised. It is reminiscent of mediaeval times and is surely contrary to the UN convention against torture and other cruel and inhuman treatment, which China ratified in 1988.

From the testimonies of Harry Wu, who spent 19 years in the Chinese gulags—the laogai—before being allowed to come to the west, and from other reports, we know that political and religious prisoners produce goods which China exports to the west. One of the reasons for the success of joint ventures with China is the fact that labour is so cheap. The laogai goods are made by labourers who are punished and tortured if they do not meet targets. They include tea, canned and leather goods, shoes, towels and stockings, as well as machine parts and radiators. Although illegal, they are being sold in this country. They are difficult to identify, but I understand that a Europewide campaign has just been launched to expose those major chain stores which sell them.

From the recent complaint of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions to the International Labour Organisation, we know of more repression of trade unions and the detention of hundreds of members. The report criticises a new code of working practices which bars workers from forming or joining free trade organisations, and refers to Han Dongfan who led China's first independent trade union movement in June 1989. He was freed from imprisonment last year on health grounds, but has only recently recovered from being beaten by officials as he left a tribunal in Beijing early this year.

Thanks to what was told to last year's conference of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, we

[Mr. David Atkinson]

understand better how Chinese women, pregnant without permission, will be harassed and threatened either to abort or risk the destruction of their homes.

From the reports from Christian Solidarity International, CSI, and the International Society for Human Rights, ISHR, we have learnt of new repression against Christians in China following a central committee directive on religious activity issued in February last year and known as document six. It was aimed at independent churches that had not registered with the state-controlled "Three Self Patriotic Movement".

Such developments were in response to the growth in religious belief, particularly among young people who had been alienated by the events at Tiananmen square, and the consequent decline in the membership of the Communist party. Such movement has been reinforced by the failure of the attempted coup in Moscow last year. It has led to strict controls on the importation of religious books and tapes, restrictions on the building of new churches, limits on theological training and baptisms, and the intimidation and surveillance of known Christians.

The movement has included the arrest of Pastor Moses Xie, one of China's best known house church leaders and Christian evangelists, and the repeated interrogation of others such as Pastor Samuel Lamb for refusing to register his church—his real name is Lin Xiangao and he has spent a total of 21 years in prison for his Christian activities.

Several elderly Roman Catholic bishops who refused to abandon their allegiance to the Pope have been imprisoned. From a ministerial reply to my question about some of those men, I was glad to learn that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had made representations to Premier Li Peng in January, as did my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) when he visited China last year.

Of particular concern must be recent reports of the deaths in mysterious and violent circumstances in police custody of Bishops Fan Xueyan, Shi Churye and Li Zhenrony. Those men were aged 86, 71 and 72. What sort of people are the Chinese leaders who can allow such atrocities against those elderly men? What do they fear from them or from up to 50 million Christians in a country of more than 1 billion people? Perhaps the Chinese leaders know that religion, far from being the opiate of the masses, is the real threat to communism—the spiritual alternative which triumphed in eastern Europe and brought down the Soviet empire.

When the history of communism in red China is written by some Chinese Solzhenitsyn, as it will be one day, it will record more victims and atrocities than anything now coming to light in the Soviet Union, Poland or Cambodia. When it does, the people of the world will ask, as they did of the holocaust,

> "You must have known—why, then, did you do nothing?"

The forthcoming visit of Lord Howe to China provides us with a new opportunity to impress on the Chinese leadership that we cannot tolerate such atrocities and human rights abuses any longer. I hope that Lord Howe will go armed with a copy of the *Hansard* report of today's debate, supported with detailed references of all the abuses since Tiananmen square, and an up-to-date list of prisoners of conscience.

I commend Lord Howe to take a copy of the recent Asia Watch report, "Anthems of Defeat—the Crackdown in Hunan Province 1989-1992", which is probably the most comprehensive account of systematic human rights violations to have emerged from China in the past 15 years. I hope that Lord Howe will press China to accede to the two human rights covenants of the United Nations: the international covenant on civic and political rights, and the international covenant on economic social and cultural rights. I hope that he will press China to accept international Red Cross inspections of Chinese prisons and to investigate the widespread reports of torture.

I hope that Lord Howe will deplore the fact that China is the largest supplier of arms and military equipment to remaining totalitarian regimes, including those which have been the worst perpetrators of human rights abuses, such as Myrimar and the Khmer Rouge. I hope that he will challenge the Chinese leadership to accept a visit by the Pope—it would be one of the most encouraging gestures that it could make to allay the fears of Hong Kong for its future after 1997. Not long ago, China pathetically even refused to allow a plane carrying the Pope to fly over Chinese territory.

Last week, the 14th congress of the Communist Party of China committed itself to a freer, more market-oriented economy, which we welcome, but it also confirmed the party's near-totalitarian monopoly of political power at the expense of fundamental freedoms—for which there can be no justification. Today, China remains the last of the evil empires. I hope that my noble Friend Lord Howe will succeed in conveying to the Chinese leadership our abhorrence of its human rights record, and the whole House will wish him well in that task.

2.45 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) is well known and respected for his fervent advocacy of human rights world wide. We are indebted to him for bringing these important matters to the attention of the House. I begin by assuring him that human rights constitute a central element in our dialogue with the Chinese authorities, and are a regular feature of our ministerial contacts with them.

As my hon. Friend will recognise, our interests in and dealings with China go wider than this single issue—important and disturbing though it is. China is an important country with a long history and a proud and industrious people. We have a common interest, in an increasingly uncertain world, in discussions with the Chinese over a full range of international issues. In recent years, China has been pressing ahead rapidly with a welcome process of economic reform, which has resulted in an impressive improvement in living standards.

We are encouraged by the outcome of the recent party congress in Peking, with its emphasis on developing the market economy and bringing through more youthful leaders. Our other shared interest, which is much in people's minds this week, and to which my hon. Friend referred, is Hong Kong. Over Hong Kong, we have a particular and onerous responsibility which this Government are determined to discharge fully and honourably.

No one would be foolish enough to claim that it is for us to try to run China's internal affairs, but, as a democratic country, it is entirely right for Britain to urge China to observe internationally recognised standards of human rights—and we do so.

We have often emphasised to the Chinese authorities the

> "universality of international standards of human rights and fundamental freedoms."

Those are not just western or Christian standards, but apply to all countries and regions. The concept is enshrined in articles 55 and 56 of the United Nations charter. Article 55 states:

> "the United Nations shall promote universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion."

Article 56 states:

> "all Members pledge themselves to take joint and separate action in co-operation with the Organisation for the achievement of the purposes set forth in Article 55."

The specific rights and freedoms codified in the universal declaration of human rights and two international covenants transcend national, religious, cultural and ideological frontiers. Those specific rights and freedoms are all equally applicable to all persons in all circumstances. We believe that the inability of a country to ensure the exercising of any of those rights—for example, the right to an adequate standard of living—cannot be used as an excuse to ignore obligations in respect of another right, such as the right to freedom from arbitrary detention.

Human rights are no longer exempt from external pressure on grounds of "state sovereignty". The United Nations Security Council endorses that by recognising that gross violations may endanger international peace and security. And, of course, United Nation's peacekeeping efforts now incorporate human rights verification.

China has a long history of subordinating the rights of the individual to the will of the state. Tiananmen square was a tragic illustration of that, and one which the Government and people of Britain, and the west generally, have not forgotten. I am afraid that my hon. Friend did less than justice to the Government's position. In the immediate aftermath of Tiananmen, we and our western partners introduced a number of measures—for example, in relation to aid and to high-level contacts—to bring home the strength of western feelings about those events. As time passed and some degree of relaxation developed—for example, the lifting of martial law and the release of numbers of detainees—we and our partners decided at the Foreign Affairs Council on 20 October 1991 that most of those measures should be rescinded. The European Community and its member states nevertheless take every opportunity to remind the Chinese of their obligations towards their own people, and about the widely felt anxieties elsewhere about their behaviour.

I am well aware of the depth of parliamentary and public concern in this country about human rights in China—including Tibet—which I share. I consistently receive a large volume of letters from Members of Parliament and from the public on the subject. The Government have been extremely active with the Chinese authorities on this issue, as has been recognised by many of the non-governmental organisations most interested in the subject.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister raised our concerns with Premier Li Peng during his visit to Peking in September last year, in New York in January and in Rio in June. The Foreign Secretary and I raised human rights with the Vice-Foreign Minister during his visit to Britain in July. I took the opportunity then to hand over a list of names of individuals who are of particular concern, as well as copies of Amnesty International's report—published in May this year—on the situation in Tibet, and its list of appeal cases. More recently, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary raised human rights with the Chinese Foreign Minister during their meetings—both bilateral and in the troika—in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly last month. The Chinese can be in no doubt about the strength of feeling in this country.

As my hon. Friend rightly said, Tibet is an area of particular concern. Human rights issues there are undoubtedly entangled with aspirations for independence; but the fact is that Tibet has never been internationally recognised as an independent country. It is not the same as Afghanistan. Nevertheless, we regularly speak to the Chinese about the need for better protection of human rights in Tibet, and about the need for a more decent autonomy for Tibet. We have consistently encouraged the Chinese to enter into a dialogue with Tibetans, including the Dalai Lama. We believe that this is the most promising solution to the problem of Tibet. The Chinese can be in no doubt about the strength of feeling in the House—and more widely—about their behaviour in Tibet.

Some people, like my hon. Friend, fear that what the Chinese are doing today in Tibet they will do in Hong Kong after 1997. I do not believe that. All the Government's endeavours are directed to building an edifice that will survive the transition. The joint declaration, an international treaty registered at the United Nations, lays down a series of guarantees for human rights in Hong Kong after 1997. For example, it provides that

> "rights and freedoms, including those of the person, of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association . . . of religious belief . . . will be protected by law."

In addition, the Hong Kong Government have enacted a Bill of Rights, which enshrines in Hong Kong law the international covenant on civil and political rights, which the joint declaration and the future Basic Law guarantee will remain in force. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that it is right to build—as we have been—as lasting an edifice as possible for the guaranteeing of human rights in Hong Kong.

I should say a word about Taiwan, as it was raised by my hon. Friend. We do not recognise the authorities in Taiwan as the Government of China, which is their claim. Nor do any major countries. We cannot recognise two Governments for China. I do not fully understand my hon. Friend's point. Commercial, educational and cultural exchanges with Taiwan and this country are thriving, and I welcome that.

Chinese behaviour will not change overnight; Chinese history, culture and social arrangements differ from ours. There are, however, a number of positive signs. The Chinese are more ready to discuss the issues. They have published several White Papers in an effort to achieve greater understanding of their position on human rights, including those in Tibet. They argue that the provision of food, clothing, housing and a secure and stable environment are the most important rights. And on the positive side, there is no doubt that China, with its massive population of 1·1 billion, is currently making great strides in developing its economy and reforming its industrial base. It has gone a long way towards eliminating poverty

[Mr. Alastair Goodlad]

and deprivation, and we welcome that. Maintaining both economic progress and stability is important; so is international opinion. Although the Chinese authorities do not accept all our ideas on human rights—which are based on the standards elaborated in the universal declaration of human rights—there is evidence that persistent pressure can lead to a point at which a poor human rights record becomes a matter that will be addressed.

My hon. Friend has mentioned a number of unpleasant abuses of human rights. The Government have raised on many occasions their particular concerns—the continued persecution of religious believers, the continued detention of individuals for the free expression of their political beliefs and the situation in Tibet.

We and our European Community partners have raised our concerns over the persecution of religious believers on a number of occasions. The matter of the persecution of Catholic bishops was specifically raised by Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials earlier this month with the Chinese embassy here. I was also dismayed and concerned to learn of the incident in Henan province on 8 September and the reported imprisonment of 120 religious believers. We have raised the cases of a number of individuals who have been persecuted for their religious beliefs, including Pastor Moses Xie and Pastor Samuel Lamb. Some of these individuals were on the list handed to Premier Li Peng by the Prime Minister in New York in January. Oth[illegible] included on a list of 40 cases of concern handed over by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food during his visit to China last year, and freedom of religious worship will be one of the areas of concern for the forthcoming mission led by Lord Howe.

We share with hon. Members a number of other concerns expressed by my hon. Friend: for example, the widespread use of the death penalty, the trade in human organs taken from executed Chinese prisoners and torture. We, our Community partners, and other like-minded Governments, will continue to press the Chinese to conform to their international and legal obligations.

At his meeting with Premier Li Peng in New York in January my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister proposed that a delegation should visit China to examine human rights and related issues. My hon. Friend has referred to that delegation. As the House will know, it is to be led by my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Howe. The Chinese have agreed that the visit will take place from 1 to 8 December. Its aim is to exchange views on human rights issues and to learn more about China's provisions and practices in this area. The precise terms of reference and itinerary are under discussion, and the arrangements are well in hand. The official host will be the Chinese People's Institute for Foreign Affairs.

Lord Howe will be accompanied by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) and by the hon. Members for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) and for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) together with the Rt. Rev. the Bishop of Tonbridge, Professor Anthony Dicks of the School of Oriental and African Studies, and Mr. Nigel Rodley of the university of Essex. The delegation is not on this occasion expecting to visit Tibet, but it certainly proposes to raise human rights questions relating to Tibet in the course of its programme in China. Lord Howe and his colleagues are in close touch with a number of experts and non-governmental organisations here in Britain. They will be briefed in advance by relevant NGOs, including Amnesty International, on all issues of concern, including persecution of religious believers, the situation in Tibet, torture, forced abortion, the death penalty, trade in human organs from executed prisoners, prison-made goods, and others.

I do not believe that we should avoid contact with China, even if we disagree with important elements in Chinese policies. We welcome China's opening to the world. The benefits are for all to see. We believe strongly in the advantages of such contacts. China's current economic development is astonishing. It benefits China, Hong Kong and all of us. As standards of economic prosperity rise, it is our hope and that of our Community partners that standards of democratic accountability will also rise. We are doing our bit to help this by, for example, training Chinese lawyers, accountants, administrators—some of the essential human resources which make good government possible.

So with China our policy is clear. We extend the hand of friendship and support. We encourage trade to the benefit of our people, as well as theirs. We encourage, through persuasion, training and example, a gradual spread of the tenets of Government accountability, and we take every opportunity to remind the Chinese that the world expects higher standards from them, in particular on human rights, as they emerge on to the world stage.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 26 October 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Rural Transport

1. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to monitor the service provision level *(a)* in rural areas and *(b)* on Sundays and at off-peak times.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): I apologise for the absence of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. He is chairing the Transport Council in Luxembourg today.

The Transport Research Laboratory has published several reports on the changing pattern of bus services, including one recently on rural bus services.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept that, as we forecast when the Transport Act 1985 went through, because local authorities do not have enough money for subsidised services there is a rapidly declining off-peak service on some days and in rural areas? The same will happen on the railways because of privatisation unless the Government recognise the social need for a public transport service.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman asks about railway privatisation. I can confirm that central funding will be applied to the subsidisation of socially necessary rail services. Through the franchising authority, the state will provide sufficient funding to ensure the running of socially necessary services.

Mr. Donald Anderson: As the Minister well knows, the deterioration in off-peak services was predicted, was bound to happen, and has happened. Has the Minister attempted to monitor the mergers in the bus industry and is he anxious about increasing monopolisation in the industry?

Mr. Freeman: It is the responsibility of the Director General of Fair Trading to monitor the bus industry and, where appropriate, action is taken by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. It is not the responsibility of the Department of Transport to take action, but the Department monitors the performance of the industry. The recent Transport Research Laboratory report about which I spoke refers to service patterns in four rural areas and concludes that in recent years there has been no significant change in the provision of services.

Ms. Walley: I am stunned at the lack of concern among Conservative Members about the effects of bus deregulation on rural transport. In view of what the Minister has said, why is he not prepared to recommend that subsidies for standard spending assessments should be ring fenced? We are worried about the way in which bus journeys have decreased by as much as 18 per cent. since bus deregulation. As my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) has said, no matter what assurances the Minister gives about central funding for British Rail privatisation, there will not be the same concern to ring fence rural services following rail privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: The Government have no proposals to ring fence specific provision through the revenue support grant and standard spending assessments, either for subsidising socially necessary bus services or for concessionary bus fares. It is for local authorities to determine their own priorities. I accept that those choices are difficult, but local authorities must make them.

Manchester Airport (Rail Link)

2. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about a railway link southwards from Manchester airport.

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): This is a matter for British Rail, in consultation with the local authorities and the airport company. I understand that a working party has been set up to consider the case for a southern link.

Mr. Bennett: The Minister will be aware that people in Greater Manchester are delighted about the progress that has been made to establish the railway station at the airport and at the fact that from next May there will be a first-class rail service from the north of England to the airport. Does he agree that it is tragic that for the want of approximately a 100-yard curve, the airport will not be linked to the whole of the midlands? Is it not rather odd that although the Government can produce large sums for transport in London, they cannot find sufficient to set up 100 yards of track to enable the airport to be linked both north and south?

Mr. Norris: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for drawing attention to the fact that the northern link is due to be commissioned in May 1993 and that it will provide direct and excellent access from Manchester to the airport. He asked about further possible links and I will draw his remarks to the attention of British Rail, which will have ultimate responsibility for that matter.

Settle-Carlisle Line

4. **Mr. Booth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the future of the Settle-Carlisle route.

The Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Kenneth Carlisle): This is a matter for British Rail in the immediate future. In the longer term, the line, like all others, will be franchised and subsidy for socially necessary services will continue.

Mr. Booth: Beyond saying that the Carlisle to Settle railway will extend to Finchley, will the Minister kindly assure the House—moving from rural to urban regeneration—that in future urban regeneration schemes, infrastructure and particularly rail infrastructure will be thought about and put in place at the formative stages?

Mr. Carlisle: I pay tribute to the work that my hon. Friend has done in this sector. As he knows, we have substantial interest and investment in the Sheffield and Manchester schemes and we recognise that those schemes can do a great deal for urban communities. As to the Settle to Carlisle route, since British Rail was refused consent for this to close in 1989 there has been great success with the scheme, and substantial investment has been made. I am glad to tell the House that work on the famous Ribblehead viaduct has been completed, stations have been improved and platforms extended. This will provide a corridor for substantial investment in this beautiful part of our country.

Mr. Waller: Is my hon. Friend aware of the considerable amount of work done by the supporters of the line to promote it, and that this involved surveys of local businesses? Will he take into account the fact that this line is predominantly for social and recreational use, so that any subsidy purely for travelling to work and other similar purposes will not go a long way to subsidising the line?

Mr. Carlisle: I realise how much loved the line is, and that is one reason why it survived attacks in previous years. I believe that it has a future not only for social and recreational reasons but because of the service that it can give to the general community. It is supported by a whole range of people. It is interesting to note that the standing conference consists not only of the local authority but of the tourist board, the Rural Development Commission, voluntary groups and the West Yorkshire passenger transport authority. The recent report, "Settle to Carlisle: Opportunities for Development", offers the real way forward for this famous line.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that there could be a hidden agenda here? When I see the hon. Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) tabling questions about the Settle to Carlisle railway and the Minister giving a positive reply, I begin to put two or three things together. Is it conceivable in this hidden agenda that the hon. Member for Finchley is thinking about getting a job there, running the show on the Settle to Carlisle line, and vacating his seat at Finchley so that the queen across the water—Lady Thatcher—can inherit it? If so, I have a good suggestion: the line can be renamed the Chiltern Hundreds.

Mr. Carlisle: The hon. Gentleman would see not only a hidden agenda but a plot under every support of the Ribblehead viaduct.

London Underground

5. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to meet the chairman of London Underground to discuss improvements to the underground train service.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I meet the chairman of London Underground regularly to discuss a variety of issues, including improvements to the underground train service.

Mr. Carrington: My hon. Friend will be aware that the new Westminster and Chelsea hospital opens in April next year. The hospital is badly served by London Underground and if Professor Tomlinson's proposals for London's health services are implemented, communications with the hospital will be even more vital. In the planning for the Chelsea-Hackney route, will my hon. Friend consider the proposals to put a station near that hospital to serve the patients? Will he also consider the possibility of speeding up construction of the route, which will be even more important in the future than it has been in the past?

Mr. Norris: I know of my hon. Friend's considerable concern about rail services in his constituency. The Government have safeguarded the route of the Chelsea-Hackney line and thus demonstrated their confidence in the viability of the project. I am sure that my hon. Friend will understand when I tell him that I cannot give any assurances on when construction might commence.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the Minister recognise that the underground service provides no stations in the London borough of Greenwich? That is why there is particular concern about progress on the Jubilee line. When will the Minister be able to make an announcement, and will that announcement be positive, that the Government will proceed to build the Jubilee line extension?

Mr. Norris: I wish that I could give the hon. Gentleman a full and complete answer to that question. He will have to satisfy himself with the response that he knows that I am obliged to make, which is that the matter is not one on which I can deliberate at this stage. He is right about the benefits that the line will bring to his constituency and to others that it will serve.

Mr. Bowis: May I endorse the request made by my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington)? Will my hon. Friend bear it in mind that among those seeking to reach the excellent new hospital facility will be my constituents from south of the river? It is important that the Chelsea-Hackney line comes in soon and continues south of the river into Wandsworth.

Mr. Norris: I shall consider what my hon. Friend has said about possible options for the route of the Chelsea-Hackney line at the southern end. It is right that several options are available which have not yet been fully explored. I shall be happy to take his suggestions on board.

Mr. Cohen: Has the Minister seen today the survey produced by the Association of London Authorities, which shows that fares in London are four times higher than in Paris, six times higher than in Rome and Madrid and eight times higher than in Athens? At the same time, the underground system has not had investment to match fare rises. Does the Minister agree that in those circumstances there is no case for further fare rises? Will he come down from his ivory tower and admit that the price is not right?

Mr. Norris: Someone has to pay for the operation of the rail service—and that means either the taxpayer or the user. I am convinced that it is right that users should pay enough to cover at least the majority of the operating costs of London Underground. I am sure that the hon.

Gentleman knows that there still has to be a subsidy of the operating costs. If users pay an appropriate amount of the costs, the taxpayer's contribution flows straight through into new investment. That must be in our interests. That seems to be something that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues have overlooked.

Mr. John Marshall: Would my hon. Friend care to recollect his journey on the Northern line with me? Does he agree that existing services on that line are Victorian and need to be brought up to date? Does he agree also that it would be quite illogical to appoint a Minister with responsibilities for transport in London and then to cut or cancel expenditure on the London Underground system?

Mr. Norris: I remember my journey on the underground with my hon. Friend with particular piquancy. It was an interesting and illustrative experience. In all seriousness, he knows that London Underground fully appreciates the extent of the need to modernise the Northern line service. He will know of the considerable programme of modernisation on the Central line, which is worth about £800 million. He will know also that London Underground currently proposes to follow on from that work to the Northern line.

Madam Speaker: I call Mr. Peter Snape—*[Interruption.]* Mr. Tony Banks.

Mr. Tony Banks: I do not know who should be more offended, Madam Speaker.

I welcome the Minister to the Government Dispatch Box on the occasion of my latest and most enduring comeback. Will he confirm that thousands of jobs in construction and manufacturing industry outside London are waiting on a decision on the Jubilee line extension? It is appalling that the indecision and lack of an announcement from the Government should be leading to so much uncertainty. If the Minister cannot make an announcement today, will he tell the House whether he is personally in favour of the Jubilee line extension?

Mr. Norris: I welcome the hon. Gentleman to the Dispatch Box. As he suggested, he has made more come backs than Frank Sinatra. I hope that this one will prove enduring, as I am sure that our exchanges will be enjoyable.

I am fully aware of the extent to which all mega-projects can generate jobs. It is clear, however, that such schemes must be subject not only to the criterion of desirability but to that of affordability. That will be considered by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues when they consider the whole public expenditure round. There is no doubt in my mind that the Jubilee line is an excellent scheme, and I hope very much that it will proceed. The decision will, however, be made by others on the basis of overall affordability. I acknowledge that I must be as much subject to such pressures as any other Minister.

Rail Privatisation

6. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what response he has had to the White Paper "New Opportunities for the Railways".

7. **Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress of the Government's plans to privatise British Rail.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State received a number of responses following publication in July of the Government's proposals for privatisation of British Rail. We plan to introduce this autumn the main legislation, to enable our proposals to be implemented. On 12 October, we published a detailed consultation document on franchising. I look forward to the responses, especially those from firms interested in taking on franchises.

Mr. Hawkins: I again draw attention of my hon. Friend to a problem of which I know he is aware from our previous discussions. I refer to the withdrawal of the last remaining direct InterCity services to my constituency from London and Glasgow. I thank my hon. Friend for the attention that he has paid to that matter in the past, and ask him to take full account of the views of no fewer than 11,000 people who signed a petition asking British Rail to reinstate those through services. Will my hon. Friend comment on the scope for the introduction of through direct services from London and Glasgow to Blackpool as a result of the Government's plans for privatisation?

Mr. Freeman: Currently, decisions about rail services are for British Rail. Although it suspended the direct service to which my hon. Friend referred, a connecting service is available from London and Glasgow. As to the future, I envisage that when the new regime is in place after full parliamentary debate and discussion, private sector operators will want to run specific services, with the agreement of the regulator, on a train path. It may be that Blackpool-Euston will be such a service; and if it can be run viably and a train path is available, I will welcome that.

Mr. Harvey: Will the Minister comment on the collapse of Charterail and on the end of the StageCoach service to Aberdeen—two pilot private operations—and say whether the Select Committee on Transport will have a chance to report before the privatisation Bill comes before the House?

Mr. Freeman: I regret the demise of Charterail, but that had more to do with the recession and the company's optimistic plans than the charging regime, which is currently not in place but is operated ad hoc by British Rail. I do not believe that we can fault British Rail for Charterail's demise. Under the present regime—not the new track-charging regime which will be in place on privatisation—StageCoach reached agreement with British Rail. That company also was clearly too ambitious, as not enough tickets were sold. However, I am pleased that services will continue, and that StageCoach will sell tickets to London not only from Aberdeen and Edinburgh but from Glasgow. I repeat that it is the Government's intention to publish a Bill next month.

Mr. Adley: May I put it to my hon. Friend—quietly and, I hope, thoughtfully—that his proposals are novel, complex, controversial and untried? Would not the Government be better off listening to all the issues and debating them thoroughly before producing a Bill? My hon. Friend has referred to the franchising White Paper.

As the document contains no information about charges, should not that fundamental issue be explored before we rush into introducing a Bill?

May I ask my hon. Friend again whether he agrees that it would be good for all concerned if publication of the Bill, which presumably cannot take place until the paving Bill has received Royal Assent, were delayed until the Select Committee has had a chance to examine the issues?

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend is right in saying that there should be thorough discussion of the Government's proposals. We are trying to meet the timetable, and it seems to us that the publication of a Bill will help the process. Detailed examination of the Bill will take up much of 1993 and the Select Committee hearings will provide a valuable forum for the Government and, indeed, others to comment on the proposals.

I draw a distinction between the publication of our proposals for the framework of introducing the private sector, and the implementation of those proposals. We have no plans to rush the process; indeed, we expect both passenger franchises and the sale of freight to start operating for the first time in 1994.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Does the Minister agree that, on the whole, it is better to take evidence before making a decision than to take it after that decision has been made? Would not the Minister benefit from an opportunity for the Government to find out a bit about the subject, before they have to reverse their views too publicly?

Mr. Freeman: I am sure that the Select Committee's deliberations, which will go into great detail, will be very valuable to the Bill's Committee stages in both Houses. I do not accept that the principles of our privatisation proposals, which we have set out very clearly, cannot be debated in the House. The debate that will take place on Thursday will provide us with an ample opportunity to consider the broad principles. Of course we are prepared to listen to discussion of the details: that is why we published a franchise document a short time ago.

The Select Committee's conclusions will be extremely important, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I look forward to appearing before the Committee on Wednesday.

Mr. Dunn: In the interests of my constituents in north-west Kent, may I urge my hon. Friend to refuse to listen to those who counsel for delay? Does my hon. Friend agree that British Rail managers, or those who succeed them, are bound to welcome the privatisation plans because they will place full responsibility, control and accountability where they belong—with those who run the railway system?

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's support. There is no doubt that our proposals have received a very positive reaction—not only from some 50 companies in the private sector which have expressed an interest in the principle of franchising the passenger rail services and the sale of freight service, but from British Rail management and staff. Our proposals are certainly gradualist, and they will be thought out, argued and presented in great detail. The process will not be rushed, and it will work.

Mr. Prescott: The House will note that the Minister has given the first indications of another U-turn in Government policy: no longer are we promised a full-blooded rail privatisation Bill—the Government are now talking of what is basically an enabling Bill.

Given that the Minister will have to rely on the advice of the regulator, will he tell us whether the regulator has been appointed, and whether he satisfies the condition specified in the Department of Transport's advertisement, which states:

"Knowledge of public transport not essential"?

Mr. Freeman: The appointment has not yet been made. The appointment of someone to fulfil the responsibilities of regulator cannot be made until the Houses of Parliament have approved this measure and it receives Royal Assent. In the interim, there is a job to be done in 1993: to regulate the provisions of international access under the European Community directive of 1991. We are looking for a regulator with understanding and intelligence of regulation and of the operation of public services and the protection of consumer interests.

Heathrow Airport (Noise)

8. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he intends to take in 1993 to reduce the aircraft noise around Heathrow.

Mr. Norris: Heathrow will continue to benefit in 1993 from the replacement of older, noisier, chapter 2 aircraft with modern, quieter chapter 3 types.

Mr. Jessel: Although the Government have an excellent record on aircraft noise, including the decision to refuse planning permission for a fifth terminal at Heathrow in the 1980s, and the removal of the Heathrow to Gatwick helicopter link, is my hon. Friend aware that hundreds of thousands of people living around Heathrow, where there are 1,000 flights a day, find aircraft noise a curse and a pestilence which spoils their enjoyment of their homes? Apart from emergencies, should not night flights be banned altogether?

Mr. Norris: The whole House knows that my hon. Friend has been a doughty fighter on behalf of his constituents against noise pollution. I congratulate him on this latest effort. My hon. Friend knows that the night-flying restrictions are due for review and that we intend to introduce new ones in the winter season of 1993. That process will involve wide public consultation, during which I know that my hon. Friend's views and those of his constituents will be heard. As for any application that might be made to expand services at Heathrow, my hon. Friend will appreciate that no planning application has formally been made at this point. However, when it is made, the Secretary of State for the Environment and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will have to consider all the issues involved in deciding whether to grant permission.

Ms. Hoey: Will the Minister apply his attention to a particularly nasty form of aircraft, the helicopter, which, as he knows, is being put to increasing use, particularly along the river? Can he tell us why his Department is being so secretive about ferreting around trying to find new heliport sites along the river? Can he tell us why he will not now make public the sites that his Department is looking at so that the people who live in those areas can make their views known? I am sure that he knows what they will want to say.

Mr. Norris: I know of no hit list of secret sites for helicopter sites on the Thames. However, I do not believe that the Battersea heliport is adequate. A major city such as London ought to have a heliport that is much closer to the financial centre. I should welcome the proposal for a heliport in such a position as it would enhance the economic life of our city. There has been a great deal of Nimbyism about previous proposals to find such a site, but I trust that when it is identified—I have not had one put to me yet—the hon. Lady will join me in supporting something that will do a great deal to enhance London's reputation as a financial centre.

Mr. Wilkinson: When my hon. Friend comes to review night movements at Heathrow, or any other proposal affecting air transport services to or from that airport, will he bear it in mind that it is the premier gateway to Europe, an invaluable source of foreign exchange and a vital source of employment for tens of thousands of local residents? Will he also remember that the noise footprints around the airport have been considerably reduced over the years because of the quieter aircraft that have come into service and that the really important aim is to get into service the high-speed surface transport link to Paddington? Can he help on that matter, too?

Mr. Norris: I acknowledge that my hon. Friend's sentiments about the importance of Heathrow are widely shared. When it comes to night-flying restrictions, the British Airports Authority has to balance the commercial needs of airlines against the environmental impact of those airlines' operations. It is perfectly proper that consideration of these matters should involve public consultation. My hon. Friend knows that the Heathrow express proposal is being taken forward by the BAA and British Rail. I look forward to there being some progress so that the link can be provided as soon as possible.

Mr. Snape: As Dan-Air has become the latest victim of the recession, does the Minister think that British Airways' replacement aircraft will lead to a reduction in aircraft noise and, indeed, a reduction in noise from the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel), who I notice is not with us now? [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes, he is."] I am sorry; he is skulking. Will the Minister confirm that Virgin and British Midland were offered the same deal as that accepted by British Airways, but preferred to wait for Dan-Air's collapse to pick up its routes and slots without having to save jobs or meet redundancy payments to its former employees?

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman knows that the chapter 3 requirements on noise extend to new aircraft being manufactured, which will gradually lead to improvements in noise levels at Heathrow and elsewhere. He knows that the commercial criteria of the Dan-Air transaction are for my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, who will consider all aspects of it in considering whether to take further action.

Network SouthEast

9. **Mr. Haselhurst:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he has taken to monitor the performance of Network SouthEast in its West Anglia division.

Mr. Freeman: I receive reports on British Rail's performance against its charter standards every four weeks and pursue any points of concern as necessary. I am pleased to say that for the year so far West Anglia has exceeded its charter targets.

Mr. Haselhurst: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is insufficient margin of spare rolling stock to cover when units have to be taken out of service for repair, which sometimes leads to drastic reductions in capacity on some services? Will he see whether improvements can be made in maintenance in the West Anglia division to ensure that sufficient rolling stock is always available?

Mr. Freeman: Yes, I give my hon. Friend that assurance. I shall certainly pursue his point with British Rail. With the franchising of British Rail services, we expect a vigorous leasing market for investment in new rolling stock to develop naturally, which will permit private sector franchises and those who provide and run rail freight services to place orders and, with the assistance of the City of London, to lease rolling stock in the same way as ships, vessels, trucks, taxis and buses are leased.

Tyneside Metro

10. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last discussed with the chairman of the Tyne and Wear public transport authority the extension of the Tyneside metro to Sunderland.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I know that Tyne and Wear is considering the feasibility of extending the metro to Sunderland. It has not yet made any formal approach to me.

Mr. Mullin: As the closure of the pits will almost certainly mean the closure of the rail line between Newcastle, Sunderland and Middlesbrough because it is heavily dependent on coal, and as the Government urgently need to find some capital projects to get the economy off its knees, would not it make sense, from everybody's point of view, to proceed with the extension of the metro to Sunderland as soon as possible?

Mr. Carlisle: The hon. Gentleman's point is speculative, but every approach that is made by the local authority and operators of services will be carefully considered and assessed in competition with some attractive projects that are being proposed. It may be of some comfort, however, for the hon. Gentleman to know that we give substantial support to such projects. I am delighted, for example, that we are giving substantial support to the Manchester light railway and the South Yorkshire super tram, which are costing about £135 million and £240 million respectively.

Rail Services, Grimsby

11. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for improving direct rail services between Grimsby and London.

Mr. Freeman: It is for British Rail to bring forward proposals for improving rail services, not for Ministers.

Mr. Mitchell: In the past the Minister has given the impression that he has no powers to stop British Rail closing the service. Now that the North Eastern Transport Users Consultative Committee has put him right on the law and has not only told him that he has the powers, but has asked him to use them to stop the closure of the service, and now that Steer Davis and Gleave, the management consultants employed by Grimsby, have shown that British Rail's financial case for closing the service is almost total rubbish, will the Minister use the powers he has and keep a service that is vital to Grimsby and Cleethorpes?

Mr. Freeman: No. I will not direct British Rail to withdraw its proposals. I do not believe that that is either legally and statutorily appropriate or in the best interest of British Rail's finances. I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that I will meet any potential private sector operator of a through service from Grimsby, through Lincoln and Newark into King's Cross, or any consortium including local authorities that wishes either to subsidise the service or to run it. The reopening of a direct service on that line may be appropriate, but it is for British Rail to deploy its present assets as efficiently as it considers possible.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Prosecutions

30. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Attorney-General what plans he has to review the guidelines on which a decision to prosecute is based.

The Attorney-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): The code for Crown prosecutors is kept under review by the Director of Public Prosecutions. The most recent edition, published in January this year, emphasised the interests of the victim, and gave guidance on racial motivation as an aggravating feature and on the approach to be adopted in cases of mentally disordered persons alleged to have committed offences.

Mr. Dickens: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that many people believe that the Crown prosecution service should be more tightly reviewed? Many people whom one meets in victim support schemes have been victims of a crime, yet never see the people concerned come to court because the Crown prosecution service believes that there will be reasonable doubt for the magistrates or for the jury. On the other hand, other people have to come to court. The cases are adjourned and adjourned again, and they suffer months of sheer agony while they wait for their cases to be called. Sometimes no evidence is submitted to the bench in the end. Will my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House that he will review the system far more tightly, because there is a trial within a trial by the Crown prosecution service?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend is quite right in saying that the position of the victim is extremely important. The Director of Public Prosecutions has made it clear that she recognises that. That said, it is important that the power to prosecute should be exercised independently. There is a powerful system of review within the service right up to the Director and through the Director to me. I superintend her and I am answerable to the House.

Mr. Fraser: Will the Attorney-General confirm that when, just over a week ago, British Coal gave short notice of redundancy, a criminal offence was committed under section 105 of the Employment Protection Act 1975, and that that was a criminal offence which was counselled and procured by the President of the Board of Trade, as well as being an action that laid the Government open to prosecution by the European Commission for breach of the mass redundancies directive? What guidelines and advice did the Attorney-General give to his Cabinet colleagues about those blatant breaches of employment and European law, or was his opinion not asked for at all?

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman is experienced enough to know that he will not get an answer to most of his question. However, it is right to say that the matter in principle is one for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. To expand on the first part of my answser, the hon. Gentleman knows that legal advice given by Law Officers is never disclosed.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that more cases in which the Crown prosecution service has some doubt in its mind about whether there is a likely success of prosecution would come to court if the whole process of getting cases into court were speeded up?

The Attorney-General: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. The working group on pre-trial issues, in which the Crown prosecution service has played a leading part, has produced some very constructive proposals to achieve the speeding up for which my hon. Friend rightly calls.

Fraud

31. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Attorney-General what new proposals he has to reduce crimes of fraud.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Derek Spencer): The Serious Fraud Office welcomes the proposals in the Criminal Justice Bill to give the courts of England and Wales a wider jurisdiction over international fraud. It will also give its full support to the new machinery to strengthen co-operation between supervisors and other relevant authorities announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer last Thursday.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Solicitor-General agree that the greatest crime of fraud perpetrated against the British people was the lies and deception used by the Conservative party at the general election? Now that the Government have lost all respect and authority with the Prime Minister at war with his own party, is it not time that the Government went to the country—and went now?

The Solicitor-General: The Government are concerned to prevent fraud and that is why we have introduced the Serious Fraud Office, the fraud investigation group and the Criminal Justice Bill. That is the answer to the question that the hon. Gentleman should have asked.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my hon. and learned Friend seek to simplify the trial procedures in fraud cases which currently make it very difficult to secure convictions? Many fraud cases collapse after long and expensive trials and that can scarcely be a deterrent to further fraud.

The Solicitor-General: Following the result of the Blue Arrow trial in the summer, the Lord Chancellor announced in July that the Government would publish a consultation paper seeking ways to limit the length of such trials and canvassing solutions as to how that should be achieved. I expect that the paper will be produced shortly. However, we do not just have long trials in fraud cases. There are long trials in child abuse cases and in cases of armed robbery. At a recent seminar held by the Bar which I attended, there was virtual unanimity about the fact that legislation is now required in that area and that that was the only solution.

May Inquiry

32. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Attorney-General when he expects Sir John May to complete his inquiry into the Guildford and Woolwich bombings.

The Attorney-General: So as not to prejudice the trial of the Surrey police officers, Sir John May has decided to adopt a modified procedure in order to complete his inquiry into the Guildford and Woolwich bombings in time to report his findings to the Royal Commission on criminal justice of which he is a member. The royal commission is due to report in June 1993.

Mr. Mullin: Is not it the truth that Sir John May's inquiry has been nobbled? Three years have passed since the inquiry was commissioned and he has yet to begin to address the Guildford and Woolwich convictions. Has not his inquiry been nobbled because he was not willing to participate in a whitewash that would preserve the reputations of a number of extremely distinguished people such as the late Lord Havers, Sir Peter Imbert, Mr. Michael Hill QC and others who were involved in achieving those convictions?

The Attorney-General: I do not think that there is any truth in that at all.

Company Fraud

33. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Attorney-General what is his policy on the prosecution of persons involved in company fraud.

The Attorney-General: It is the policy of both the Serious Fraud Office and the Crown prosecution service, acting through its fraud investigation group and specialist prosecutors in each of its areas, to prosecute company fraud, wherever it is detected, in accordance with the code for Crown prosecutors.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If Department of Trade and Industry inspectors produce a report indicating actions bordering on fraud or irregularities by prominent Conservatives, surely in those circumstances it is quite improper for the DTI to secure an injunction to prevent Channel 4 from publishing information from those reports in last night's programme "The Greed and the Glory".

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman is muddling two concepts. If there is evidence of wrong-doing of that type by anyone, no matter who he or she may be, it should be properly investigated—in such a case, by the Serious Fraud Office. However, the confidentiality of the reports carried out by the DTI is a matter of public interest which is for the courts to decide if an application for an injunction is made.

Domestic Violence

34. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Attorney-General what response he intends to make to the report of the national inter-agency working party on domestic violence.

The Solicitor-General: The report's wide-ranging conclusions and recommendations, represent a valuable and constructive contribution to finding more effective ways of tackling domestic violence.

Mrs. Gorman: Will my hon. and learned Friend join me in welcoming the fact that Kiranjit Ahluwalia, who was subjected to appalling domestic violence and was imprisoned for life, has now been retried and freed? Does he welcome the recent decision of the New Zealand Government to review the laws on provocation so that women, who often retaliate at a later stage after being badly beaten, will have a much better chance of being able to plead manslaughter? Will he also take note of the recent book written by the distinguished woman QC, Helena Kennedy, which points out that the ingrained attitudes of the male-dominated legal profession often lead to women being more severely punished than men for similar crimes?

The Solicitor-General: As my hon. Friend knows, any change to the substantive law is the responsibility of the Home Secretary, but I understand her concern about the matter. In his answer to my hon. Friend on 23 January this year the Home Secretary acknowledged that concern. He said that he believed that the arguments were finely balanced, that before we rushed into change we should be very sure that the changes did not do more harm than good, and that we did not want to introduce changes that would, in fact, sanction revenge killings.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Know-how Funds

40. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will consider further increasing know-how fund resources to help with problems in the developing world.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): An important part of our aid programme to developing countries is know-how in the form of training and technical co-operation. We shall continue to treat this form of aid as particularly important.

Mr. Mackinlay: Does the Foreign Secretary understand that many hon. Members will not be satisfied with his reply, bearing in mind that the fragile democracies and economies of central Europe as well as Commonwealth countries are desperate for assistance from western Europe? Will he assure the House that in any review of the Government's budget the know-how funds for both central and eastern Europe and Commonwealth countries will be guaranteed? Will he tell the Heads of Government from Poland and elsewhere at the summit in London this week that the United Kingdom will increase its budget this year to assist them in developing, protecting and enhancing their fragile democracies and economies?

Mr. Hurd: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman agrees that the British know-how funds in central and eastern Europe have been a marked success. They have succeeded not only because of the substantial sums allotted to them —£36 million last year—but because they are precisely targeted at the aims and objectives of those countries. I am sure that we will discuss this matter at the summit in London on Wednesday. Obviously, I cannot anticipate what funds will be available in the future.

Mr. Cormack: Does my right hon. Friend realise that many Conservative Members do not expect the know-how funds or other parts of the aid budget to be cut and will take a serious view of any such cut?

Mr. Hurd: I note my hon. Friend's remarks. But he will not expect me to anticipate the autumn statement.

Africa

41. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much aid has been given to African countries in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): Gross bilateral aid flows to Africa were £514 million in 1989; £389 million in 1990; and £521 million in 1991.

Mr. Greenway: Does my hon. Friend accept that aid to Africa can be good only in developing the enormous resources of that vast and important continent? Is it not essential to ensure that Africa's resources, including food, are developed as a means of discouraging and stopping that appalling carnage and war that have taken place there, causing people to go west and to leave Africa in such large numbers?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Aid to Africa will remain a priority for the overseas aid programme. However, economic reform is the key to Africa's sustainable development. In accordance with our aid programme, we are encouraging economic reform in all African countries. The African countries that have taken up reform have prospered more.

Mr. Meacher: Can the Under-Secretary confirm that the Government are planning a 15 per cent. cut in the Overseas Development Administration budget, which amounts to nearly £300 million a year? If so, is that not a denial of common humanity, when there are an unprecedented 40 million people facing death from drought and famine in Africa, who need more help and not less? If the cut is made will it not be the most immoral act yet of a deeply immoral Government, who have already cut the aid budget in half as a share of national income and —perhaps most importantly for this Government—is it not against our interests, when a rising aid budget is the most cost-effective means of increasing demand for Britain's exports, thus creating jobs and growth at home?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I confirm no such thing and I reject the hon. Gentleman's allegations. We have a substantial aid programme for Africa—40 per cent. of all British bilateral aid goes to Africa, which is a higher proportion than is warranted by its population. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have the fifth largest aid programme in the world. If he had had his way—the increases that he had demanded in all the Departments that he has shadowed—the country would have been bankrupt long ago.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Does my hon. Friend agree that Britain has done much to assist the African countries with education? Is that not an area in which there is much to be done, and is not this country perhaps the most suited in the world to assist with it?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: [illegible] consider all aspects of a country when deciding what [illegible] assist in the aid programme, including education and other aspects, such as economic management, human rights, the rule of law, accountability and transparency of government.

Multilateral Lending Institutions

42. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the relief of debt owed by developing countries to multilateral lending institutions.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The multilateral lending institutions do not reschedule debt because to do so would threaten their ability to provide new loans to developing countries.

Mr. Denham: Is the Secretary of State aware that, as a result of the policies that he has described, the poverty-stricken countries of sub-Saharan Africa sent back to the International Monetary Fund $2·2 billion more than they received in new loans during the past eight years? Is he also aware that last year the IMF received $400 million more in debt repayments than it paid out in new loans? Does he accept that that is completely unacceptable for poverty-stricken countries, that the policies that he has outlined are not working, and that they are denying poverty-stricken countries the money that they need to recover? Will he pledge the Government to work within the IMF to change the disastrous policies that he has advocated?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No. The hon. Gentleman is wrong. While the multilateral institutions do not reschedule debt, there are opportunities whereby the World bank and the IMF make new loan agreements with concessionary terms, which often help those countries. The hon. Gentleman is wrong in his allegation that the developing world paid back more in 1990 than it received in assistance in the form of aid. Under the Trinidad terms, which the hon. Gentleman might well study for his own benefit, aid debt was written off for many countries. Under the accounting procedures that I have explained before to the House, that appears as a write-off, when it is merely a rescheduling and a forgiveness of the debt by the lending country.

Mr. Ottaway: Following my hon. Friend's comments about the Trinidad terms, which were a welcome initiative by the Prime Minister, is there any possibility of extending them?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. So far, eight countries have benefited from the Trinidad terms —six are in Africa, and we have been discussing it this afternoon. The Paris Club is meeting this week and there might be two more beneficiaries by the end of the week

—Mali and/or Honduras. My hon. Friend is right to point out that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister initiated the terms, which have been of such benefit to the developing world.

Southern Africa

43. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will increase the level of aid allocated to southern Africa in the current year.

44. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to review the level of aid allocated to southern Africa in the current year.

Mr. Hurd: Southern Africa must be a high priority for us, particularly because so many countries there need our support for their economic reform programmes and because we must help them cope with the effects of the grievous drought. So we keep our help to that region continuously under review.

Mr. Bayley: The Conservative party manifesto in April said that next year's aid budget, excluding aid for eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, would reach £1,800 million. Will the 1993-94 aid budget in real terms meet that manifesto promise and will the proportion going to southern Africa be the same as in the current financial year?

Mr. Hurd: As I have said before, I cannot anticipate the results of the public spending review, which is going on now and on which no decisions have so far been taken. We shall continue to have an energetic role in relation to the tragedies in Africa, whether they concern Somalia, dealing with the drought in Zimbabwe, or projects that, for a comparatively modest expenditure, produce enormous benefits to townships in South Africa.

Mr. Burden: Surely the House cannot have too much confidence in such assurances given the Government's track record on overseas aid. It was cut by 27 per cent. in just 11 years so what confidence can we have that the Government will ever reach the agreed target of 0·7 per cent. of gross domestic product devoted to overseas aid? Is it not obscene that the Government should even consider cutting back on overseas aid when a child dies of starvation every 2·4 seconds?

Mr. Hurd: Obviously, the amount that we spend on aid is part of the Government's general public spending programme. That has been so under all Governments. What has happened in the history of this Government is that reductions in the beginning were followed by a substantial expansion, so that in 1991-92 we spent 3 per cent. more in real terms than in the year before. Since 1987-88 the aid programme has risen in real terms—not fallen as the hon. Gentleman suggested—by 8 per cent., which is a substantial increase.

English Heritage

3.30 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether he will make a statement on the future of English Heritage.

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Peter Brooke): English Heritage has today published its forward strategy for the rest of the 1990s. The strategy sets out 20 key policy objectives. It proposes a new priority programme for restoration of the most important monuments in English Heritage's care and new partnerships for total management of other monuments. Grant resources will be better targeted on areas of greatest need. There will be vigorous private sector fund raising to widen support for key projects. There will be restructuring of the organisation to meet those objectives. Our citizens charter principles will be applied to raise standards of service. Proposals for London, which would redefine relationships between English Heritage and the boroughs, will be the subject of full consultation.

That is a positive, forward-looking strategy which recognises both the opportunities and the constraints which lie ahead. It confirms English Heritage's central role in the protection of our heritage. That role will continue, with my full support.

Mr. Corbett: I thank the Secretary of State for that reply, but why were the plans drawn up in such total secrecy? Was it a bureaucratic muddle, or does it demonstrate the scale of the shame and neglect that lie behind them? Why were not English Heritage's senior archaeologists and architectural historians consulted? Why was its Historic Buildings and Areas Advisory Committee ignored? Does not the Secretary of State understand that dividing English Heritage's 400-property estate into three arbitrary categories ensures that some sites will be doomed to neglect?

When we are in the depths of a never-ending recession, how does the right hon. Gentleman think that councils, owners and voluntary organisations can raise the money to take over the 200 sites that will be sold off when vital day-to-day services, which are already underfunded, are threatened with more cuts? How can they be expected to pay for the 480 jobs of people with unique skills, which are set to go for starters?

Does he accept that, for more than 100 years, the national responsibility for those sites has been maintained in the public interest, and that they are visited by increasing numbers of people from home and abroad who have a better love of our history than the unsuitable ideological ignoramus who presently chairs English Heritage?

Does the Secretary of State acknowledge that, under these plans, at the very least public accessibility is threatened, admission charges are to be increased and further work to uncover sites of national and international importance is to be put at risk? Many will see a Government, who have already sold so much of the family silver, now opening the vaults of our national heritage in an outrageous bid to place in private hands a valued heritage that, as the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor said, gives us our identity as a nation and helps bind us together?

Mr. Brooke: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his rhetoric, if not on the underlying sense of his questions.

The document that the chairman of English Heritage announced this morning is essentially a strategy document. There is an immense amount of work to be done at a tactical level, over which there will be widespread consultation with, among others, the advisory committees involved.

The hon. Gentleman said that the properties that fell to English Heritage would be doomed to neglect. The chairman made it clear this morning that approximately 60 sites of major, first-class importance will remain permanently within the hands of English Heritage. English Heritage will expect to continue to maintain a further 100 sites that are of significant importance. At the remaining sites, no charge is made for admission, they have no commercial aspect and no staff are physically present. In due course, English Heritage will discuss those sites with other organisations to see whether, by negotiation, other responsibility could be taken for them.

I particularly resile from the phrase used by the hon. Gentleman when he described the sites as being "sold off". That is not the project's intention—indeed, it would not be within the powers of English Heritage, as the ownership of sites either falls under a form of property law known as guardianship or rests with me as Secretary of State.

Of the 480 jobs to which the hon. Gentleman referred, 380 fall within the direct labour force and 100 relate to the administrative body. Of course the hon. Gentleman is right to say that there are some workers with unique skills, but some of the direct labour force—I do not mean this unkindly—are engaged in lawnmowing, and it would be wrong to use the phrase "unique skill" with reference to that job.

The hon. Gentleman was kind enough to refer to the increasing numbers wishing to visit English Heritage sites. In the past seven years, English Heritage has successfully improved public access to the sites and increased the numbers of those who visit them.

I took particular exception to the phrase used by the hon. Gentleman about the new chairman of English Heritage. I did not appoint the new chairman, but I worked with him closely for seven years at the Royal College of Art, initially as the Higher Education Minister and latterly as Member of Parliament for the constituency.Those who work at the Royal College of Art, including—notably—the student body, expressed the greatest regret when he left the Royal College of Art and transferred to his new post.

As I said earlier, public accessibility will be maintained. That will continue to be the case even if another organisation takes responsibility for the site.

There is of course a reference to raised income from admissions, but income can be raised from admissions by increasing the number of people who visit as well as by raising charges.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Will my right hon. Friend constantly uphold Britain's heritage, which is second to none in the world? If we do not do that, future generations will curse us, and they will be right to curse us.

In London, will not English Heritage be rather more reliable than some of the London boroughs?

Mr. Brooke: Of course I endorse everything my hon. Friend has said, not only about the scale of our heritage but about the commitment to its maintenance on my part and on that of my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key).

The London decision which is foreshadowed in the statement that Mr. Stevens made this morning will be the subject of consultation over a period. Certain local authorities in London are anxious to take over these responsibilities.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Secretary of State accept that this document has caused the most widespread anxiety among all the bodies in this country concerned about national heritage; and that it outlines a strategy the detailed tactics of which suggest that more than half the properties currently owned by English Heritage will not enjoy the direct attention or involvement of the body statutorily responsible for their care?

Does the right hon. Gentleman further accept that the proposals with respect to dispensing with the direct labour organisation are in direct conflict with the advice of the National Audit Office, which as recently as July pointed to the shortage of skills in areas for which English Heritage has responsibility? Will he ensure that irreversible steps are not taken before the House has an opportunity to debate these matters—for the preservation of our heritage is the right hon. Gentleman's and our first responsibility?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman refers to the proposals as prompting widespread anxiety, but certain aspects of them will secure a welcome—such as, for instance, the concentration of resources that will flow from the redirection that Mr. Stevens has foreshadowed.

Each site will be a special and individual case, and the terms on which responsibility will be transferred will vary in every case and will respond to each case's circumstances. In certain instances, I dare say that management agreements will be considered.

The sites for which English Heritage is responsible have come together over the past decades—I mean this descriptively, not evaluatively—in a miscellaneous manner. I am perfectly aware of other organisations for which I am responsible deciding that it may be in the interests of particular owners or controllers of sites, or of institutions, to transfer them into the hands of others who believe that they might be better able to look after their interests. The problem with looking after a rural property in, say Wales, is that that may be better done by those who wish——

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): English Heritage is not responsible for Wales.

Mr. Brooke: The right hon. Gentleman is right to exclude my Welsh example. Such a property is much more likely to be looked after well locally than by central control from London.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): May I first say how much many of us welcome my right hon. Friend to his new responsibilities on his first appearance at the Dispatch Box? Most of us will want to study the document in rather more depth and detail than the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) has studied his press releases. We will also expect the House to have an opportunity to debate the matter.

There is already great concern in London; English Heritage has performed a most valuable role, and it would be a great pity if would-be vandal developers thought that they could get away with things without proper monitoring in future. That impression is being given, probably wrongly, but I should be grateful for a robust rebuttal of it by my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Brooke: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome. He is quite right to say that we shall get a more measured view of these proposals when their detail is looked at. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) asked about irreversibility. I should add to what I said in reply to the hon. Gentleman that there will be plenty of time during the discussion on the tactics of these strategic moves for sensible debate.

My hon. Friend asked about London. Because it is recognised that the performance by local authorities may be variable, there will be extended consultation to make sure that local authorities will properly be able to take the transferred powers.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): I also congratulate the Secretary of State on his appointment. Does he not understand that his statement will be viewed with anger and dismay by people all over the country, because it fails to grasp that the sites are our national heritage and that responsibility for them should be national—that is to say, with and by the Government?

Does the right hon. Gentleman not further understand that the third category of unstaffed sites, which he apparently considers to be of lesser importance, includes vital sites such as Arbor Low in a national park which are of key importance to our archaeological heritage? If those are privatised and responsibility is divested by the Government and English Heritage, and local authorities are asked to be responsible for them, will he at least make the responsibility statutory, so that local authorities can claim revenue support grant to help them fulfil the responsibilities in which the right hon. Gentleman does not seem interested although many people throughout the country are interested in them?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman speaks about anger and dismay, and was obviously echoing the remarks by his hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), who asked the first question.

When I said that the unstaffed sites were in Mr. Stevens's third category, I was being descriptive in terms of the category. I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's kind words, but I stress that English Heritage is not thinking of transferring responsibility only to local authorities. It is looking for local voluntary bodies and bodies of a professional or expert nature. In the case of an archaeological site, there may well be an archaeological body into whose hands the site could be transferred. I repeat that each case will be looked at individually. English Heritage will need to be satisfied about those who will take on the responsibility, and it made it clear in its strategy document that, if it is not so satisfied, it will retain the responsibility.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): As one who attended this morning's launch by Mr. Stevens along with my right hon. Friend, may I ask him to remember that one was left with the clear impression that the proposal is strong on wishful thinking and very weak on the possibility of resources? If no local authority resources are available, will my right hon. Friend's Department make the

[Mr. John Gorst]

necessary expenditure, or will there be a complete wilderness in the B and C category sites for which English Heritage is responsible?

Mr. Brooke: I welcomed my hon. Friend's presence at this morning's press conference. The first question he asked gave rise to a lengthy answer by Mr. Stevens. I repeat what I said to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher)—that the transfers are individual, and English Heritage will need to be satisfied that the body to which it is contemplating a transfer will be properly able to look after it. The issue of resources will obviously arise, but will be part of the decision as to whether the transfer should take place.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): Does the Secretary of State accept that, when he speaks vaguely about redirecting and concentrating resources, that is bound to give rise to a great deal of concern in some areas and on some sites which it is felt will lose out? Can he assure me that in my area, the north-east, all sites will be maintained, none will be allowed to fall into disrepair, public access will be maintained at all times and the essential character of the sites will not be changed simply for commercial exploitation?

Mr. Brooke: I am glad that the hon. Lady has asked those questions, although they are obviously rather detailed, about the sites in her area. The object of the exercise is not, in her phrase, "commercial exploitation". Some of the significant body of sites that have come into the hands of English Heritage over the years could more properly and sensibly be looked after by bodies closer to them, rather than being managed from London or one of the regional offices. Local bodies already have an interest in taking over such sites, and are prepared to enter into negotiations with English Heritage for them.

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): I add my congratulations to my right hon. Friend. I am sure that he will agree that the description of Mr. Stevens by the hon. Member for Erdington is ridiculous. Many Conservative Members have the greatest confidence in his stewardship of English Heritage.

Can my right hon. Friend assure me that, regardless of ownership of the sites, the important factor in the policy of English Heritage will be that the sites are properly maintained? Secondly, will he bear in mind the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack)—that there is disquiet among Conservative Members about the listed buildings casework in London, in which English Heritage has a splendid record?

Mr. Brooke: I hope that it has been implicit in all my answers that English Heritage will be concerned, whatever the future of any site, to ensure that it is maintained to the standard that it has so far enjoyed. Secondly, we are contemplating local authorities in Greater London having responsibility for grade 2 buildings, although not for grade 2 star and grade 1 buildings, which are the responsibility of English Heritage around the country.

In that respect, London is coming into line with other parts of the country. Because a number of the London boroughs will have only sketchy facilities, there will be a prolonged consultation period to ensure that they are ready and prepared to take over that responsibility.

Ms. Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): Could the Secretary of State elaborate a little more on what is meant by "properly caring" for such sites? The Opposition have no argument with local management of sites by local people, but we are concerned because local people may have to provide the funds. Certain sites may lose their natural character by being taken over by the entrepreneurial spirit, or may be closed to the general public because entrance fees will exclude the majority of people for whom these sites are part of their history. Should not the House be concerned if these sites are barred to the generations who wish to admire what has gone before?

Mr. Brooke: I am happy to give the hon. Lady the assurance for which she asks. However, I must remark in passing that she is leading with her chin, in that Keats's house has been in the ownership of Hampstead borough council since 1924 and of Camden council since 1965. It is a matter of great regret to those of us who know the house well that Camden council is denying access to it.

Mr. Michael Ancram (Devizes): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the speculation in the press today that the Avebury site in my constituency will be affected by this morning's announcement? Will he give me an assurance that the unique nature of this immensley valuable prehistoric site will not be adversely affected by the strategy announced today?

Mr. Brooke: I am delighted to give my hon. Friend the assurance for which he asks. Like Stonehenge, Avebury is one of the seven world heritage sites for which English Heritage is responsible, and its care and maintenance of the site will continue in the same way as heretofore.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry, North-West): The Secretary of State will know that we welcome his appointment to this important position. Will he assure the House on a couple of matters? First, he will be aware that the west midlands has many sites that could fall into the category that he has announced will be affected. While we welcome his assurance that these will not be subject to commercial exploitation, in his phrase, he must be aware that, as has been made clear already, the maintenance of those sites is paramount, as is public access to them on terms at least equal to the present ones.

Secondly, if the right hon. Gentleman has—as I understood him to say in his statement—the ultimate say on transfer of ownership, can he assure the House that he will not agree to any change of ownership or transfer of responsibility that does not as a minimum guarantee the two requirements to which I have referred? Indeed, could there not be an enhancement, as it were, of responsibilities, especially as some of the sites that are taken over will probably require additional resources in the light of additional responsibilities?

Mr. Brooke: I had the pleasure of being in the west midlands a weekend or so back, when I looked specifically at sites in the ownership of English Heritage and others in private hands. I give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that he is seeking in terms of any decision about change of ownership that might be involved.

I shall give an example at random. Fort Cumberland, one of the forts in the River Solent, is extremely difficult to visit at present, for relatively obvious reasons. Hampshire county council wishes to acquire the fort from English Heritage, and I suspect that access to Fort Cumberland will be increased by such a move.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I make no apologies for asking about a specific site. Chatham historic dockyard has the greatest concentration of ancient monuments in Europe in one place. Although it is managed by the historic dockyard trust, I would be grateful for my right hon. Friend's reassurance that the input that has come from English Heritage in the refurbishment of the historic dockyard will continue unabated and without any problem.

Mr. Brooke: I am pleased that my hon. Friend has praised what is happening at Chatham dockyard. As he knows, there is an agreed programme, and that programme will be honoured. My hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), the Under-Secretary of State, had the pleasure of visiting the dockyard recently.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): When did Jocelyn Stevens advise the Secretary of State of his proposals? Why were documents not available to Members this morning? Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that documents are available in the Library this afternoon?

Will the right hon. Gentleman clarify his statement that there will be private sector funding and reconcile that with his claim that there will not be any sell-off? Are we to assume from his statement that franchising and leases will be granted to private companies for some of the properties? Will he assure me that none of the properties that are much valued in Essex is proposed for sale or leasing? Finally, will he understand that all 1,400 members of staff have cause for anxiety, not only 300 of them?

I am sure that the members of staff will be as much in the dark as hon. Members about the details of the proposals. Is it not unsatisfactory and unfair for them? Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that they and others outside the House will see today's statement as indicative of the Government's decay, their lack of standards and a lack of pride in British heritage?

Mr. Brooke: I am rather diffident about saying to the hon. Gentleman, who I realise is a new Member, that I bring to the job both affection and pride in our heritage. I know that he did not intend to be personally disagreeable, but that was an incidental effect of his remarks.

The easiest response to the hon. Gentleman's question about private funding is to refer to the proposals for Stonehenge, which have been made public. We are planning to build a visitors centre quite some distance from the site. A private developer will be involved with the centre but we shall be working also in conjunction with the National Trust, which owns the land. Basically, we have a site which draws 1 million people a year. I think that it is the most visited ancient site in Europe. It is important that we ensure that the quality of services available to those who visit it are worthy of them.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I add my congratulations to those expressed to my right hon. Friend on his new responsibilities. Does he acknowledge that historic buildings and sites are the cornerstone of this country's tourist industry, and will he ensure that tourist boards and other bodies involved in tourism are widely consulted on the proposed strategy? Does my right hon. Friend believe that, if the review is implemented, overall a larger sum of money will be available for the preservation and maintenance of historic buildings and sites?

Mr. Brooke: I give my hon. Friend an assurance that tourist interests in the heritage, which are very important, will be kept informed and consulted. As to funding, I cannot prejudge any statement by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in a fortnight's time, but the grain of English Heritage's proposals is in line with the contribution that the private sector has made and will continue to make. I should earlier have answered the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) with an assurance that I will make the documents available in the Library.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): This seems like the country's final closing down sale, when historic monuments are to be transferred to whomsoever they are transferred to. Will the Secretary of State give a firm assurance that, when monuments are transferred to local authorities, they will be given the necessary funds to continue to keep those monuments in the order that we would expect? Will the right hon. Gentleman also undertake that, when sites are transferred, those remaining will not be privatised by English Heritage?

Mr. Brooke: The question of resources for local authorities rests more with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment than with me, but I repeat my earlier assurance that, in its negotiations, English Heritage must be satisfied that those taking on responsibility for sites have the means of looking after them. The hon. Gentleman's point about the privatisation of other sites had the flavour of a rhetorical question. I gave an assurance earlier that the main body of sites, to which English Heritage assigns the first two categories of importance, will essentially remain under English Heritage's control. I repeat that we do not envisage commercial exploitation or the sale of sites.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I have a Standing Order No. 20 application to hear, so I ask the hon. Gentleman and others to resume their seats.

Parkside Colliery

4.2 pm

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): I beg to ask leave to move the adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

the ending of coal mining on Friday last at Parkside colliery in my constituency and the loss of 800 miners' jobs without any consultation.

The matter is specific, in that, throughout last Wednesday's debate on pit closures, the President of the Board of Trade and the Secretary of State for Wales repeatedly gave categorical assurances that British Coal had a statutory duty to consult on each of the 10 pits remaining on the closure hit list. In fact, at 9.50 pm that night the Secretary of State for Wales said:

> "Let me make matters absolutely clear about the 10 pits. British Coal is under a statutory duty to consult on those closures . . . it must be a genuine consultation. British Coal has given the criteria to show that those pits are currently loss-making and have no prospect of viability in the foreseeable future."—[*Official Report*, 21 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. 526.]

Less than 36 hours later, at 7.15 am on Friday 23 October, the president and secretary of the Parkside branch of the National Union of Mineworkers were called to the colliery deputy manager's office and told that, as from 7 pm that night, all coal production would cease. That was the total extent of the Secretary of State's "genuine consultation."

Parkside miners have been denied any opportunity to prove to the nation that theirs is a profitable colliery with a ready market at Fiddler's Ferry power station, which presumably will now import even more Colombian coal.

The issue is important for two reasons. First, a debate would deal with the veracity and integrity of Ministers who have made statements to the House about colliery closures. Secondly, it would establish whether British Coal is treating Ministers and the House with contempt in shutting collieries without any consultation.

Lastly, the matter is urgent—indeed, very urgent—in that the very fabric of the mine is now threatened. I am advised that the proposed level of care and maintenance at this pit is completely insufficient, with no personnel deployed to protect the faces themselves—one of which, I am told, will deteriorate within the week if coaling is not resumed, owing to floorlift and geological pressure.

It is of the utmost importance, Madam Speaker, that the matter be discussed urgently, so that Parkside colliery, its work force and its millions of tonnes of coal reserves can be protected for the nation.

Madam Speaker: I have listened very carefully to what the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) has said. I am instructed to give my decision without stating my reasons. I am afraid that I do not consider the matter raised by the hon. Gentleman to be appropriate for discussion under standing order No. 20, and I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

Points of Order

4.6 pm

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. My point of order concerns a report by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council, which recommends that emphysema and bronchitis be deemed industrial diseases. Such action would greatly assist the many thousands of miners and former miners who suffer from those wretched illnesses, and who have been seeking compensation from British Coal for many years.

Although the document emanates from the Department of Social Security, it has been reported that a senior civil servant in the Department of Trade and Industry has advised the President of the Board of Trade to delay publishing it, on the grounds that many of the sufferers will die in the interim and that the cost to the Exchequer will therefore be reduced.

Have you, Madam Speaker, received any requests for a statement on this urgent matter? What steps should my right hon. and hon. Friends take when faced with the DTI's blanket refusal to answer questions about leaks, even when the rights of dying men are at stake?

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. If anything motivated me to become a Member of Parliament, it was this. The anomaly introduced by academic and medical argument over whether certain people were suffering from emphysema or bronchitis, from pneumoconiosis or silicosis, has affected every member of the mining fraternity. It is heartrending to ask a miner's widow and dependants to allow a post mortem on the deceased after he has breathed his last, but all of us have had that experience. It may sound melodramatic, but if anything made me bitter, it was that.

Sufferers from those diseases have given their lives to an industry from which we all benefit. It is only right for the anomaly to be dealt with, and I appeal to Ministers to enact such a change immediately. It should not be delayed; if anything, it should be speeded up, and I hope that any payments that became due some time ago will be backdated.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: I will, of course, take points of order that relate to the matter that we are discussing, but they must be directed to me, rather than attempting to debate the subject of the report.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Only last week, the President of the Board of Trade apologised to the House for his discourtesy. If it is other than discourtesy, is it not at least very disturbing that we should be left to weigh the value of stray memoranda from the Department of Trade and Industry in order to discover the Government's policy on an issue that is so deeply important to people suffering from distressing chronic illnesses, many of whom have to struggle to breathe?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Over many years, Madam Speaker—especially during the past 10 years—you will have heard my hon. Friends make requests and present Bills on this very subject. You will have heard the Government say that they now intend to look at this matter.

Therefore, it becomes an issue for you, in the sense that, now that you are in the Chair, it seems to me that they are saying that they are treating the House of Commons with contempt, and the proposals that have been put before it. Because of that, it is important that you insist that a statement be made by the Government, either today or tomorrow, on the matter so that we can question the Minister about this stinking, rotten, lousy memorandum.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I intend to respond now to those points of order.

The House has strong feelings on the matter. To deal with it purely factually, I have had no information from the Government that they are seeking to make a statement. However, Ministers are here, and they will have heard the strong feelings expressed about the matter. I could make light of it and say that there are more leaks around these days than there are in my kitchen colander, but it is a very serious matter, and I hope that the Ministers sitting on the Treasury Bench have heard what hon. Members have said.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. We are given to understand that next week we are to debate the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, which seeks to enact the so-called Maastricht treaty. Unlike certain members of the Cabinet, you and I have had the benefit, if that is the word, of reading the Maastricht treaty and therefore understand some of its implications.

Title 1 of the Maastricht treaty talks about maintaining something called the "acquis communautaire". It goes on to talk about building on the "acquis communautaire" —a decentralisation measure, I understand: I do not know what it means. I thought that I would try to enlighten myself by finding the biggest English dictionary that I could set hand on. I could not find it there. I understand that "acquis communautaire" comes from the French language.

I want to ask you two questions. If it is in order, is there any precedent whatever for United Kingdom legislation being framed in the French language, and, if so, can you tell us when? Secondly, if it is in order, could it be translated into plain English before next week, so that the whole country can understand it? You yourself will wish to understand what it means because, in the increasingly unlikely event of the treaty passing through the House, you will be required to rule on the meaning of "acquis communautaire". From time to time you will have to say to us, "Lads, it's not on; it's part of the acquis communautaire, so we can't debate it." So you, as well as we, will wish to know in plain English what it means. Can you help us, please?

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Last Thursday, the Leader of the House said during business questions, at column 570, that the debate on 4 November was expected to be on a substantive motion. There has been a lot of interest in and controversy about what will happen on 4 November. We now understand that there is a possibility that the debate will not be on a substantive motion but on a motion for the Adjournment of the House, when it is unlikely that a Division would be called.

If that is the position—I stress, if that is the position —can you again confirm that it is your wish that such information should be given, first and foremost, to the House before the media obtain it? I hope that we shall not find that the media state that that is firmly the position without the House having been notified before next Thursday's business questions. I put it to you that the House is being treated with contempt. If the Government are going to do another U-turn, which is quite likely, the House should be the first to know of it.

Madam Speaker: I always take the very firm view that, before going to any of the outside authorities, this House should be the first to know when statements are to be made. The hon. Gentleman and the House understand that. I cannot discuss with the hon. Gentleman what will happen next week—I do not have my crystal ball. If I were to do so, it would be hypothetical. However, I have taken——

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order; I have quite a lot to say.

I understand what the hon. Gentleman says, but he will understand that from my point of view it is hypothetical and that I do not know what the situation will be next week.

The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) flatters me greatly by saying that he knows that I have read the Maastricht treaty. I am only a quarter of the way through it at the moment; it is not the easiest bedside reading. The House has committed the European Communities (Amendment) Bill to a Committee of the whole House, and it would be quite wrong of me to comment on the proceedings in Committee or to give rulings involving a legal opinion on matters of Community law. I cannot take it any further than that at this stage.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. On 15 July, the President of the Board of Trade failed to explain in his announcement of the privatisation of Parcel Force that it would lose its VAT-exempt status as part of the Post Office. As a result, charges in the newly privatised Parcel Force will rise by 17·5 per cent. Surely the right hon. Gentleman should apologise to the House and come clean about the impact of his policies.

Madam Speaker: Again, I have not had any request from a Minister to make a further statement on the matter raised by the hon. Gentleman. Perhaps he could find methods on the Order Paper by which he could make his views known.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Further to the application under Standing Order No. 20 made by my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans), Madam Speaker. My hon. Friend questioned the veracity of the statement made by the Secretary of State for Wales in winding up the coal debate. The Secretary of State does not seem to have realised that, as he was making his statement, lorries were entering the pit yard of Taff Merthyr colliery ready to tip hard core down the shafts. Can you call him back to the Chamber to tell us why he did not know that, or, if he did, why he made that statement?

Madam Speaker: I am afraid that the House and hon. Members credit me with more authority than I have. I listened carefully to the application under Standing Order No. 20, and gave a ruling in accordance with our proceedings. I can take it no further at this stage.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, which I hope is of some constitutional significance. The governor of Hong Kong made statements on television this morning that affect the position of hon. Members. He made statements in defence of the Prime Minister and of the Maastricht treaty that went way beyond his responsibilities as governor of Hong Kong. It should be made clear that he must desist from making such statements and must limit himself to his area of responsibility.

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the House will understand that my responsibilities do not stretch as far as Hong Kong or television. The hon. Gentleman will know that he can draw this matter to the attention of the Government in an early-day motion. I must leave it to him to do so. He is a wily Member and knows how to set about these things.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. A motion appears on page 1632 of today's Order Paper relating to a European Community document that was debated by the members of European Community Standing Committee B last Wednesday.

Has the Leader of the House given you any indication that he intends to seek to increase the number of European Community Standing Committees? The original intention was to create five, but we have only two. A heck of a lot of work is being put on the shoulders of members of the two Committees. There should be more Committees to debate the ever-increasing load of documents, legislation and regulations—I will not call it bumf—that is emanating from Brussels. We need a bit of help on this.

Madam Speaker: I appreciate the amount of work that members of the two Committees do. I know that the hon. Gentleman is a member of one of the Committees, although he is not raising the matter purely because of the burden that falls on him. The Leader of the House has not raised the matter with me. I suggest that the hon. Member puts a question to the Leader of the House.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. On 21 October, reported in *Hansard* at columns 459-460, the President of the Board of Trade, in response to remarks by Opposition Members about Colombian coal, made critical comments about local authorities purchasing such coal, and then said that he required an open inquiry into the matter.

On 25 October, it was reported in the *Observer* that the Prime Minister had been in Colombia and had discussed negotiations about the import of Colombian coal. The import of such coal has meant the closure of the pit in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans).

It has also been said that, at the Prime Minister's request, the Home Secretary visited Colombia, not only to discuss the issue of drug trafficking, but to take the opportunity to negotiate on behalf of the Government the early access of Colombian coal to the United Kingdom market. The Prime Minister has intervened personally to——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is aware that points of order are for me to deal with. He is now getting into an argument. What is the point of order with which I as Speaker can deal?

Mr. McCartney: The point of order is that, on 21 October, the House was seriously misled in debate by the President of the Board of Trade. As a result of his ability to misrepresent the position, I ask you to ask him to make an early statement about the Government's negotiations about Colombian coal. The question of those negotiations is important in discovering whether the Government knew months ago of the intention to close a number of pits in the British coalfield.

Madam Speaker: I have had no information at all that any Minister wishes to come to the House to make a further statement on those matters. I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman will have to find other methods of raising the matter.

Orders of the Day

Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New clause 1

VESTING OF ESTATE, AND DEALINGS OF DEBTOR, AFTER SEQUESTRATION (NO. 1)

'(1) Section 32 of the 1985 Act (Vesting of estate, and dealings of debtor, after sequestration) shall be amended as follows.

(2) After subsection (1) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(1A) A determination by the sheriff under subsection (2) below—

(a) may be made on the application of the interim trustee or the permanent trustee; or

(b) may be made by the sheriff of his own volition."

(3) In subsection (2), leave out "The sheriff, on the application of the permanent trustee, may" and insert "A determination under this subsection shall".

(4) After subsection (2) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(2A) A determination by the sheriff under subsection (2) above may be made—

(a) in the circumstances in paragraphs (b) or (c) of subsection (1A) above, when the sequestration is awarded; and

(b) in the circumstances in paragraphs (a), (b) or (c) of subsection (1A) above, at any time thereafter during the period of sequestration.".'—*[Mr. Bill Walker.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.20 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take new clause 2—*Vesting of estate, and dealings of debtor, after sequestration (No. 2)*—

'(1) Section 32 of the 1985 Act (Vesting of estate, and dealings of debtor, after sequestration) shall be amended as follows.

(2) After subsection (1) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(1A) A determination by the sheriff under subsection (2) below—

(a) may be made on the application of the interim trustee or the permanent trustee; or

(b) may be made by the sheriff of his own volition, and

(c) shall be made on the application of a person representing not less than one quarter in value of the creditors."

(3) In subsection (2), leave out "The sheriff, on the application of the permanent trustee; may" and insert "A determination under this subsection shall,".

(4) after subsection (2) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(2A) A determination by the sheriff under subsection (2) above may be made—

(a) in the circumstances in paragraphs (b) or (c) of subsection (1A) above, when the sequestration is awarded; and

(b) in the circumstances in paragraphs (a), (b) or (c) of subsection (1A) above, at any time thereafter during the period of sequestration.".'.

Mr. Walker: My comments today will be directed largely at new clause 2, so I want to remind the House of what was said in Committee on 9 July. The point at issue then, although in a slightly different context, was whether a debtor should be required to file details of income and outgoings when lodging his or her petition.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) made some extremely helpful and reassuring remarks. He said:

> "I certainly agree with my hon. Friend that there is much to be said in favour of adding details of the debtor's income and outgoings to the information that the debtor must lodge with his petition."—*[Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee, 9 July 1992; c. 291.]*

The Minister will be aware that the information required of the debtor under subsection (6A)(a) can be added by regulations. With such a power available, the need to specify the information required in the Bill would be diminished.

I emphasise the importance that the credit industry in the United Kingdom places on those remarks and the comfort that it draws from them. The new clauses are designed to rectify what I see as an operational shortcoming in the existing law. The objective of new clause 2 is straightforward.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Has the hon. Gentleman tabled the new clause on his own behalf or on behalf of any other organisation? If the latter is the case, should he not bring that to the attention of the House?

Mr. Walker: As is the case in such debates, we all take advice and receive recommendations. We all listen to that advice. Yes, I have received advice and I have never made a secret of that. I have no interest to declare and I hope that the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) will understand that. My only interest is that I hope that we can include in legislation something that will benefit the debtors and creditors and all those who are interested. If the hon. Gentleman would care to listen to me, he will learn that I intend to quote several contributions that were made in Standing Committee not by Conservative Members, but by Opposition Members.

The object of new clause 2 is quite straightforward. It has proved impracticable under existing law for creditors to seek reasonable contributions from any excess income that the debtor may have. However, the clear intention of section 32 of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 is that such a mechanism should exist.

New clause 2 is designed to ensure that section 32 becomes workable and viable. The principle of reasonable contribution from income is agreed on both sides of the House. I draw the attention of the House to comments made in Standing Committee by the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty). He said:

> "I think that the hon. Member for Tayside, North wants more detailed information to be provided. A list of assets, liabilities, income and outgoings would show whether someone was genuinely insolvent. We often hear of people who have declared themselves bankrupt yet still drive a Jaguar and have a house in a salubrious part of the city. Something is missing in the inspection process."

I hope that the hon. Member for Dundee, East will understand that that view is shared across the Chamber.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said in Committee:

> "In a way, this is a Tayside, North point. It is a pity that the hon. Member for Tayside, North is not present to hear me support his general approach, because there is concern that sequestrations are sometimes used in circumstances that are not always appropriate.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden also said:

[Mr. Walker]

"Let us take the case of a person who is properly going through the sequestration process on the basis that he is in receipt of public benefit and nothing else. If that person, happily, is able to get a job with a substantial salary it is clearly right that a reasonable contribution, leaving enough for livelihood, is made available to the creditors. We might quarrel about where the line is drawn, but clearly the principle is correct."—[*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 9 July 1992; c. 293-348.]

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Under the new clause, would not the hon. Gentleman seek immediate involvement of the debtor's income? At present the normal process is to allow a period of two to three months for the sheriff or trustee to take account of the debtor's income and requirements. Why is the hon. Gentleman trying to create a situation in which that period of consultation and negotiation is removed from the debtor?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Lady is right to some extent. I hope that I have shown in the speeches from which I have quoted that there is concern across the Chamber about the fact that the operational mechanics are suspect. While I do not pretend that anything that I introduce will be legislatively perfect, the intention of the new clause is clear. If the hon. Lady will listen to what I have to say, I shall demonstrate what the intentions are.

There seems to be general agreement that debtors should be required to make some reasonable contribution from their income if they can afford it. To require debtors to disclose not only their assets and liabilities but their income and outgoings when they file their petition will make the process of determining whether they ought reasonably to contribute much more straighforward. That is what the new clause seeks to achieve.

4.30 pm

An important deterrent effect is also likely to arise from such a system of disclosure. It will not surprise anyone to know that I am a great defender of deterrence. Those "non-genuine" debtors who previously would have used sequestration, safe in the knowledge that their income would probably not be scrutinised, will be likely to think again. To put it another way, the mere requirement to disclose income and outgoings is likely to weed out unmeritorious cases. In turn, the measure will have important cost-saving implications because such cases will be less likely to enter the system. I should have thought that that would be of interest to the Government. I am always looking for ways to save taxpayers' money.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The hon. Gentleman deals with an important point. Does he have any idea of the extent—for example, in the past two or three years—of the abuse that he describes?

Mr. Walker: The evidence that I can produce today is based largely on the information that I have received within my constituency. The hon. Gentleman must also face cases in which people say, "Are you aware that So-and-So has gone bankrupt and is still living the life of Riley?" That is the difficulty to which the hon. Member for Garscadden drew attention. We all have such cases. There is a feeling that something is not right, but the matter can be put right. Those people who should not be in that particular category because they have funds and can contribute towards the debt should be made to do so.

I am conscious that the Government are anxious not to place barriers in the way of those in genuine difficulty, for whom sequestration is the only option. None of us is suggesting that we should put barriers in the way of genuine cases. This concern was demonstrated by the significant Government amendments to clause 2(b), which ease the requirements for a debtor's petition. Such a disclosure system as I have described would not constitute a serious barrier. I will explain why.

I have been fortunate to see a copy of a book written by Mr. Jim Gray, who is well known to Opposition Members as he has written to them about the Bill. Mr. Gray is a solicitor, and manager of the Drumchapel money advice centre. He is a prominent member of the money advice industry. The book is entitled, "A Guide to Money Advice in Scotland". I understand that it was published in May or June of this year, although the introduction is dated January 1992. The book is, in effect, a handbook for money advisers.

Before dealing with the main point, I should like to make three important observations on what Mr. Gray has to say. The first relates to credit references bureaux. In Committee I stressed how a person's ability to obtain further credit would be adversely affected by the credit reference record of a sequestration. We had some interesting debates on that aspect. That is of secondary importance to Mr. Gray, but I believe that it is vital. I remind the House briefly of what I said in Committee. If a young man in his late teens or early twenties decided to go into sequestration and later married, he would not get a mortgage—with all the related problems that that could cause. That would not be a good route to travel for a young man with prospects of a good income.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): Will the hon. Gentleman clarify that? He said that someone who had been sequestrated would not get a mortgage if he married. My understanding is that there is a time limit on the person's lack of ability to get credit. I presume that the hon. Gentleman means that he would not get a mortgage within a fixed period.

Mr. Walker: He would not be legally entitled to a mortgage within a fixed period, but after that he would also have difficulty in obtaining credit. Let us not underestimate the importance of one's track record. I am anxious that people should not go into sequestration if they would be well advised not to go down that route. It is not always the best option. I am drawing attention to the weaknesses in the way people have been directed and I do so not out of malice, or in an attempt to prove one side right or wrong, but out of genuine concern.

We have all met constituents and looked into the history of their problems, only to find that they are linked with something which happened some years earlier. It is important that we bear that in mind.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I have no problem with the general thrust of the hon. Gentleman's argument, which I support. It may be appropriate to enhance what he is saying by recalling that a crucial failing of the Bill is that it removes one of the filters which protect people from precisely the problem that he describes. Insolvency petitioners, far from hastening people into personal bankruptcy procedures, stop many people from going down that road because up until that point they have been badly advised. Does he agree that the Government must take that on board, or they will increase the number of personal sequestrations in Scotland, which is contrary to their stated aim?

Mr. Walker: I have no argument with what the hon. Gentleman says. There is general agreement on both sides of the House that we want to ensure that when the Bill is enacted it will not encourage people who should not go into insolvency to go down that route. People who can afford to pay should make a contribution. More importantly, those people who have prospects of increased earnings in the near future would be well advised not to go down that route.

I am merely drawing attention to the book "A Guide to Money Advice in Scotland".

Mr. Connarty: There is a fixed time after which people are supposed to return to creditworthiness. I understand that it is three years. The hon. Gentleman said that he had been given advice by organisations in the credit industry, which he did not name. My concern—and, I think, that of the House—is that he may be reading into the minutes of the House the idea that credit companies may hold a secret extended blacklist beyond the statutory three-year period. I should like him to make the House aware whether that is the case.

Mr. Walker: In real life, if I have money and want to lend it, I shall be selective about whom I lend it to. There is nothing sinister about that, and one must recognise it if one want to borrow—whether from a bank, building society or some other organisation which lends money—to buy goods or whatever. I ran department stores before I came to the House. We never made any secret of the fact that we vetted everyone who wanted credit, and there is nothing wrong with that.

The question is whether people who have gone down a certain route were best advised to do so. Sequestration may be the best possible route for many individuals, but the Bill must ensure that the checks and balances are right. What is written in statute does not necessarily mean that an individual can demand credit. One can have credit only if those who are lending are prepared to give it. I see nothing sinister in that.

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): It is a bit hypocritical of the hon. Gentleman to suggest that he is looking after the interests of people who have got themselves into debt when the Government had a borrowing rate of 6 per cent. and, before long, people had to pay 16 per cent. You are responsible for about 90 per cent. of the current insolvencies and are now trying to get people out of trouble.

Mr. Walker: I trust, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the hon. Gentleman was not suggesting that you got people into debt and were now trying to get them out of trouble. Part of the problem with our discussion is that the hon. Gentleman is sending dots and I am receiving dashes. That is equally true of almost every discussion about personal problems. It is awfully easy to say that Smith and Bloggs are responsible. In real life, we all enter agreements believing that we can honour our commitments, but sometimes people enter agreements which they would have been well advised not to get into in the first place.

Paragraph 10.6.1 of "A Guide to Money Advice in Scotland", entitled "Advantages", says:

> "—In most cases, all debts are wiped out after three years.
>
> —The trustee's fee can be paid by the court where there is a small assets sequestration".

Paragraph 10.6.2 goes on to discuss disadvantages and says:

> "—The trustee has wide ranging powers over the debtor's assets.
>
> —The undischarged bankrupt is disbarred from holding public office.
>
> In most cases, only the trustee's powers will worry debtors".

Later, under the heading "When can the debtor start a new life again?" the author glibly talks about how much credit the bankrupt can obtain. That is misleading people.

My second observation on Mr. Gray's book is that nowhere in the entire chapter on sequestration does he mention advice being sought from the insolvency practitioner. I hope that that answers the point which the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) interjected earlier. We spent many hours in the summer listening to descriptions of the value of such advice, yet Mr. Gray's approach seems to be that the decision is for the money adviser alone. That is curious in the light of all that we have heard to date.

My third observation is on a passage in paragraph 10.2 of the book, which says:

> "Personal bankruptcy has given rise to much debate amongst money advice practitioners. Some have felt that it offers the best solution to intractable cases where creditors are unwilling to accept that the debtor simply cannot afford to pay off even a fraction of the total debt. Others have argued that no-one should be paying off debts for over 3 years—the period of most personal bankruptcies. A few have argued that debtors on income support cannot afford any debt repayments and that in the absence of debt being written off, personal bankruptcy is the only option. Other advisers feel that bankruptcy should not be used as an easy option avoiding the need for the detailed money advice work set out in earlier chapters".

The whole passage is agonised. Money advice workers seem to have many different views on what bankruptcy if for and some, judging by the last sentence, may be using the process just to save themselves work. All in all, it paints a disturbing picture. Those are, however, simply observations—albeit observations that throw further light on our committee hearings.

4.45 pm

My main point is that Mr. Gray's book makes it clear that the key function of all money advice work is to establish the debtor's income and outgoings. For example, paragraph 1.4 lists matters which should be included in the money process, including:

> ". . . information gathering . . . recording and analysis of client's expenditure . . . preparation of financial statement".

Appendix 2 contains a pro forma financial statement to assist the money adviser to establish the client's income and outgoings.

If a debtor has sought money advice, his income and outgoings will already have been established. It would be a simple, cost-effective matter to transfer that information to the document that is to be lodged anyway in the court. A requirement on a debtor to lodge details of income and outgoings with his or her petition would not be onerous because the investigative work would already have been done by the money advice people who are routinely involved in sequestration cases.

Mr. Wilson: Does the hon. Gentleman intend that that should become a public document?

Mr. Walker: The new clause says that that information should be available to the sheriff at the time of sequestration. It is already available and would therefore add no additional burden of work. However, it would avoid making people go down that route and would have a determined value, which would certainly do something to help the complaints that we get about the chap driving round in his Jaguar, to which the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) drew attention.

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The question is that the clause be read a Second time. Mr. Allan Stewart.

Mr. Bill Walker *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I apologise to the hon. Gentleman. I thought that he had finished his speech.

Mr. Walker: I was giving way to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson). He and I seem to be involved in a dialogue which will, I hope, clarify my points.

Mr. Wilson: I wished to make a specific point. I accept that the record of income and outgoings is already prepared for the money adviser and that it then goes to the sheriff, and I see no great principle involved there, but I am concerned about whether it then becomes, by definition, a public document, as that would intrude on the rights of the individual.

Mr. Walker: I should have thought that that would be unnecessary because the sheriff has that information, so the circumstances would be simplified and improved.

A requirement on a debtor to lodge details of income and outgoings with a petition would not be onerous because the investigative work would already have been done by the money advice people who are routinely involved in sequestrations. I am aware that, in dealing with those matters, I have been re-travelling ground that we covered in Committee. However, I felt that it was essential to do so, particularly now that I am clearer about the Government's general approach to those issues.

On new clause 2, the reality of the position under current law is that the debtor keeps all his income. Simultaneously, all his debt repayments stop. The effect can be dramatic and may seem to the creditor to be unfair.

I have an example which is extreme but makes the point. Let us imagine that, before sequestration, the debtor's income was £1,800 per month and his debt repayments were £1,400 per month, making his net available income £400 per month. After sequestration, the debtor's income would be £1,800 per month, his net debt repayments would be nil and his net available income would be £1,800 per month. Is that fair? From the debtor's point of view it would seem very fair, but it definitely would not seem fair to the creditor. Any objective bystander would say that the debtor should make at least some contribution from his income.

In theory, under section 32 of the Act the debtor can be required to make a contribution, but section 32 has a fundamental defect: it relies on two separate individuals taking two separate decisions to the effect that the debtor's ability to contribute should be considered. The individuals involved are the permanent trustee and the sheriff. The Act seems to give those individuals no guidance as to when and in what way they should make their decisions.

The permanent trustee may apply to the sheriff, but no one can force the trustee to do so. The sheriff can act only if the permanent trustee applies. But if the permanent trustee applies, the sheriff appears to be under no obligation to take action. Any reluctance on the part of the permanent trustee or the sheriff is fatal to the operation of the section.

The credit industry is aware of no case—out of a total of 12,000 sequestrations per annum—in which section 32 has been used. A criticism of the current system frequently made by creditor organisations is that they frequently have no way of triggering the section even if they have relevant facts. They see cases in which any reasonable observer would agree that the debtor should make a contribution, but the creditor organisations have no way of requiring the court to explore the issue.

In the interests of fairness and balance, I believe that creditors should have the right to trigger the section. That is the core of new clause 2. To prevent frivolous applications from being made, I have included a requirement that at least 25 per cent. by value of creditors must agree to the trigger.

The other key element of my new clause is that it should be possible to consider contribution by the debtor from his income at the hearing of the sequestration award. The new clauses, particularly new clause 2, give a balance and make it possible for the sheriff to take action that he may not currently be prepared, willing or able to do. The reluctance to which I have drawn attention creates problems.

I think that the House will accept that the views expressed, some of which I have quoted, show that there is a consensus that we should examine the issue carefully. I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister responds he will agree on two matters: first, that the Government could probably save money and, secondly, that the law surrounding sequestration could be tidied up and is currently most unsatisfactory.

Mrs. Ewing: I have listened with care and courtesy to the comments of the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), but I must disappoint him and say that he has not persuaded me by his arguments that there is consensus on his new clauses. I believe that the rights of the creditor and the debtor deserve equal attention, but I do not believe that the new clauses address the problems.

I have carefully read the two new clauses and section 32 of the 1985 Act that they seek to amend. It seems that the hon. Gentleman has missed some of the salient points of section 32 and the sheriff's role. I understand that in a sequestration case all property belonging to an individual, apart from those possessions exempted for the purposes of warrant sales, become the trustee's property. In small business cases, any income derived from the business or a substantial bank or building society account also becomes the trustee's property. New clauses 1 and 2, particularly new clause 1, have a more serious impact on ordinary employees who are not likely to receive a high income but would be severely penalised.

Under section 32, the 1985 Act gives the creditor the right, through the trustee, to ask for a contribution. The system is similar to divorce settlement cases where an agreement is eventually reached on aliment. The normal procedure is that, after a few months, when the initial sequestration has been agreed and the person declared bankrupt, everyone can consider the assets, the family's requirements and its income, and reach a sensible agreement on what proportion of the income should go towards paying off the debt. That seems a sensible approach and one that I should certainly like to see maintained in the legislation, but I suspect that new clause 1 would largely remove it.

I understand why the hon. Gentleman argues the case of the creditors. He has argued the case in principle, but in practice it is impossible to have an immediate assessment of the debtor's needs. I believe that the breathing space is very important. An analysis of the figures shows that very few of the creditors have benefited as a result of sequestration. In 1989, out of 2,344 bankruptcy cases, ordinary creditors received dividends in only four cases. In 1990, out of 4,364 cases, dividends were paid in only 11. The hon. Gentleman's proposals would do nothing to resolve that problem. His new clauses would penalise those people with the least assets and income.

The Minister, like me, is not involved in legal practice, but his colleague the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) may be able to advise him. I am worried that the powers contained in the new clauses——

Mr. Connarty: As the hon. Lady has carried out research into who receives the money from the sequestration, will she say how much money goes to those who work in accountancy?

Mrs. Ewing: We dealt with that point at length in Committee. I suspect that the Bill has come before the House due to inadequacies in the previous legislation, and I take some credit for having consistently asked questions for two years to draw attention to that fact.

The sheriff has an important role to play in making decisions about bankruptcies and sequestrations. The proposals of the hon. Member for Tayside, North would seem to impose a new role on the sheriff. If a sheriff were to take an immediate decision at the time of sequestration that a proportion of income should come from the debtor, the sheriff would have to adopt an inquisitorial role. He would not previously have adopted such a role in the cases which came before him, when he would have listened to the applications made and passed a form of judgment.

Under the hon. Gentleman's proposals, the sheriff would have to take on an inquisitorial role and pass a verdict as though he were a judge. That would need a legal amendment and should not be covered by the new clause, which I hope that the Minister will not accept.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), as he did in Committee, has done us a service with his well researched and well considered contribution. He invites the House to reflect on where the balance should lie between the interests of the debtor and those of the creditor. I find myself in the unusual situation of having a great deal of sympathy for the motives of my hon. Friend and of finding a great deal of persuasiveness in the practical arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing).

5 pm

There is no doubt that the new clauses raise an important issue. A debtor's estate can comprise not only his or her assets, but also such contributions from that debtor's income as the sheriff may determine under section 32 of the 1985 Act. In making such a determination, the sheriff must decide what income the debtor needs to meet his basic living expenses and his obligations to his family. Only if the sheriff decides that a debtor has income in excess of that required to meet those needs will he fix an amount to be paid to the permanent trustee for the benefit of creditors. The machinery therefore already exists to ensure that contributions from income can be used to meet the costs of administering the sequestration and to provide a dividend to creditors. However, I accept that that machinery is rarely used at present.

The new clauses focus on the fact that only the permanent trustee may apply to the sheriff for a determination under section 32 of the 1985 Act. They would introduce three principal changes. First, the right to apply for such a determination would be extended to include the interim trustee, the sheriff and, in new clause 2, creditors where at least one quarter in value approve. I accept my hon. Friend's point that he has sought to avoid the possibility of frivolous applications under this formula.

Secondly, an application could be made before the permanent trustee is appointed or elected, including at the time of the award of sequestration itself. Finally, the discretion that the sheriff enjoys as to whether or not to issue a determination is somewhat curtailed in new clause 2.

The right of application under the 1985 Act was deliberately left solely with the permanent trustee because he is the person charged by law with the ingathering of the debtor's estate for the benefit of all creditors. The permanent trustee is the person who is fully armed with all the information relating to the debtor's circumstances which would enable him to judge if an application was likely to succeed or was justified. He would not seek a determination unless there was the prospect of a reasonable contribution from the debtor's earnings which would justify the cost of collection.

It cannot be expected that creditors would have the information to make such an application, nor would it be appropriate for them to do so. Some creditors might be tempted to use such a power anomalously to pursue the debtor, not because they believed it was in the overall best interests of all—unlikely, perhaps, but a risk nevertheless.

It remains the Government's intention to require a debtor to provide information on his income and outgoings when presenting a petition for sequestration. Such information will need to be considered by the interim trustee and the permanent trustee before a full picture of the debtor's financial affairs emerges—sufficient to allow a successful application under section 32. I reassure my hon. Friend on this point, but I agree with the hon. Member for Moray in the sense that I do not believe that it would be workable for a determination to be made at the time of the award of sequestration by the sheriff. Even though information about the debtor's assets and liabilities had been lodged with the petition, it is unlikely that the debtor's full financial circumstances would have been properly investigated at the time sequestration was granted. In particular, the extent of any obligations to the debtor's family may not be readily apparent, so the sheriff would be acting in the dark to some extent.

Nor do I see any compelling reason to muddy the respective roles of the interim trustee and permanent trustee to allow the former to apply. The permanent trustee, with his much fuller knowledge of the debtor's financial affairs, is best placed to deal with such matters. I accept that limited use is made of the powers in section

32 at present. In the past two years or so, only 5 per cent. of debtors made any contribution from their income towards the estate. That is because many debtors are already on a low income or in receipt of state benefit and so are unable to contribute anything.

There may be scope to make greater use of the existing powers in some 10 to 15 per cent. of cases, but I believe that one must continue to rely on the professional judgment of the permanent trustee as to whether it makes sense to pursue a contribution from income, and leave the discretion with the sheriff. We should also bear in mind the fact that creditors already have the option of taking the trustee to court if they feel that he is not acting in their interest.

As so often in the course of our proceedings in the Bill, both sides are agreed on the need to strike a balance between the interests of debtors and creditors, although we have on occasion disagreed as to precisely how to strike that balance. My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North has done the House a service by raising these points today, but I must repeat that the basic structure and approach of section 32 is the correct one. Perhaps greater encouragement could be given to its use in future. I hope that, in the light of the practical problems that I have outlined, my hon. Friend will not press his new clause.

Mr. Bill Walker: I accept what my hon. Friend says about section 32. I imagine that these matters will be debated at considerable length in the other place. I do not want to detain the House by talking about what happens in a sheriff's court in other areas on which the sheriff does decide; nor do I wish to force these matters to a Division. Therefore, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 3

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

'( ).—(1) The Secretary of State shall appoint a committee to advise him on the operation of this Act and on sequestration proceedings in Scotland and in particular—

(a) the availability and geographic spread of advice to those contemplating sequestration;

(b) any procedural barrier to petitioners for sequestration in individual cases where that seems the appropriate course; and

(c) the level of debt and deprivation and the links with the growth in sequestration petitioners.

(2) The committee shall include in its membership persons with experience of debt counselling and welfare rights work in the community.'.—*[Mr. Tom Clarke.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I rise with some trepidation, having read the reports of the Committee. As usually happens, a great deal of debate there turned out to be superfluous, because the matters in question were debated at such length that the relevant amendments and new clauses were not called—but that's life.

I hope on Third Reading to catch the Chair's eye and to pay tribute to hon. Members on both sides for their work on this Bill—particularly to my own very nocturnal colleagues who kept the debate going. Few could complain that the Bill has not been considered in detail.

I am delighted that my new clause has been selected because, although we have had scrupulous debates on other aspects of the Bill, it gives the House an opportunity to consider the role of advisory committees. If we do nothing else, we can at least invite the Minister to give some insight into Government thinking on this matter.

I understand that the main provisions of the Bill are to remove the appointment of an insolvency practitioner as trustee in every sequestration, and in some cases to allow a debtor to petition for sequestration. In cases where assets and debts are under £2,000, the accountant in bankruptcy will be appointed as trustee and will apply for an award of summary administration.

Those provisions have caused great concern to advice workers throughout the country. We have all had representations, in my case right up until this afternoon, because at present insolvency practitioners fulfil an essential role in providing detailed professional advice to clients who may or may not be sequestrated. According to information from the citizens advice bureau, that amounted last year to 2,223 clients.

Insolvency practitioners currently provide counselling and home visits to ascertain that sequestration is the only answer. That layer of advice will vanish with the introduction of the Bill, except in cases where there are assets. If I have misunderstood that, perhaps the Minister would offer clarification.

For the first time, clients will be expected to prepare their own petitions. Although amendments to the Bill make matters slightly easier than originally envisaged, clients will still require technical advice to comply with the "apparently insolvent" requirement. As there are only 11 full-time money advice workers in the citizens advice bureau service, many clients will not be able to receive the detailed technical advice that is required to complete the forms.

All those matters are important. The Government have said that a general rule to bankruptcy procedures and a guide for money advisers will be prepared by the accountant in bankruptcy. However, such leaflets will provide only factual advice and general guidance. If that is a misunderstanding, perhaps the Minister will clarify matters.

The Government's proposal may assist in filling the information gap, but the advice gap, which is so important, will remain and, in view of the expert level of advice that is required, bureau advisers will be unable to step into the breach. For many people, the absence of such advice could lead to financial ruin.

The Government have also said that solicitors will be able to provide that service under the advice and assistance legal aid scheme. Insolvency practitioners have said that approximately 40 per cent. of cases referred to them by solicitors do not proceed to sequestration. That suggests at the very least that proper training will be required, and that issue will be pursued as we see how the Bill's provisions are implemented.

Citizens advice bureaux in Scotland are extremely concerned about the number of solicitors available to carry out this legal aid work. For example, Inverness CAB presently has no solicitor firms in its area willing to take referrals from the CAB for legal aid work. That worries people in that part of Scotland, and I am sure that the Government will bear that in mind.

The Scottish Home and Health Department report of June 1990 included a research report on the location and access to solicitors' firms in Scotland. The report posed many crucial questions, such as the opening hours of the offices, whether firms carry out legal aid work and how many solicitors operating from the offices carry out legal aid work. It is manifest that, in rural Scotland, many people do not have access to a solicitor's office, and that must be a great worry to the House.

In addition, the income of many clients who seek sequestration may be limited. I think that that was mentioned several times in Committee. Such people may be excluded from legal aid advice or may be required to contribute. It seems extremely harsh that a potential bankrupt may be required to meet the cost of his own sequestration.

5.15 pm

The new clause proposes the appointment of an advisory committee to monitor the Bill. I am sure that many organisations in this field agree that it is imperative to address the Bill's impact on the availability and geographical spread of advice. Insolvency practitioners regularly visit clients' homes, which is of great benefit to people in rural areas. In the absence of that service, how will a leaflet fill the gap? Given the potential lack of available solicitors, what advice will the Government offer to rural clients? What will happen to people in such areas who face sequestration?

It is imperative that the level of debt and deprivation and any links with sequestration and the availability of credit be properly researched. If the advisory committee had representatives with experience of debt counselling and welfare rights work in the community, its work would be greatly enhanced. After all, only those who carry out advice work have first-hand knowledge of the trauma of debt on a client, and they can show that, for many people, sequestration is the last step, not the first, in a catalogue of disasters. I am sure that my hon. Friends will elaborate on what I have said, and I look forward to the Minister's considered reply.

Mr. Wilson: The central point of the new clause is the setting up of an advisory committee, a body from which the Government and the Scottish Office could take advice about the workings of the Bill. On this issue of all issues and of all the legislation to emerge from the Scottish Office, there is surely a case for a little humility.

Those who served on the Committee are aware that the legislation is required because, only seven years ago, the Government got the whole thing dramatically wrong when they created a great new tranche of public expenditure, even though that was not their intention. At least they got right the fact that it was a humane measure, which provided an escape hatch for people with multiple debt and no obvious way of extracting themselves from it.

We seek to protect the humane element in the legislation. We want to ensure that it is accessible to those who genuinely need it and that the burden upon the public purse is kept within realistic proportions. If those are the aims of the legislation, the Government should welcome the idea of an advisory committee which will say whether, this time, they are proceeding along the proper lines.

We should put aside the image, beloved by the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), of varmints driving around in Jaguars, having kidded on all of society so as to escape from their debts. That is one of those folk tales that persist despite being based on very little objective evidence. I support the idea of an advisory committee.

The aspect of the Bill that causes me most concern, given our debates in Committee, is the prospect that it will result in more people being led into the insolvency procedures and ending up in sequestration. That would be the reverse of the stated intention behind the Bill. The Bill has been driven far too much by the image of a small number of insolvency practitioners grabbing in fees of over £2,000 per case at an enormous rate.

Although there may have been some abuse of the system—the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) and others have rightly drawn attention to it in the past few years—it is not the be-all and end-all of this issue. It would be wrong if, in their new-found determination to nationalise the useful service provided by insolvency practitioners, the Government threw out the baby with the bath water, and, in the end, more people were taken into sequestration.

The statistics are important, although there is a danger that I may go over the ground covered in Committee, so I shall not set them out at any length. A whole layer of the procedure will be excluded. At present, a person goes to a citizens advice bureau or an advice agency when he is up to his neck in problems and wants to know how to get out of them. Contrary to the impression given by the hon. Member for Tayside, North through his readings from the advice given by the Drumchapel money advice centre, it is not the normal procedure for workers in these centres to encourage people into personal sequestration. In my experience, they look at the circumstances, listen to the evidence, warn people specifically about the dangers that undoubtedly exist in personal sequestration and only then direct them towards that course if they think that it is the appropriate action.

Of the people who go to advice centres with money problems, only a small proportion go on to see the insolvency practitioner, and even that filter will work less effectively in future. Once people get to the insolvency practitioner—this element is often overlooked—it is by no means axiomatic that they will go on for personal sequestration. This caricature of the insolvency practitioner as someone who entices people into personal sequestration to get hold of the fees is grotesque and false, as the statistics show.

Of referrals that come to insolvency practitioners from citizens advice bureaux, 15 per cent. do not go to the lengths of personal sequestration. That figure reflects that fact that, by and large, workers in these advice bureaux are highly trained and have done a great deal of sifting through the money advice cases with which they have to deal.

Another fact that is overlooked is that only half of the cases that reach the insolvency practitioners come from advice bureaux. The rest are referrals from solicitors and other sources. At this point, the proportion of cases that the insolvency practitioner does not take to personal sequestration goes shooting up to 40 per cent. In other words, for every ten cases referred by solicitors in Scotland, only six go to personal sequestration.

Just as the relatively low level of referrals from the citizens' advice bureaux that do not go to personal sequestration is a reflection of the relatively high level of training in these places, so that fact that 40 per cent. do not go to sequestration in other cases is a reflection of the fact that many solicitors and others who make these referrals are not trained in money advice work. They send people along to the insolvency practitioner, doubtless with the best intentions, but sometimes entirely inappropriately.

[Mr. Wilson]

At that point, the insolvency practitioner acts as a crucial filter, not in maximising the number of sequestrations but in keeping them down. It is folly to remove this layer in the procedure that has the proven effect of holding down the number of personal sequestrations. That point was never answered in Committee.

Furthermore, the judgment exercised in citizens advice bureaux in each case is influenced by the fact that workers in them know that there will be a second opinion. The insolvency practitioner will give more professional and expert advice than they can offer. In future, if the insolvency practitioner no longer fills this role—and judging by this Bill, no one else will fill it—the bureaux will not take a chance. They will shove many more people towards the insolvency practitioner, because they will not take the unilateral decision that sequestration is not the best path to go down. As a result, more people will end up in sequestration.

Because I had spoken that day to someone from Pannell, Kerr and Foster, who covers the north of Scotland, I quoted in Committee the example of two cases that had been referred to him. In both cases, this person thought that the advice to go for personal sequestration was ridiculous, wrong and inappropriate. He squared those cases by phoning the creditors and telling them that sequestration was not the right idea because they would get nothing out of it, and because the individuals had no assets, sequestration would result in no gain but substantial expense—£4,000 or more—to the public purse.

Unless the Minister can take this away from the abstract and go down to a human personal level and tell the House what would happen under the new procedure in these cases, there is a major flaw in the plan that he is putting forward. All we heard in Committee from the Minister—I shall be pleased if he can do better tonight —was this:

> "There is no reason to believe that insolvency practitioners would not retain an interest in personal insolvency."—[*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee:* 7 July 1992, c. 130.]

The theory is that, having been stripped of their businesses, the insolvency practitioners, as an act of public philanthropy, will still give advice such as that given in the cases that I quoted. That is a fiction: they will do no such thing. The prospect is that, contrary to the stated aims of the Bill, the number of personal sequestrations will increase as a result of the Bill, unless this central flaw is addressed.

5.30 pm

I am also concerned about the geographical spread of available advice. It is certain that the quality of advice varies dramatically from one part of the country to another—indeed, in some areas no advice will be available. The more rural and remote an area, the less chance there will be of responsible and high-quality advice being available.

In some towns in rural communities, one finds that good-quality advice is available, but in the immediate hinterland, people will be 30, 40 or 50 miles away from a source of advice. At the same time, they cannot be expected to have the same awareness as others of the existence of relevant advice.

It seems that these people will be shipped direct into the hands of an accountant in bankruptcy. They will not find themselves with an insolvency practitioner, who has responsibility to advise them that perhaps they are not going down the right road. Instead, they will find themselves on a conveyor belt towards sequestration.

Given the terms of the Bill, the accountant in bankruptcy is excluded from giving the sort of disinterested advice that would be offered by an insolvency practitioner. Once they are in the clutches of an accountant in bankruptcy, they stay in that position until the procedure has been completed. That is wrong in urban settings, and it is even more wrong in rural settings, where individuals often will not have had the benefit of advice at an earlier stage. That can lead only to more unnecessary sequestrations.

We must at all stages repeat the message that sequestration, for many reasons, is not an easy option. People should be protected from it if that is at all possible. It should not be made a more likely course for them through the diminution of advice at earlier stages. I support the establishment of an advisory committee.

I wish to press the Minister—perhaps this is a fortuitous day on which to do it—on legal aid. We know that the Minister has accepted at least the spirit of our amendment No. 1. This proposed that this measure

> "will not come into force unless and until provision has been made to extend the legal aid scheme to cover any legal expenses that arise from petitioning the courts for the appointment of an interim trustee under the terms of the relevant section."

I understand, as I have said, that the Minister has accepted the spirit of the amendment. Therefore, legal aid will apply. The increasingly pertinent question is to whom it will apply. In that context, it would be interesting to hear something about the Government's policy on legal aid in Scotland. It is difficult to believe that their policy is divorced from the sentiments expressed by the Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay of Clashfern. It seems from an article that appears in today's edition of *The Daily Telegraph* that he made a speech during the weekend. I am sure that that means, in the case of Lord Mackay, that the speech was made on Saturday.

We are told:

> "Lord Mackay's proposals that means-testing for civil legal aid should be brought more into line with means-testing for other benefits"—

that is an interesting concept—

> "could make it harder for many with families to obtain such aid. Under the proposals, those who remain eligible for legal aid can expect to be required to pay higher contributions in both criminal and civil cases."

There is a reference to the granting of

> "quality-controlled franchises to carry out legal aid work."

It is suggested that such a course would favour larger firms. Once again, the geographical spread is highly pertinent, because the franchieses of legal aid are the large legal practices in towns and cities. There is not much joy in that for the more peripheral areas.

I recognise that what Lord Mackay said applies to England and Wales and not directly to Scotland. There are, however, two conflicting concepts. First, the Government come forward with a concession under the Bill, which ostensibly extends legal aid to the processes that will arise as a result of its provisions. At the same time, the senior Law Officer in England and Wales is giving notice that the entire legal aid scheme will be subject to shocking cuts and means-testing.

I find that circle hard to square. Ministers have an opportunity this evening to clarify whether legal aid, which will be available under bankruptcy procedures in Scotland, and by extension in all other civil procedures in Scotland, will be subject to the sort of restrictions of which Lord Mackay was speaking in England and Wales. It is an extremely important piece of information. It is unfortunate that we must extrapolate it in the terms of a statement made in respect of England and Wales. However, we would prefer to have answers sooner rather than later.

If legal aid is to be means-tested and is to be harder to obtain for many people with families, we are entitled to ask what additional problems will be created for those who need to seek legal aid under sequestration processes. This consideration applies throughout civil actions, but it clearly applies in the procedures that we are discussing. Ministers are presented with a golden opportunity immediately after the weekend during which Lord Mackay spoke. The Bill is closely related to legal procedures, and includes specific reference to legal aid. I hope that a Minister will tell us—Ministers must know this—what the Government's proposals are for legal aid in Scotland.

I strongly support the proposal to establish an advisory committee. The Government got it wrong in 1985, and we are here as a result. There is a strong prima facie case for supposing that they have got it wrong again. Indeed, it seems that they will create more personal sequestrations rather than fewer. They will do that in the public sector, and it seems—I did not hear anything in Committee to contradict this—that this will be at more rather than less expense to the public purse. In all humility, the Government should establish an advisory committee so that they may find out rather sooner this time where they have got it wrong.

Mr. Wallace: I too, would welcome the creation of an advisory committee. I share the concerns expressed by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), particularly those in his concluding remarks. As he said, the Bill is before us because the Government failed to get things right when they introduced what became the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985. There are signs of omissions and flaws in the Bill that will make it necessary for us to return to these issues sooner rather than later. Apart from the general approach of an advisory committee advising the Secretary of State on the operation of this measure when it is enacted, it would be involved with the very issues that have given rise for concern.

I was not a member of the Committee that considered the Bill, so I feel somewhat estranged from those who became more and more familiar with it as they sat into the early hours of the morning. I read some of the reports of the Committee's proceedings, and I have the greatest admiration for the sterling work done by its members. I am greatly relieved that I was not a member of it.

Once again, I declare an interest. I am the parliamentary adviser to the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland, which has more than a passing interest in the Bill. I should add that the views that I express are my own.

The proposed advisory committee would deal with the availability and geographical spread of advice to those contemplating sequestration. I recall that the matter was raised in the deliberations of the Scottish Grand Committee and subsequently on Second Reading. It is obviously of importance to me as a Member who represents a Scottish constituency.

From a report of proceedings in Committee, I notice that the Minister, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), sought to give assurances. I refer especially to columns 150 and 151. For example, the hon. Gentleman said:

> "I entirely accept the point about geographical coverage, which has been made by many hon. Members. I also accept that in establishing market testing, we must secure a quality service . . . I entirely accept what has been said about proper geographic coverage".—*[Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee,* 7 July 1992; c. 150-51.]

I have no doubt from previous debates that the Minister got the point, but I am unclear about a Government guarantee of the adequate delivery of a quality service in diverse and scattered parts of Scotland.

A letter that I received from the manager of the citizens advice bureau in Lerwick touches on the point about advice raised by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North:

> "If the applicant requires counselling prior to signing a trust deed, this can no longer be undertaken by the nominated Insolvency Practitioner nor by the Accountant in Bankruptcy. The applicant will need to find a solicitor who is qualified to provide this, and we already have problems in the islands due to conflict of interest. The applicant may be entitled to legal aid to pay for this counselling session. However, many of the people who have gone through the Shetland office have an income which would take them outside the legal aid scheme but are still insolvent. Would any solicitor take on a client for counselling knowing that their bill may join the other creditors listed in the Trust Deed?"

Conflict of interest is an important issue in a small community served by a relatively low number of professionals, particularly solicitors. It is almost inevitable that the debtor seeking advice will see a solicitor who is acting for one or more of the creditors who are trying to exert pressure on that debtor. That makes it almost impossible for the solicitor to give impartial advice.

Earlier debates touched on the quality of advice given by outside practitioners coming to the isles, without which many people would be lost. The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North pointed out that, while there will be cases in which, for good social reasons, insolvency practitioners will be prepared to offer advice, it must be remembered that ultimately they are commercial, professional businesses—not charities—and will not provide a service for which they will get little or no remuneration. We may witness—not just in rural Scotland—the loss of professionals who have built up expertise in giving advice that often results in the avoidance of sequestration.

The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) referred to a particular book offering money advice. He cited the case of the young person about to marry, who would discover in later years the consequences of having gone down the path to sequestration. If an important source of advice is denied to such a young person, it is more likely that he will follow the course that the hon. Member for Tayside, North counselled against. The sequestration process could be to the detriment of many individuals, and would incur greater public cost—because every additional personal sequestration involves added expense.

As to a charge being made on the debtor for the original petition to the court, in Committee the Under-Secretary of State said:

[Mr. Wallace]

> "I do not believe that court fees for the processing of petitions by debtors for their own sequestration should be waived as a general rule . . . Court fees can be met under the advice by way of representation scheme. I believe that it is appropriate that assistance to debtor petitions should come from that source."—[*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 9 July 1992, c. 292.]

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North said that the Government accepted the spirit of amendment No. 1, which sought to give legislative force to that intent. I would prefer an explanation on the record of the extent to which people will qualify for legal aid. The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North did the House a service by voicing the considerable doubts that hang over the future of legal aid after the Lord Chancellor's comments at the weekend.

5.45 pm

The suspicion must be that anything not enshrined in legislation can always be taken away without legislation. We need something more tangible than an expression of good will. I do not challenge or question the Minister's good intentions, but they do not bind his successors. We want a guarantee that people already confronting sequestration will not be discouraged—and thus suffer further misery and the problems of continual indebtedness—because they could not afford to petition for their own sequestration.

I am sure that the advisory committee would be well justified in examining the costs created by the Bill. The driving force behind the legislation is a desire to cut costs. The original legislation led to an escalation of costs, but those projected in the explanatory memorandum when the Bill first came before the House revealed an exceptionally dramatic rise, which all of us found it difficult to comprehend. It allowed for one Scot in 10 to be bankrupt by 1996. Perhaps that is more likely than it was, as a result of the Government's economic policies.

Mr. Wilson: That is even more likely now, in October, than it was in July.

Mr. Wallace: Such a prospect gives no joy to anyone, because it suggests that the Government forecast an increase in the misery caused by personal sequestration.

I noted also exchanges involving the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who might have been relieved from attending these proceedings but who nevertheless has nobly been in his place to hear these debates. In exchanges with the Minister on 14 July, figures were produced that raised a number of eyebrows and placed in doubt the realism of Government costings.

There was a suggestion, for example, that an allowance of £5.13 be payable for the senior supervision of cases which, by their nature, must endure for three years. Even in the event of zero inflation—which is no longer Government policy—it is hard to believe that costs could be contained to £5.13 for senior supervision.

The sum of £10 is allowed for travel expenses. I do not know anyone who can manage to travel to my constituency for £10—but if they can, perhaps they will please tell me, and the tourism industry, how they do it.

Mr. Wilson: And the Fees Office.

Mr. Wallace: I would do anything to cut Government expenditure. I appreciate that the figure will be an average, and that constituencies such as mine will increase the average. The proposed figure, however, seems very unrealistic.

We have been given to believe that the accountant in bankruptcy's department will spend a total of one and a half hours compiling a statement based on the applicant's background and history. That, too, strikes me as inadequate, in comparison with the volume of work currently involved at the outset of personal sequestration procedures.

To describe the projected figures as optimistic is probably a gross understatement. As they form the basis of the Government's claim, I feel that the Minister should try to justify the figures more than he has done so far, and that he should tell us whether they have been subject to any review since July. If he fails to do that, he will have provided the most compelling case so far for the establishment of an advisory committee.

Mr. McAllion: I had the pleasure of serving on the Standing Committee, and I note that eight of the 14 hon. Members now present—most of them, indeed—served on it with me.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) has reminded me, Report stage gives hon. Members excluded from the Standing Committee an opportunity to debate a Bill. In view of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I feel that you should report to Madam Speaker that something has gone wrong with our procedures. Of the three English Members who served on the Committee, only the hon. Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) is present—and that is only because, as Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Secretary of State, he has to be present.

The other two, who were present throughout the Committee stage, show no interest in being present tonight. I can only assume that that is because they do not expect any Divisions to take place and their only interest in the Bill is in exercising their votes to ensure that the Tory majority is made to tell at every stage. If you report to Madam Speaker about the breakdown in procedure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps you will recommend her to approach the Government with a simple solution—the setting up of a Scottish Parliament—which would enable Bills of this kind to be handled properly and efficiently.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson). The key question is how we are to preserve the humane side of the existing arrangements for sequestration and bankruptcy—the side which allows the poorest members of society to retain sequestration as a way of finding their way out of debt. My hon. Friend is right: the Bill has nothing to do with fat cats who are ripping off the public purse. I for one am all in favour of cracking down on fat cats—especially those who support the Tory party—but I am not in favour of cracking down on anyone at the expense of the poorest sector of the population, and I fear that unless the Bill is improved, that is what it will do.

The Government should listen carefully to what I am saying. After all, their responsibility is not just to ensure that the legislation is adequate. They instigated the level of debt which now exists throughout Scotland and, indeed, throughout the United Kingdom: the policies of the three Governments led by Lady Thatcher in the 1980s created the massive debt problems which now affect so many people. The Minister shakes his head; let me remind him of some local instances.

I am informed by the Dundee money advice project that it deals with between 40 and 50 cases a week of individuals and families with serious debt problems—which suggests that the project must handle some 1,200 serious debt cases in a year. Its members believe that that is only the tip of the iceberg. They believe that, for every person who appeals to them for help, a further 10 outside in the community never approach them. They estimate that, in Dundee alone, there are 12,000 cases of indebtedness—12,000 people who have nowhere to turn, and do not know how to get out of debt.

This is not simply a Dundee problem; it exists throughout Scotland. In Committee, I reminded the Minister of a report produced by the National Consumers Council, which stated that, at the end of the 1980s, the level of debt—excluding mortgages and fuel bills—stood at £43,000 million, compared with £11,000 million in 1980. In the course of Lady Thatcher's three Parliaments, indebtedness had increased almost fourfold. Anyone who claims that such statistics are not clearly the Government's responsibility is not living in the real world.

The Minister may say that there is no connection between Tory Administrations and the level of debt, but I remember the recession of 1979-81. It was not unlike the present recession: a massively overvalued exchange rate ripped the heart out of British industry, and threw millions on to the dole. The Government's response was to create a boom, in which banks and building societies were deregulated and allowed to lend to anyone they wanted. In 1987 and 1988, the Government introduced tax-cutting Budgets, leading people to believe that the good times would never end and that they could continue to spend, spend, spend—thus becoming deeper and deeper in debt. It was suggested that, at the end of the day, they would be able to find money from somewhere to dig themselves out.

People certainly got into debt, but they did so as a direct result of the Government's policies. The Government therefore have a clear responsibility to ensure that assistance is offered to those whom they led into that debt. The Bill, however, will remove the option of bankrupty, for the simple reason that it is costing the Government too much. The story is clearly told by the statistics relating to individual sequestrations in Scotland. In 1987, there were only 808; by 1991, the figure had risen to 7,665. At a cost of £2,000 a time, that imposed a burden on the public purse which the Government were not prepared to tolerate. The Government have introduced the Bill not to improve the administration of bankruptcies in Scotland, but simply to reduce the cost to their own purse.

It is therefore all the more important for the new clause to be accepted. At least it would give poor peolple the possibility of an escape route. The Minister has told us repeatedly that the legislation would not deter people from using bankruptcy and sequestration, but he does not know that that is the case—he merely hopes that it is. What will happen if it is not? The Minister will not even know, unless he accepts the proposal that a committee be set up to monitor the operation of the Act and to report to the Secretary of State on its impact on ordinary people. That would allow the Secretary of State to take action. I am especially concerned about the availability of advice to those in debt, as opposed to the "geographical spread of advice" across Scotland.

In Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) referred to "debtors' right to advice". The Minister replied:

> "there is no such right. People receive advice, but they do not receive it because Parliament has voted funds for that purpose. Parliament has voted funds for insolvency practitioners to undertake sequestration procedures, not to give advice."—[*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 7 July 1992; c. 149.]

The Minister saw a clear distinction between the role of insolvency practitioners who implement sequestration proceedings and the role of giving advice to those in debt. There is no clear distinction between those two roles in the real world. Somebody who goes for advice to the Dundee money advice project on how to cope with his or her problem may obtain advice from that project, but it will not be the skilled advice that is required in sequestration cases. The Dundee money advice project depends upon its link with insolvency practitioners, based in Edinburgh, to give it advice that it can pass on to the poor debtor. If the Minister breaks the link between insolvency practitioners and money advice projects, those projects will be less able to give accurate and useful advice to people who urgently require it.

6 pm

I raised in Committee with the Minister the problem of the change in the fees paid to insolvency practitioners. At the moment they receive £2,000 a case. The Minister said in Committee, at column 150, that that sum was to be reduced to £400—a massive difference. The insolvency practitioners who work in Dundee are based in Edinburgh. What commercial incentive will there be for them to carry on operating in the Dundee area when the commercial return for so doing is to be reduced by 80 per cent.? If the Bill is passed, I fear that insolvency practitioners will be forced, by market conditions, to turn their back on areas such as Dundee and to concentrate on cases that arise in the Edinburgh area.

When I pressed the Minister on this point he did not give a clear answer. He said:

> "The hon. Gentleman has made a fair point . . . there should be detailed discussions between the accountant in bankruptcy, the Scottish Office and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland about detailed costs of work in different circumstances. That should be the next part of the process. Circumstances will, of course, vary."—[*Official Report*, First Scottish Standing Committee, 7 July 1992; c. 150.]

The Minister therefore said that he did know what the arrangements would be in the circumstances that I have just described. We shall have to wait until the next stage of the procedure before we find out what arrangements will be made for people who find themselves in this position.

The Minister is asking the House to accept a pig in a poke. He promises that things will be all right, but when we ask him to explain why they will be all right he cannot do so. All he says is that there will be discussions with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland and the accountant in bankruptcy and that he hopes that something will come out of them. Unless the Minister changes his mind and accepts the new clause, the Bill ought not to be passed. The new clause is particularly important on account of the geographical spread of insolvency practitioners and advice throughout the country.

The Minister referred frequently in Committee to the fact that the Government already fund money advice projects, either through the urban aid project or through local authorities. However, given what has happened since the general election, we know that the Government intend to crack down on public expenditure, and to crack down far more than they have done during the last 13 years. Therefore, I do not think it likely that there will be local authority money to support money advice projects. If the Government continue in office, all that is certain is that public expenditure cuts will continue. If that happens, money advice projects will be put at risk. They will be the first in the firing line. Consequently, no advice whatever will be available for people who find themselves in debt.

If expert advice is to be available for people with multiple debt problems, there must be a network of insolvency practitioners throughout Scotland who are able to provide advice and support to money advice projects. The only way of ensuring that that happens—the Minister referred to his proposal for market testing the system—is to provide a commercial return for the insolvency practitioners. The Bill does not provide such a return for them. That is all the more reason why new clause 3 should be supported.

The Lord Chancellor has suggested that civil legal aid in England and Wales should be means-tested. In effect, that means that legal aid will be cut. Scotland is treated differently from England and Wales, but Scotland first had the poll tax and it was only a matter of time before it spread to England and Wales. Although water privatisation was intended only for England and Wales, it will soon spread to Scotland.

The legal aid cuts proposed for England and Wales will, I fear, find their way north of the border. Access to legal aid, which would allow individual debtors to exercise their rights under this legislation through the courts, will then be cut off. Between 1987-88 and 1992-93 grants to the legal aid fund in Scotland increased from £45 million to £77 million. Costs are soaring well above what the Government are prepared to tolerate. As with every other aspect of public expenditure, the Government will look for every means of bringing down that figure of £77 million. One of the best ways to bring it down is to introduce means testing and cut off the right to legal aid of all kinds of people, including those with multiple debt problems.

The Minister must address the problem of access to legal aid when he replies to the debate. In particular, he must deal with the difference between the announcements made for England and Wales by the Lord Chancellor and what will happen in Scotland. I fear that what England and Wales have today we shall have tomorrow. There will be cuts in legal aid. If that happens, the provisions of the Bill will not work for poor people who find themselves in debt. Therefore, it is more essential than ever that new clause 3 should be accepted.

Mr. Connarty: I support new clause 3. Given the procedure that we went through in Committee, it is very much needed. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion), I spent many hours in Committee, many of them on my feet. For the rest of the time I listened to what the Government had to say about a Bill that is a shambles. The civil servants did their best, having consulted Ministers, to correct the problems that had been encountered with the 1985 Act, but the Bill that we considered in Committee was so empty of provisions that it led to 90 amendments being tabled, some of them procedural amendments.

It could be said that the Government had been listening, but they did not listen for seven years between 1985 and 1992. There is therefore a need for a committee to which the Government will be forced by statute to listen to regularly. It could be argued that the Ministers who piloted the Bill through Committee were not involved between 1985 and 1992. It was obvious from the way that they read their briefs during the first few sittings of the Committee that they had not been thinking about the problem. Although their reading improved, the Bill has not been improved sufficiently to satisfy us. That is why those hon. Members who sat on the Committee have come here to speak in the debate. If sufficient thought had been given to the Bill in its original form, so many amendments would not have been needed, and we should not have had to make this point again tonight.

It is still a cheap and patchwork Bill, and even in its present form it is a sad Bill. After having spent so many hours in Committee, I should have preferred to come here to commend the Government on the Bill, but I cannot do so because it still contains major defects. It does nothing about bankruptcy and it does nothing to help people who are seriously in debt and who do not have assets to get out of debt without recourse to the courts.

I shall give an example that I mentioned a number of times in Committee. A couple with debts of £5,000 had realisable assets of £15,000 in a part paid-up house. They came into a cash sum of £5,000, because of redundancy. However, on account of procedures that the Bill has not obviated, they find themselves having to pay out £5,000 to accountants, £6,000 to the accountant in bankruptcy for his fees and £2,000 to lawyers. In other words, they will end up with £2,000 in cash. They ended up with no house, no assets and £2,000. The Bill does nothing to change that.

In Committee, I tabled amendments to tackle the major flaws in debtors' rights, but they were rejected because the Government promised that my points were being taken on board. I see no evidence of that. It is necessary, therefore, to have a committee to oversee the Bill and to show how, again and again, the bankruptcy procedures in Scotland have caused suffering to debtors well outwith their debts and have not allowed them to get out of debt without filling the pockets of accountants and paying substantial fees to the accountant in bankruptcy. It is unfortunate that I cannot support the Government for introducing a good Bill that helps debtors in Scotland.

Two main elements of the Bill will make the tragedies that I have described more likely. The first is what some people see as a major climbdown by the Government—the reinsertion, under proposed new section 1A, of the interim trustee, who need not be the accountant in bankruptcy, in the process of sequestration. In Committee, in response to Members representing rural areas, this was portrayed as a sign that the Government would expect to use such insolvency practitioners in a rural location. It is absurd that the insolvency practitioner will receive travel expenses of £10 for travelling from Leith to far-flung parts of the country. The Government said that they would deal with that, but we should like some assurance that they have done so.

I noted that as I was speaking the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) was nodding in a negative fashion. Perhaps I misinterpreted his comments in Committee, but Opposition Members would like the Government to state clearly that, in the first instance, interim trustees in rural locations will be used rather than leaving it to a case-by-case decision.

Many money advice groups remain unconvinced that the fee proposed by the Government will attract anyone to act as interim trustee in any location. There is a dispute between the Institute of Chartered Accountants and the Government about the cost of sequestration, even when there are no assets.

I am sure that my point will be proven: it will be easy to find interim trustees where assets appear to be sufficient to pay their fees and those of the accountants. People who can afford to pay the accountant will be put on the conveyor belt. Debtors whose assets outweigh their debts will remain on that conveyor belt until they are sucked dry by having to pay accountants' fees and the accountant in bankruptcy's fees—the first two charges on their assets —after which, as the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) said, there is little left for the creditor. There is nothing in the Bill to change that.

It is little wonder that the public wonder whether the only purpose of the bankruptcy laws in Scotland is to pay money to accountants and to meet the running costs of the accountant in bankruptcy's office. Our bankruptcy laws seem to do little for people who are made bankrupt.

6.15 pm

The second problem with the Bill is created by clause 9, which defines the remuneration of permanent trustees. It is clear that—*[Interruption.]* I am not sure what my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) is trying to signal to me. The regulations proposed under clause 9 are causing the difference of opinion between the Institute of Chartered Accountants and the Government. How much will those who act as trustees be paid? It is argued that the Government are not offering enough to attract people to act as insolvency practitioners. Members of a firm in east Scotland tell me that they are extracting themselves from—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry, but I am getting all sorts of signals.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Perhaps I may assist the hon. Gentleman. There is a tenuous link between clause 9 and new clause 3, but it is extremely tenuous. I hope that the hon. Gentleman has done his homework and knows the extent of that tenuous link. Otherwise, perhaps we may return to new clause 3.

Mr. Connarty: I do not need to apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I thought, because it is clear that without an advisory Committee the deficiencies in the Bill that I am highlighting will become apparent. We need the advisory committee because of the Bill's deficiencies and because of the problem with remuneration that will arise from clause 9. The regulations proposed under the clause have been a constant cause of friction between the Government and the Institute of Chartered Accountants. The Bill is likely to cause the collapse of advice and of the system that allows people who are facing sequestration to go to insolvency practitioners. I hope that the Government will accept my comments as a strong argument for setting up the advisory committee.

The Government must realise that without the advisory committee they are likely to blunder on as they did between 1985 and 1992. I believe that clause 3 will cause a problem with the availability and geographical spread of advice and will erect procedural barriers between petitioners and sequestration. It is clear that the Bill is about the Government's accounting and financial concerns rather than about the interests of bankrupts in Scotland.

I wish to express some sympathy for the part of the equation that has not received any sympathy so far. I have been critical of accountants, who may have led to the tabling of the amendments that will cause problems for debtors in Scotland, but I have much sympathy for those in accountancy practice who diligently attempt to deal with complicated sequestrations where there are problems with realising assets and other matters.

It is important to have an advisory committee which takes into account the needs of all those people. If we do not take them into account, we shall end up with problems about the availability and geographic spread of advice, as was said in Committee. Accountants will not come forward to do the job, although their fees are probably some balm to their hurt.

Sympathy should also go to the debtors with whom the advisory committee would be most concerned in bankruptcy cases. Debtors will be left with little advice if our predictions about the Bill are justified. They will be left with a new summary administration system under clause 6 and with no marked route to lead them to using that system. It seems that it is also a system that debtors must find money to initiate. I find no clear guidance for the new system. I welcome the sudden attention of the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) to the bankruptcy problems of the people of Scotland.

I wish mainly to address Scottish Office Ministers. From my recollection, we were promised that on Report Ministers would clarify how people would get advice, how they would find their way through the maze of their debt problems into the courts and how they would use the new system. We were told that there would be an explanatory leaflet, but I have not seen such a draft. It is a grave concern to the House that we have had no information on paper about how people will be advised if they lose the support of the insolvency practitioners, which I predict will happen if the regulations are introduced under clause 9.

Not by chance but by design, I had a meeting with the Scottish Legal Aid Board. The chair of the board, Christine Davis, who is a constituent of the hon. Member for Stirling, who popped into the Chamber recently, and the chief executive, Mr. Douglas, pointed out that the board was responsible, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East said, for £77 million of legal aid distribution. They expressed concern about what they had read in the reports of the Committee. Promises were made, although as usual with some caution, by the hon. Member for Eastwood that legal aid would be available for advice—at least the first £90 and perhaps automatically to the upper limit which can be claimed on the signature of a solicitor. Christine Davis and Mr. Douglas expressed concern to me that if that were the case, they would have to be provided with sums more substantial than those they disburse at present.

I join my colleagues in saying that it is difficult to believe that Lord Mackay was speaking only for England and that he was not describing the Government's general policy which would bring about a cut in the availability of legal aid in Scotland, as well as such a cut in England in the near future.

The board also explained that it was cash limited in some areas of administration expenditure. I hope that we

[Mr. Connarty]

have an advisory committee to consider that point. If the board is cash-limited, it is a matter not just of how much money can be given out in legal aid, but of whether the board has the administration necessary to run the system efficiently. It will have not only the present legal aid distribution, but new legal aid moneys to distribute if solicitors suddenly take on the role of giving advice to people who want to use the new summary procedure under clause 6. I ask the Government to give an assurance, perhaps not an unqualified assurance, that they will not cash limit any part of the legal aid board's additional costs which come from running a proper advice system under the Bill.

My hon. Friends have made the case again and again for the new clause to be accepted. I am pleased that we have the support of members of other Opposition parties. The Government should take on board the fact that we represent 75 per cent. of the opinion of the Scottish people in terms of their choice of representative. I hope that the Government will seriously consider the new clause and will not treat it in an offhand fashion. It is a positive addition to the Bill, and a future Government, although perhaps not of the present Government's colour, will thank the House for it.

Mr. Stewart: It may be for the convenience of the House if I give the Government's response. Opposition Front-Bench Members may then seek to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on reading the Committee proceedings. That is a considerable feat, and shows that he has taken to his new task with considerable determination.

We have had a useful debate, covering a wide range of points. I assure the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) that, although I do not accept his charge of nodding negatively, I entirely accept his general point, which was also made by the hon. Members for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) and for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), that the background to the tabling of the new clause is the reasonable desire of hon. Members to ensure that the Bill is monitored and that it does not give rise to problems in practice which we cannot foresee.

I assure hon. Members, especially the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), who has slipped out of the Chamber, that, given the Government's experience with the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985, to which the hon. Member for Falkirk, East referred, Ministers have no intention of simply announcing the legislation and then forgetting about it. We shall want to ensure that the Bill meets the objectives set for it at the outset and that it improves the conduct of sequestrations in Scotland, at a lower cost to the taxpayer and with better value for money.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I thank the Minister for accepting the need to monitor the Bill. He will recall that the 1985 Act came under the supervision of the Department of Trade and Industry. Will the supervision and monitoring of this Bill come under the Scottish Office?

Mr. Stewart: I am happy to be in the unusual position of being able to give the hon. Lady a wholly unqualified assurance on that point.

Opposition Members have rightly referred to the experience of outside organisations with an interest in the subject. I have no doubt that bodies such as the Scottish Consumer Council and Citizens Advice Scotland will monitor closely how the new legislation works from the point of view of debtors, while others with a legitimate interest, such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland, will check to ensure that the new procedures and the new role for the accountant in bankruptcy provide value for money for the taxpayer.

The hon. Member for Falkirk, East was wrong to refer to friction with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland. We have found discussions with the institute over the summer to be constructive and positive. Of course organisations that have a genuine interest in the Bill will soon draw to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and, if necessary, to the attention of any hon. Member any problems about how the legislation works in practice.

I will deal with some of the detailed points made by hon. Members when putting the case for the new clause.

I do not believe that it is appropriate to require the accountant in bankruptcy to provide advice to debtors, for the reasons that I have given in previous debates on that issue. I accept the need for the accountant to provide general advice on the procedures and consequences of sequestration. The hon. Member for Falkirk, East asked me specifically when the advice would be published. He will understand that it would be wrong to publish the advice before the Bill has reached the statute book, which would be the normal practice with such matters.

However, I assure the hon. Member for Falkirk, East and the House that officials have already been in contact with the Scottish Consumer Council and Citizens Advice Scotland among others, to discuss how the advice should be taken forward. That is the right route to take.

6.30 pm

With regard to the point about advice given by insolvency practitioners, in only 15 per cent. of cases referred to insolvency practitioners by citizens advice bureaux did they recommend against sequestration.

Mr. Wilson: What did the Minister mean when he used the word "only"?

Mr. Stewart: That means that the recommendation went the other way for the other 85 per cent. I was about to agree with the correct reference of the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North to the fact that people often go to insolvency practitioners and are advised against proceeding to sequestration. The figure that I was given for that was 15 per cent.

Mr. Wallace: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Stewart: I do not want to get too bogged down on this, but I will give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Wallace: What does 15 per cent. represent in figures?

Mr. Stewart: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman at an early date about that, unless illumination comes to me in the very near future. The advice to which I have referred is important, but it also shows that the information provided by citizens' advice bureaux is often along the right lines.

To give effect to the suggestion of maintaining the role of insolvency practitioners in all cases would require us to maintain the effective status quo that insolvency practitioners have an effective monopoly in bringing petitions for sequestration. In general, that is not the view taken by members of the Committee.

Mr. Wilson: I hope that I am not about to pre-empt the Minister, who will probably tell me that he was just about to clarify this point. However, he referred to "only" 15 per cent. of cases going to insolvency petitions which do not then go to sequestration. Surely he is honour bound to refer also to the 40 per cent. of cases referred by bodies other than money advice services or bureaux—mainly by solicitors—which do not go to sequestration. Once the figures arrive, I am sure that they will translate into substantial human terms. Even by the Minister's standards, 40 per cent. does not qualify for a description of "only".

Mr. Stewart: I can see that I obviously made a great mistake when I qualified the 15 per cent. with "only". That has delayed the House for several minutes, although I do not believe that it was of particular significance. I naturally accept the figure of 40 per cent. to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

I can tell the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland that I have suddenly recalled the figure that he requested. It is about 333 cases. That is 15 per cent. of the 2,223 cases referred by citizens advice bureaux to practitioners.

Mr. Wilson: Will the Minister give way for the last time?

Mr. Stewart: If it is for the last time, yes.

Mr. Wilson: Well, for the last time on this subject.

Let us get this right, because the point is serious. If 15 per cent. equals 333 cases from the 50 per cent. of cases referred from advice bureaux, 40 per cent. of the 50 per cent. referred by solicitors and others equals about 888 cases. If we add the two together, we are talking about more than 1,200 families a year in Scotland who are saved from sequestration because of the filter of the insolvency practitioner. That is not an insignificant number.

Mr. Stewart: I did not suggest that it was an insignificant figure. I was simply responding to the point made by the hon. Member for Monklands, West about the important role and very often correct advice given by citizens' advice bureaux in the first instance. There is no dispute across the Floor of the House about that.

I must repeat what I said in Committee about this point in general. I do not share the fear that insolvency practitioners will withdraw entirely from that field. They have an important role to play in sequestrations in future. It is for insolvency practitioners to decide whether to continue to provide advice which they provide at present on a voluntary basis. A key point about costs and advice is that the major savings that resulting from the Bill will arise through simplification of the procedures. That point is not in dispute.

The hon. Member for Falkirk, East and others asked me about the costs of the accountant in bankruptcy and the negotiations to which I have referred. The costs that I quoted were necessarily averages spread over a large number of cases. The most complex cases will involve more time than others and cost more. I must reassure hon. Members that the Government have the same interest as they have expressed in getting those costs right. We have no interest in getting our estimates other than correct. That is why we have had discussions with the professional bodies over the summer, and adjustments have been made.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland referred to the figures in detail. I can assure hon. Members that the gap in the figures produced by the accountant in bankruptcy and those put forward by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland has substantially narrowed as a result of those negotiations.

Mr. Wallace: I take the Minister's point that it is in the Government's interest to keep costs down. What assumptions have been fed in about the capital start-up costs of the accountant in bankruptcy in terms of computer equipment? Has any assumption been made in the medium term about the fact that many insolvency practitioners and accountancy practices may not now be engaged in training young people in the skills that they would previously have deployed in their insolvency divisions, and that that cost for training may have to fall on the accountant in bankruptcy? What provision or assumptions have been made about that?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman may not have seen the detailed documents that were set before the Committee. There were certainly assumptions about capital costs and training costs. I assure him that they have been subject to the most detailed discussion over the summer among those involved, and they have resulted in the gap between the two sets of figures being substantially narrowed.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland and other hon. Members questioned the geographical coverage of sequestrations. I emphasise that the accountant in bankruptcy will have a statutory duty to creditors to ensure that all sequestrations in which he is appointed are carried out properly, wherever the sequestration arises. The Bill also allows him to administer such cases directly or through agents. I have no doubt that, in Orkney and Shetland, it will make good sense to continue to use local practioners to deliver that service when it is cost-effective. Therefore, the means exist to ensure proper coverage across Scotland.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland asked about court fees. My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State has written to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on that point. The simplest thing would be to let the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland have a copy of that letter.

Hon. Members also asked me about legal aid. I can confirm that debtors petitioning for their own sequestration will be able to apply for legal aid, assistance and representation under the assistance by way of representation scheme.

The hon. Member for Falkirk, East asked about the present position. Officials have been involved in detailed discussions with the Scottish Legal Aid Board on the details of these proposals. I am sure that they will extend those discussions to include the Law Society of Scotland.

I was asking about the timing of the changes. It remains our intention that the legal aid arrangements will be in place before the new petition procedures of what is now clause 3 are introduced. That depends, among other things, on the progress of the legislation through Parliament.

Mr. Connarty: I did not hear the Minister mention the cash-limited sums to which the Scottish Legal Aid Board referred in a meeting with me. The cash-limited sums are not necessarily the amounts paid to solicitors. Administration costs are cash-limited. The board expressed genuine anxiety that, if it experienced a large increase in administration as a result of the new demand for legal aid, it would find itself in difficulty because the sums for administration are cash-limited.

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman will understand my caution in giving a detailed response. Officials are involved in detailed discussions about how the proposals would work in practice. I cannot say anything further.

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North and others made a general point about legal aid which goes wider than the Bill. As the hon. Gentleman will know, any general changes to legal aid are subject to debate in the House. I could not go further than that this evening.

Mr. Wallace: To some extent, we understand that it may be difficult to go into the detail of what changes will be made to legal aid and the legal advice and assistance scheme. Can the Minister confirm that any changes will be the subject of secondary legislation which will come before the House? Even if he cannot go into detail, can he express with clarity on the record the principles of the changes and what and who will be covered in terms of income range and so on?

Mr. Stewart: I think that I can help the hon. Gentleman. As I said in Committee, debtors who petition for their own sequestration will be able to apply for legal advice, assistance and representation under the ABWOR scheme. The details still need to be worked out. As I have said, these arrangments will be in place before any change in the petition procedures is introduced.

Mr. Wilson: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Stewart: There is nothing further that I can add, but I will give way for the last time.

6.45 pm

Mr. Wilson: I am sure that the Minister understands the unsatisfactory conclusion to which his comments bring us. We have the assurance that people will qualify for legal aid, but that is in the context of what would appear to be major changes in the whole legal aid system. Will the Minister convey to the Minister of State, Scottish Office, or whomever is responsible for legal aid, that Scottish Members would like to hear a statement, preferably in the House, and not have to draw secondary conclusions on the basis of a speech made by Lord Mackay of Clashfern?

Mr. Stewart: I am sure that the Minister of State will in any event read these proceedings with the greatest interest and care. Perhaps I can reassure the hon. Gentleman to some extent by emphasising that eligibility for legal aid is kept under review. Any changes are debated by the House each spring, and any future changes will also be debated by the House.

The essential proposal is that an advisory committee should be set up to keep the legislation under review. I cannot find any precedent for a committee of the nature suggested. As I have said, the outside expert organisations will have every opportunity to monitor the progress of legislation and to inform hon. Members of their views.

However, I take seriously the point about the importance of monitoring which several hon. Members made. Therefore, I can give an assurance that, once we have experienced the operation of the Bill when enacted, we intend to have outside research work undertaken on how the system operates in practice. We envisage that the results of that research will be made available to hon. Members.

I think that hon. Members will accept that the establishment of a committee such as they have suggested is without precedent and not without difficulty. I certainly take seriously the general point about the importance of monitoring the legislation when it is enacted.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): It is my pleasure to sum up the debate on new clause 3 for the Opposition. I was not aware that I was to be involved in this Committee until the summer. I asked a senior colleague in my party how to go about the Bill. I suggested that I read the Committee's proceedings, and he said, "Don't do that. That would only mix you up." If I am wayward tonight, it is the result of my assiduity in not taking that advice.

The Minister said that the Government had a vested interest in getting the costs correct. We must remind ourselves that the same Government had that vested interest in getting the costs right in 1985, and got them horribly wrong. Costs have increased from £13,000 in 1986 to £18·5 million in 1991. On historical trends, the costs will increase to £50 million by 1993-94 and to £80 million by 1994-95. The Minister's comments do not give us much assurance that the costs and the procedures will be correct.

Judging from speeches by my colleagues, legal aid seems to be the central issue. I tabled amendments Nos. 1 and 2, which dealt with legal aid, but Madam Speaker in her wisdom did not accept them. I was told that the Minister accepted them on principle, but his summing up appeared to contradict that.

Opposition Members are still worried about the legal aid scheme. It is obvious that it needs to be restructured before clause 3 comes into force. We are not satisfied with the Minister's comments, because at present legal aid allows advice and assistance free. However, when someone petitions for personal sequestration, he or she will not be able to get a solicitor to do it. In practice, the procedure allowing a debtor to petition for his sequestration will not be simple enough for debtors to use it without legal assistance. Although one welcomes the Minister's undertaking that debtors will be able to apply for legal aid, that is no guarantee that they will receive it. That is the nub of our concern.

Sometimes debtors with no assets have employed income which might make them financially ineligible. My hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West moved new clause 3, which seeks to establish a committee to advise on the availability of advice to those contemplating sequestration. The main concerns are access and justice.

Justice depends on many factors, but the foundations lie in our laws—the rules and regulations which govern our lives and our relationships with people, organisations and the rest of society. People must have access to knowledge about those laws, independent advice and an assured and effective judicial system. The Minister's comments fall far short of reassuring us on those matters.

Access to justice is denied to many people. There have been many representations—I received a number this afternoon from the Scottish Consumer Council, citizens advice bureaux of Scotland and the Law Society of Scotland. They feel that access is denied to many and restricted for most, and the legal aid procedures in the Bill could restrict it even more. They realise the complexity of modern law. Reflecting modern society, it is so complex that many people need expert advice. The cost of legal action is rising, and only the extremely rich or the extremely poor can resort to it. The legal aid system has been undermined to such an extent that the voluntary bodies are extremely concerned.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West mentioned the Inverness citizens advice bureau, which was seriously concerned about the decline in the number of lawyers prepared to take on civil legal aid cases.

I have received a communication from the House of Commons Library which shows that, in 1989-90, there were 29,527 applications for civil legal aid, of which only 20,463 were granted. In 1991-92, there were 33,180 applications, with only 23,027 granted. The latter is a 44 per cent. refusal rate.

Is it the case that in Scotland today, only 23,027 poor people in any year have to turn to the courts to enforce civil rights? As the Minister will acknowledge in private, although perhaps not in public, that is not the case.

The costs are extremely high, and the legal aid system is in crisis. The Law Society and voluntary agencies have told us so. New clause 3(2) says:

> "The committee shall include in its membership persons with experience of debt counselling and welfare rights work in the community."

In Scotland, citizens advice bureaux dealt with almost 300,000 debt-related inquiries last year. An increased burden is falling on an already overstretched voluntary agency. Do the Government intend to provide the voluntary organisations with additional resources, to allow them to expand their role in welfare and counselling? That is another important aspect of our new clause 3.

Unless the procedure can continue to be available at no cost to debtors with few or no assets, they will not use it, and the lifeline thrown to them by the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985, will be withdrawn. Remarks were made to Lord Mackay of Clashfern on the legal aid system, which is why we are so pessimistic about its future.

The Minister said that major savings would be made from the simplification of procedures. It was the same story over the poll tax. Hon. Members have had to deal with the results of those simplified procedures every week in their constituency surgeries and mailbags. That phrase sends a shock through us, especially as the Minister said that major savings will be made from the simplified procedures.

While we shall not press the new clause to a vote, we hope that the Bill will not come down on Government heads in the same way that poll tax legislation has done. We hope so for the sake of many poor people in Scotland, who are disadvantaged and cannot have access to justice to ensure that their affairs are carried out properly.

Question put and negatived.

Mr. Wallace: I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 1, line 29, at end insert—

> '(6) For the avoidance of doubt, the Accountant in Bankruptcy may be liable for damages in respect of any loss sustained by any person as a result of any negligent action or omission by the Accountant in Bankruptcy or a member of his staff in the performance of his duties.'.

I acknowledge that a similar amendment was moved by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) in Committee, which sought to exclude any question of Crown immunity. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) responded by saying that Crown immunity would not apply. As we are dealing with the somewhat unusual case of someone who is a paid official or servant of the state engaging in professional practice, we think that there should be no doubt as to his liability or that of any member of his staff. We are in a vicarious position as regards members of his staff. Clearly they should be liable in respect of losses sustained by the debtor or creditor.

One can imagine a situation in which a creditor believes that, through some act of negligence, he or she has not received the full payment of a dividend and subsequently maintains that there was negligence when managing to ingather the estate. The accountant in bankruptcy should not be able to slide out of any liability for that, and it is equally important that that applies to those practitioners who undertake work on behalf of the accountant in bankruptcy.

As I understand it, the tender document will include an obligation to indemnify the Crown for the actions of anyone who is contracted to do the work. Given that those who do the work on behalf of the accountant in bankruptcy will have to accept and follow his general and specific directions, the contractor will tend to be put at a disadvantage. If work has been undertaken by an independent contractor and a claim subsequently arises, will the Minister assure us that that claim will be met by the accountant in bankruptcy, and that, if it transpires that the claim was due to a fault by the contractor, liability will then be passed on?

7 pm

Mr. Stewart: As the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) reminded us, the question of the liability of the accountant in bankruptcy and whether he can be sued for damages arose on a number of occasions during the proceedings on the Bill. The accountant in bankruptcy is and will be answerable to the courts for his actions. As I have previously reassured the House, the accountant may be sued for damages if any loss is sustained by a third party as a consequence of any negligence by the accountant, his staff or his agents. By virtue of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947, proceedings may be raised in the courts.

The answer to the hon. Gentleman's specific question is that, where an agent acts on behalf of the accountant in bankruptcy, in accordance with the principles of the law of agency, the accountant as principal may be sued, not the agent. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that, should damages be awarded against the accountant as a consequence of his agent's negligent act, the accountant may seek to recover the damages as a separate action.

Mr. Tom Clarke: May I ask the Minister a question that I should have asked the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace)? Has the Institute of Chartered Accountants expressed a view on that matter?

Mr. Stewart: Yes, the Institute of Chartered Accountants has expressed a view on the matter. It has written to my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister

[Mr. Stewart]

of State about the indemnity that we are discussing and about a number of related matters, and a response will be sent to the institute shortly.

I repeat my assurance that the accountant in bankruptcy may, as a separate action, seek to recover damages from the agent if a breach of contract can be shown, but that would be a matter for him. The Government will not seek a blanket indemnity, as was feared by the institute earlier in our proceedings.

Mr. Wallace: I welcome the general tenor of the Minister's reassurances and, in those circumstances, I seek the leave of the House to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Stewart: I beg to move amendment No. 6, in page 3, line 28 after 'perform' insert 'on his behalf'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Government amendments Nos. 7, 8, 9, 11, 17, 18 and 36.

Mr. Stewart: These are purely technical drafting amendments.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2

APPOINTMENT AND FUNCTIONS OF INTERIM TRUSTEE

Amendments made: No. 7, in page 4, line 31 leave out 'or' and insert 'and'.

No. 8, in page 4, line 35 after 'administration' insert 'of the sequestration'—*[Mr. Stewart.]*

Clause 3

PETITIONS FOR SEQUESTRATION

Amendment made: No. 9, in page 6, line 7, at end insert 'of presentation'.—*[Mr. Stewart.]*

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move amendment No. 10, in page 6, line 8, leave out '£750' and insert '£1,500'.

The amendment is a concession to a point raised in Committee by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Gascadden (Mr. Dewar). Members of the Standing Committee that debated the Bill will recall that the Committee accepted an amendment proposed by the hon. Member for Garscadden to increase the minimum debt level before a creditor could petition for the sequestration of a debtor from £750 to £1,500. During the debate on that amendment, there emerged a general feeling in the Committee that the equivalent minimum debt level before a debtor could petition for sequestration should also be raised to £1,500. I promised to consider the matter further, and this amendment is a direct response to the views expressed by the Committee.

Committee members recognised that there was a need to strike a balance between the interests of debtors and creditors in all aspects of these procedures. Sequestration is a serious process which not only results in penalties on the debtor but can also result in financial loss to the creditors who will have provided money, goods or services in good faith and will now no longer be paid. It is therefore right that there should be some constraint on the levels of debt involved before sequestration is contemplated, and £1,500 appears to strike the right balance at the present time.

However, as I said to the Committee, it remains the Government's intention to monitor the effect of this provision and to consult more widely on the debt levels once the Bill is enacted. The Bill allows for that figure to be adjusted by regulation in the light of experience, should that prove necessary or desirable.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made; No. 11, in page 6, line 10, at end insert 'of presentation'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Mr. Stewart: I beg to move amendment No. 12, in page 6, leave out lines 13 and 14 and insert —

'(i) is apparently insolvent; or'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 13.

Mr. Stewart: Members of the Standing Committee will recall that the Government amended the Bill in Committee to allow a debtor to petition for sequestration where he or she was apparently insolvent in terms of section 7 of the 1985 Act. That was felt on both sides of the Committee to be a simpler and more objective test than the original provision. Most debtors seeking access to sequestration would have no difficulty establishing grounds for apparent insolvency.

In the interests of maintaining a balance between the interests of debtor and creditor, it was felt necessary for this purpose to exclude the ground that a debtor had granted a trust deed. Not to have done so would simply have maintained the problem that has given rise to the present situation.

Over the summer, concern has been expressed by the Law Society of Scotland that some debtors might seek to make use of the provision in the 1985 Act which allows apparent insolvency to be constituted by a debtor giving a written notice to his creditors that he has ceased to pay his debts in the ordinary course of business to prevent creditors from undertaking diligence. Such an action would be a form of self-certifying sequestration aimed at avoiding the payment of debts that were legitimately due.

We have therefore concluded that that ground for apparent insolvency should also be excluded as a basis for a debtor presenting their own petition for sequestration. In practice, that is likely to affect only a small number of debtors with trading concerns. The typical consumer debtor—the main worry of hon. Members—would not fall within the terms of section 7(1) (b) of the 1985 Act. Therefore, his or her position will not be affected by the change.

I assure the House that the other grounds on which apparent insolvency can be established will still apply—allowing debtors who genuinely cannot pay creditors to have access to sequestration. That is largely a technical and legal matter, and I commend the amendment to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 13, in page 6, line 19, at end insert—

'and for the purposes of this paragraph a debtor shall not be apparently insolvent by reason only that he has granted a trust deed or that he has given notice to his creditors as mentioned in paragraph (b) of section 7(1) of this Act.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move amendment No. 14, in page 6, line 36, leave out from 'whereby' to the end of line 39 and insert—

'his estate (other than such of his estate as would not, under section 33(1) of this Act, vest in the permanent trustee if his estate were sequestrated) is conveyed to the trustee for the benefit of his creditors generally.'.

Amendment No. 14 adjusts in a minor fashion the definition of "trust deed" in new section 5(4A). Its purpose is simply to clarify the definition. References to sections 31 and 32 of the 1985 Act are removed as those provisions do not actually set out limitations on the property which vests in the permanent trustee, and are not therefore relevant to the definition.

The object of the definition is to ensure that, for a trust deed to be recognised for the purposes of the 1985 Act, it should not convey property of the debtor which is exempt from poinding, or which is held on trust by the debtor for another person. Section 33(1) provides that exemption in the case of sequestrations and the definition, as amended, ensures that the exemption also applies in the case of trust deeds. That was a point mentioned in Committee by the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty). It means that the debtor's clothes, tools of trade and certain other belongings will be exempt, which was what the hon. Gentleman wanted.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 4

AWARD OF SEQUESTRATION

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move amendment No. 15, in page 8, leave out lines 14 and 15 and insert—

'(4) In this Act 'the date of sequestration' means—

- (a) where the petition for sequestration is presented by the debtor, the date on which sequestration is awarded;
- (b) where the petition for sequestration is presented by a creditor or a trustee acting under a trust deed—
  - (i) the date on which the court grants warrant under subsection (2) above to cite the debtor; or
  - (ii) where more than one such warrant is granted, the date on which the first such warrant is granted.'.

The amendment to the definition of "date of sequestration" has been proposed as a result of comments during the summer received from the Law Society of Scotland. It fears that the definition currently contained in the Bill may give rise to difficulties in relation to conveyancing transactions. A debtor may sell a property after a petition for his sequestration is presented to the court. The purchaser would not necessarily be aware that the petition had been presented and would be purchasing in good faith. However, under the Bill as presently defined, title to the property would transfer to the debtor's estate and vest in the permanent trustee following the granting of the award of sequestration, leaving the third party at a loss.

The definition in the Bill was introduced originally at the suggestion of practitioners to bring the practice in sequestrations into line with that in insolvencies. It also clarified a problem where a court grants two warrants to cite a debtor on different days. At present there is confusion as to which warrant should trigger the date of sequestration.

As a consequence of our discussions with the Law Society, the definition will revert back to that contained in the 1988 Act, subject to a slight amendment to take account of the fact that more than one warrant to cite the debtor may be granted by the court.

I commend this sensible technical amendment to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 5

CALLING OF STATUTORY MEETING

Mr. Stewart: I beg to move amendment No. 16, in page 8, line 18, leave out from 'below' to 'may' in line 20 and insert

'where the interim trustee is the Accountant in Bankruptcy, the statutory meeting'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Government amendments Nos. 37 to 44, 46 and 49.

Mr. Stewart: The amendments are substantial, not purely technical and it is appropriate for me to explain their purpose as they constitute a response to comments made by hon. Members in Committee.

Amendments Nos. 16, 37, 38 and 46 are drafting amendments which clarify which procedures leading to the statutory meeting of creditors should apply when the accountant in bankruptcy is appointed interim trustee and which apply when someone other than the accountant is appointed interim trustee. The procedures are different and during our discussions in the Committee hon. Members said that there could be understandable confusion as to which rules applied when. The amendments aim to reduce any such confusion in the future and make the legislation easier to operate.

The Government did consider the suggestion made in Committee by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) that the discretion allowed in the Bill to the accountant in bankruptcy to dispense with a statutory meeting should be extended to other interim trustees. During the recess, we discussed that proposal further with the Scottish insolvency practitioners joint liaison committee, which is made up of representatives of the main professional organisations involved in sequestrations.

7.15 pm

There remains considerable concern that widening the discretion to other interim trustees would be a significant reduction in creditor rights, particularly the right to elect a permanent trustee of their choice to administer the sequestration. After all, in most of the sequestrations in which an insolvency practitioner is appointed interim trustee significant assets will be involved, and creditors' interest will be high. There is a strong feeling that dispensing with the statutory meeting can only be justified when the cost would otherwise fall on the taxpayer. We have therefore decided to retain the different procedures allowed in the Bill.

There was, however, a wide measure of support for another suggestion put forward by the Opposition in Committee. The suggestion was that all interim trustees should be allowed to apply for a certificate of summary administration when they are administering cases which fall within the criteria set out in clause 6. When such a certificate is granted the permanent trustee has a greater discretion as to how the case is conducted and should be able to administer the sequestration at a lower cost.

Accordingly, the Government have brought forward amendments 39, 40 to 44 and 49 which allow both the accountant in bankruptcy and other interim trustees to apply to the court for a certificate of summary administration after the statutory meeting of creditors. The criteria as to which cases qualify remain the same, and the procedures to be followed are similar. Creditors and others retain the right to apply for the withdrawal of a certificate if they feel this is justified.

Overall, while the number of cases which are likely to fall into this category may be small, we believe that the amendments are a useful improvement to the Bill. I commend them as a good example of constructive Committee work. When positive suggestions were proposed by the Opposition, the Government subsequently consulted on them and are now able, with confidence, to commend the amendments to the House.

Amendments agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 17, in page 9, line 25, at end insert—

'( ) section 25A of this Act shall apply; and'.

No. 18, in line 29, leave out from 'estate' to end of line 30.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Clause 6

SUMMARY ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Stewart: I beg to move amendment No. 19, in page 9, line 36 leave out from 'shall' to 'grant' in line 37 and insert

'subject to subsection (8) below,'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider also Government amendments Nos. 20 to 26.

Mr. Stewart: This group of amendments deals with provisions in clause 6, the clause relating to summary administration of sequestrations. I draw attention to amendment No. 21. Hon. Members who served on the Committee may recall that the hon. Member for Garscadden asked why basic household goods should be included when calculating whether the debtor's assets exceeded the £2,000 limit for qualifying for summary administration. In my reply, I explained that the Government were considering tabling an amendment on Report to deal with the matter. Amendment No. 21 is that amendment.

The amendment would exclude from the calculation of a debtor's assets for the purposes of clause 6 those assets which would not vest in the permanent trustee by virtue of section 33(1) of the 1985 Act. These are goods exempted from poinding under section 16 of the Debtors (Scotland) Act 1987, or which are held in trust by the debtor for a third party. Such an amendment has been requested by the Scottish Consumer Council and Citizens Advice Scotland, as well as by the hon. Member for Garscadden. I commend it with confidence to the House.

The other amendments in the group are technical and procedural; I commend them to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 20, in page 10, line 3 after 'of' insert '(i)'.

No. 21, in page 10, line 4 at end insert—'or

(ii) any property of his which, under section 33(1) of this Act, does not vest in the permanent trustee.'

No. 22, in page 10, line 4 at end insert—

'( ) For the purposes of an application under subsection (1) above made by—

(a) the Accountant in Bankruptcy; or

(b) an interim trustee who is not the Accountant in Bankruptcy.

a certificate by the Accountant in Bankruptcy or, as the case may be, the interim trustee as to the aggregate amounts of the debtor's liabilities and assets shall be sufficient evidence of such aggregate amounts.'.

No. 23, in page 10, line 7 after '(a)' insert

'in any case where the application for the certificate was made by the Accountant in Bankruptcy,'.

No. 24, in page 10, line 8 after '(b)' insert 'in every case,'.

No. 25, in page 10, leave out lines 32 to 39 and insert—

'(8) The court shall not grant an application as mentioned in subsection (1) above—

(a) in any case where the application is made by the Accountant in Bankruptcy before the sequestration of the debtor's estate has been awarded and the court has previously appointed, or at the same time as it awards sequestration appoints, as interim trustee a person who is not the Accountant in Bankruptcy; or

(b) in any other case—

(i) where a person has been elected as permanent trustee, before the sheriff has confirmed the election of that person as permanent trustee; or

(ii) where no such person has been elected, unless the court at the same time appoints the interim trustee as permanent trustee.'

No. 26, in page 11, line 25 after '5.' insert—

'Except in the case of an application for the grant of a certificate for the summary administration of the sequestration of the debtor's estate under section 25(2A) of this Act,'.

—*[Mr. Stewart.]*

Clause 7

APPOINTMENT OF PERMANENT TRUSTEE

Amendment made: No. 27, in page 11, line 30 leave out '23(4A)'.—*[Mr. Stewart.]*

Clause 8

FEES FOR THE ACCOUNTANT IN BANKRUPTCY

Amendments made: No. 28, in page 12, line 4 after 'fees' insert 'and outlays'.

No. 29, in page 12, line 7 after 'fees' insert 'and outlays'.

No. 30, in page 12, line 12 after 'fees' insert 'or outlays'.

—*[Mr. Stewart.]*

Clause 9

REMUNERATION OF PERMANENT TRUSTEE

Amendment made: No. 31, in page 12, line 16 leave out from beginning to 'and' in line 20 and insert

'the petition is presented during the period beginning with the day on which this Act is passed'.*[Mr. Stewart.]*

Clause 12

SHORT TITLE, INTERPRETATION, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Amendments made: No. 32, in page 13, line 33 at end insert 'section 1;'.

No. 33, in page 14, line 2 leave out from 'above' to 'nothing' in line 3.

No. 34, in page 14, line 4 leave out from beginning to 'shall' in line 5.

No. 35, in page 14 leave out lines 7 to 15 and insert 'the petition is presented before such commencement.—*[Mr. Stewart.]*

Schedule 1

MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS OF THE 1985 ACT

Amendments made: No. 36, in page 16, line 6 leave out '(2)(a)' and insert '(3)'.

No. 37, in page 17, line 22 at end insert—

'. Before section 21 there shall be inserted the following section—

"Statutory meeting.

20A. A meeting of creditors called by the interim trustee under section 21 or 21A of this Act shall, in this Act, be referred to as 'the statutory meeting'.'.

No. 38, in page 17, line 23 at end insert—

'( ) In subsection (1) for the words from the beginning to 'statutory meeting')' there shall be substituted the words 'Where the interim trustee is not the Accountant in Bankruptcy he shall call the statutory meeting'.'.

No. 39, in page 18 leave out lines 1 to 12.

No. 40, in page 18, line 19 at end insert—

'( ) For subsection (1) there shall be substituted the following subsection—

"(1) At the statutory meeting, the creditors shall, at the conclusion of the proceedings under section 23(3) of this Act, proceed to the election of the permanent trustee.".'.

No. 41, in page 18, line 25, leave out 'subsection' and insert 'subsections.'.

No. 42, in page 18, line 32, at end insert—

'(3B) Where a report is made in pursuance of subsection (3A) above, the Accountant in Bankruptcy may apply to the sheriff for the grant of a certificate for the summary administration of the sequestration of the debtor's estate.'.

No. 43, in page 18, line 36, at end insert—

'( ) After subsection (4) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

'(4A) Where a report is made in pursuance of subsection (4) above, the interim trustee may apply to the sheriff for the grant of a certificate for the summary administration of the sequestration of the debtor's estate.'.

No. 44, in page 18, line 38, leave out from beginning to second 'in' and insert—

'(1) Section 25 (confirmation of permanent trustee) shall be amended as follows.

(2) After subsection (2) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(2A) Where a report is made in pursuance of subsection (1) above, the interim trustee may apply to the sheriff for the grant of a certificate for the summary administration of the sequestration of the debtor's estate.".

No. 46, in page 25, leave out lines 10 to 16 and insert 'for the words 'section 21(1)' there shall be substituted the words 'section 20A'.

No. 47, in page 27, line 43, after '9' insert—

'(a)'.

No. 48, in page 27, line 45, at end insert—

'(b) after sub-paragraph (1) there shall be inserted the following sub-paragraph—

"(1A) Where the offer of composition is approved and the permanent trustee is the Accountant in Bankruptcy, the permanent trustee shall prepare accounts of his intromissions with the debtor's estate and he shall make a determination of his fees and outlays calculated in accordance with regulations made under section 69A of this Act'.;

(c) after sub-paragraph (2) there shall be inserted the following sub-paragraph—

"(3) Subsections (2), (3), (4), (5), and (10) of section 53 of this Act as adapted by paragraph 9(2) and (3) of Schedule 2 to this Act shall apply, subject to any necessary modifications, in respect of the accounts and determination prepared under sub-paragraph (1A) above as they apply in respect of the accounts and determination prepared under the said section 53 as so adapted.".'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Schedule 2

REPEALS

Amendments made: No. 49, in page 29, line 39, column 3, leave out from '23' to end of line 42 and insert 'subsection (4).'

No. 50, in page 30, column 3, leave out lines 5 and 6.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Order for Third Reading read.

7.25 pm

Mr. Stewart: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

We have had full discussions of the Bill on the Floor of the House and in Committee. I pay tribute to the hon. Members on both sides who sat on the Committee, for a long time on some occasions, to consider matters of importance to the people of Scotland. The Bill has been improved as a result of that detailed consideration, and I commend it to the House.

7.26 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke: It is fair to say that the Government can hardly complain about the constructive response from the Opposition this afternoon. Our debate on new clause 3 was especially helpful and many of the issues raised in it will not go away even after the Bill is passed.

It is important to place on the record our concern about the future of legal aid and about the statement by Lord Mackay of Clashfern at the weekend. It would have been helpful if we had known precisely and comprehensively what the Government's thinking on the future of legal aid is. I am sure that I would be supported in that view by the Law Society of Scotland, the Scottish Consumer Council, the citizens advice bureaux and others.

The Bill has certainly been influenced by the considerable increase in the cost of sequestrations. In 1985, there were only 295 sequestrations in Scotland, but by 1991 the number had risen to 7,665, with all the attendant problems for the Government which they have considered during the deliberations on the Bill.

The Minister mentioned that I had taken the trouble to read most of the Committee proceedings. I found them fascinating, as was the response today in the form of various amendments and new clauses.

I am worried about whether those most affected by the Bill will have much say in its impact. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), in a distinguished contribution, mentioned his link with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland. That is of course important, but I wonder whether the people who may be deterred, as many of them may be, from applying for sequestration as a result of the legislation have been consulted.

Have they been asked their views on means testing in England and what that will mean to Scotland? Do they realise that we are considering the closing off of one bankruptcy option which, for many cases of multiple debt, was the only course open to a large number of people? We owe a great debt of gratitude to those organisations which,

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

as we have seen in the *Hansard* report of the Committee and as we have heard today, have taken seriously their role in contributing to the legislation. I am sure that the Minister will join the Opposition in thanking all those professional bodies and voluntary groups which gave outstanding assistance and provided research to all hon. Members. Whether they are satisfied with our deliberations is another matter.

During the debate on new clause 3, the Government committed themselves to monitoring. We welcome that. My hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) even got a concession on clause 14 which may hitherto be known as the Connarty clause. We have made not a little progress, although I do not want to be too extravagant in praising the Bill.

I did not take part in Committee proceedings, in which the Opposition were led by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). I was interested in the contributions by new hon. Members, especially my hon. Friends the Members for Falkirk, East, for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm) and for Dunfermline, West (Ms. Squire). I am sure that they found the Committee a fascinating learning curve. I vividly remember reading the advice offered by the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) who not only quoted in Latin but offered to send advice in Italian. I do not know whether the Committee benefited greatly from that. One of the Government Whips is indicating assent, so somebody must have been grateful for the classical knowledge.

We are obviously very concerned about the problems that led to the introduction of the Bill. We are concerned about multiple debt and about the evidence of poverty in our society which plainly contributed to the need for such a Bill. However, for the reasons given by me and my hon. Friends, we do not oppose Third Reading. We thank those who contributed towards putting the Bill on the statute book. I am sure that all hon. Members will join me in thanking the Chairman of the Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) for his good-humoured and diplomatic contributions to the progress of the Bill.

On numerous occasions the Government have spoken about monitoring. I am sure that the Under-Secretaries of State for Scotland, the hon. Members for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) and for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) will not be surprised to find us monitoring the progress of the legislation. My hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) reminded the House of our commitment to a Scottish Parliament. Before long this legislation will be reviewed not in London but in Edinburgh, and that is absolutely right in the context of the problems that we face in Scotland.

7.33 pm

Mrs. Ewing: Before commenting generally on the Bill, I should like to raise a specific point with the Minister. He will recall that on Tuesday 14 July in the Committee's afternoon session I spoke about the possibility of looking at exempted assets. He undertook to consult ministerial colleagues on the issue of whether personal injury awards as a source of income would be carefully examined for consideration as an exempted asset. The speed of the legislation may not have enabled the Minister to respond to that issue, but I should like to have some comment on it. I would settle for a letter if the Minister wishes to write to me in greater detail. It is an important issue, which was pressed by me and by other members of the Committee, and it would be a shame to let it go adrift.

I am not sure why the Government suddenly produced this interesting legislation. I repeat my original contention that, as there was a need to look at the laws of diligence as they affected people facing bankruptcy in Scotland, the opportunity should have been taken for a wide-ranging inquiry. That could have taken account of the needs of the debtor and the creditor and looked at examples in other countries. In Committee I gave effective examples of what happens in other countries. The inquiry could have taken evidence from advice centres, the citizens advice bureaux and the legal and insolvency practitioners.

We should have taken the opportunity to discover why so many people in Scotland are affected by the likelihood of bankruptcy. There is little doubt in anyone's mind that it is the result of the credit boom in the 1980s. At that time, credit was encouraged and, as the recession began to bite, people were faced with bankruptcy. The Government produced the Bill in great haste and may have to repent at leisure, because I am not convinced that the legislation is the correct way to address the issues that face us in Scotland.

The Government should have looked at warrant sales in Scotland—that law which still pertains in our country and which affects so many of the poorest sections of our society. Those people have no assets and no money and cannot possibly meet the debts into which they have been pushed. We have missed a great opportunity. I am not convinced that the Government have fully assessed the costs or the implications of the legislation. We have not yet been afforded the full details of the legal aid costs that will be involved. If more time had been taken before the Bill was printed, we could have resolved some of the details in advance and made the legislation much more effective.

Like the official Opposition, we shall not oppose Third Reading, but I give due warning that I shall carefully monitor the Bill's progress in the same way as I monitored the effects of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985. I suspect that the issue will again be debated on many future occasions.

7.37 pm

Mr. Connarty: I join the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) in expressing regret at the fact that no opportunity was taken to look seriously at the problem caused by warrant sales in bankruptcy cases. The Government will regret that, because their reputations will not be enhanced in Scotland or elsewhere as they continue to use a greatly outmoded system of diligence.

I regret the final form of the Bill. I compliment the civil servants who adeptly sieved the submissions from people who perhaps could not see the target for the Government's smoke. A Special Standing Committee would have been able to take evidence in the way in which it was meant to be submitted, rather than in the way in which Government procedures allowed it to be submitted.

The Bill's main omission is that the House made no attempt to change the way of looking at debt and debtors. A reading of the Bill and the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 clearly shows that they are founded on Acts drawn up centuries ago. The legislation is penal. It sees debtors as bad people who should be dealt with by way of quasi-criminal proceedings. The Bill makes no attempt to look at people who are led into money problems because of Government policies.

This Government freed up credit so much that I recently heard of a case of a 14-year-old girl being sent a letter by a bank asking her whether she would like to open a bank account. She placed £20 in the account and was given a bank card which allowed her to draw out £50. Unfortunately, she did. When the mother tried to find out what was going on, she was told that she could not be given her daughter's personal details. That is ridiculous.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): My hon. Friend may wish to recall that such behaviour was not just espoused but encouraged by members of the last Conservative Government, in particular the present Lord Ridley, who went out of his way to say that children, of any age, with substantial means should be allowed to use credit cards.

I know that my hon. Friend cut his parliamentary teeth on the Bill and is much more experienced than I am on the cases affected by it. However, a constituent recently approached me and said that in 1983-84 she became bankrupt over a debt of £3,500 to a bank. By 1990, that case had not been solved. By that time, because of high interest rates, she and her husband owed over £9,000. In that year, she was told by the appointed receiver to borrow £14,000 through remortgaging her house. Two years later, she still has not seen any of that money and nor have any of her creditors. The receiver told her that it is none of her business and that £14,000 still sits with him. Is that not typical of the cases that my hon. Friend——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. this is supposed to be an intervention.

Mr. Connarty: I am grateful for that intervention. I recommend that my hon. Friend reads the *Official Report* of today's debate. He will find references from the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) to the fact that creditors get little of the money realised through this procedure, but the Government have not tackled this problem.

Unfortunately, the debtor is treated as a bad person and is partly criminalised, and the Bill will not change that. I was surprised that the Government did not take the trouble to investigate the procedures used in other countries, particularly in the United States. In a number of states, people are allowed to keep their homes, which is an important factor. In some they are allowed to retain their vehicle, if they have one, because it is necessary to use it to seek, or to remain in, gainful employment. The Government have not considered any of those procedures. Instead, they have brought in an amending Bill that apologises for previous draconian Acts. I regret that the Government have done nothing to move bankruptcy proceedings into the 21st century.

I shall return to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid). Again and again we were shown that the creditor gains little from the bankruptcy proceedings. The Bill will not improve that. Much of the time and energy of professional accountants and people in the courts are spent on paying money into the accounts of accountants and the accountant in bankruptcy. The Government should have used this time to bring in a Bill that gave more money and resources to conciliation and reparation and that ensured that the creditor would get something back from someone who had fallen on hard times or who had over-extended himself in debt.

Mr. Bill Walker: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can you confirm that the Third Reading debate is about what is in the Bill rather than what is not in the Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have no difficulty in confirming that.

Mr. Connarty: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), who wishes us to deal only with matters in the Bill.

Clause 6 deals with the new procedures. A great deal of concern has been expressed about the difficulty that people will find in using the new summary procedures, particularly with the loss of advice that will result from the change in remuneration. We predict that, regrettably, this will make accountants less likely to give advice as insolvency practitioners.

Two legal aid questions remain unanswered. The first is whether people will get sufficient legal aid support to obtain advice from lawyers. The second is whether solicitors will be available to take up legal aid money and offer advice. Another question that has been asked repeatedly arose from Lord Mackay's statement that there will be means testing in England. That gives the Opposition cause for concern. We feel that the Bill will not be implemented in the way that it is written and that people will not be able to use the new summary procedures.

I regret that the Government have not addressed these issues. If the point of Third Reading is to talk about the Bill, I can only say what I have said before—this is a cheap Bill that cheapens the cost of bankruptcy procedures in Scotland. It is a shoddy patchwork and not a real attempt to deal with bankruptcy in Scotland.

7.45 pm

Mr. Wallace: Our wide-ranging debate on new clause 3 may allow us to keep our remarks on Third Reading relatively brief. I, too, will not divide the House, but there are still so many shortcomings in the content of the Bill that we cannot be confident that it will remain on the statute book unamended for some time to come. We have been asked to accept that the detail of legal aid will be worked out. I do not doubt the sincerity with which the detailed negotiations will be conducted, but we are being asked to give a Third Reading to a Bill of which an important part is incomplete.

We have not had adequate answers to the questions about advice, which will no longer be available to people facing bankruptcy and serious problems of debt. In earlier exchanges, it was calculated that 333 of those recommended to insolvency practitioners by citizens advice bureaux were turned away from the courts and sequestration. The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) calculated a further 888, in an impressive display of mental arithmetic on his feet. My calculation is that, if the two are added together, and we multiply the result by £300 per sequestration, the rough cost of the Government's proposed scheme, that is £366,000 which may not be saved because the Government have taken away an important element of those who provide advice.

That leads me to the question of those who live in rural areas. I have no doubt that the Minister genuinely believes

[Mr. Wallace]

that, somehow or other, the arrangements in place at the moment will continue. Often, Ministers express hopes that become weaknesses in Acts and result in expectations not being fulfilled. No doubt, the hopes expressed during the progress of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 were equally pious, but they have resulted in the problems that this Bill is attempting to address.

I have a detailed point that it was not possible to raise earlier, but which may be raised on Third Reading. We have come a long way from the original debate, when the Under-Secretary was so obviously discomforted by the fact that he appeared to be introducing a nationalisation measure. He tried to retreat and argued that the system would be open to market forces and market testing. I understand that, in market testing arrangements, the accountant in bankruptcy may be in competition with those in the private sector. Is it the intention that the accountant in bankruptcy will be involved in examining tenders? If so, there would be a potential unfairness. Perhaps the Minister can say something about that.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) mentioned my association with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland. He is a generous person and will also know, from the debate in the Grand Committee and the debate on Second Reading, that I have tried to put the case for the ordinary people who find themselves in debt. I have in mind citizens advice bureaux and the Tackling Debt group. If we examine the record in Committee and on the Floor of the House, their case has been put. Perhaps the more telling questions are whether their case has been listened to and whether there has been a response to it. Some of us have doubts about that.

I conclude by reminding the House of what the Scottish Law Commission stated in paragraph 2.35 of its 1982 report:

> "The discharge of prior debts is one of the main objectives of a civilised system of bankruptcy law and we consider that it would be morally indefensible and politically unacceptable to recommend policies which do not, at least after the lapse of time, admit of an insolvent debtor's discharge."

There is concern that in an effort to tackle one problem another problem may have opened up. Perhaps many families will have to suffer a continuing burden of debt and all the worry that is associated with it because under the new regime they will not feel able—perhaps they will not know what to do—to do something about it. That remains a concern. As has already been said, the Bill, when enacted, will require careful monitoring.

7.50 pm

Mr. Wilson: I shall take up directly the remarks of the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). It is important to return to where this proposed legislation began and why it began. It is before us because the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 generated too much demand. The result was a level of demand that the Government found not to be acceptable financially. There were so many sequestrations taking place in Scotland. In a rather perverse way, from an ideological point of view, the Government chose to bring the process into the public sector. It remains a nationalisation measure, however unpalatable that may be to some of those who are promoting it.

The Government got it wrong in 1985 in terms of projecting the scale of demand. I have not heard anything to convince me that they have it absolutely right now. I congratulate the Government retrospectively, however, on what they did in 1985, which was to recognise the injustice that the Scottish Law Commission had focused upon. They provided a humane means for people to escape from the burdens of debt.

Everything that we have sought to focus upon during our deliberations is centred on the question whether it will be more or less difficult for those who suffer problems of multiple debt and poverty to use the humane mechanism that has been provided. Only time will tell, but severe doubts remain. If a Government approach the issue by believing that the process is costing too much, the suspicion must persist that the way in which money will be saved is not through cutting the cost per case but reducing the number of cases. If that proves to be true, thousands of families in Scotland each year will not have a humane mechanism open to them.

The subsidiary concern—it has been focused upon—is the possibility that those for whom sequestration is not appropriate will be led into it because the safety valve that now exists is not accommodated within the new legislation. The message that must go out clearly from our debates—there are some who are insulated from the sort of circumstances that lead to personal sequestration—is that personal sequestration is not an easy option or a course of least resistance. Every case involves human tragedy and burdens that are based on the circumstances in which people find themselves. It is not an easy option, and it would be a tragedy if an individual for whom personal sequestration was not appropriate were to take that course as a result of anything that we are doing this evening.

During our consideration of the Bill we have dealt with many sub-plots. For example, we have dealt with the argument that the 1985 Act encouraged a great increase in personal sequestrations. We have dealt with the idea that insolvency petitioners are responsible for the rapid growth in personal sequestrations. We have dealt with the theory that there are money advice agencies that are telling people to go for personal sequestration. There are many theories for the increase in the number of personal sequestrations in Scotland, but we must not let the Government escape from the real reason for the increase, which is the rapid growth of grinding poverty that afflicts the lives of so many of our people. That is why there has been an increase in personal sequestrations. That is why debt has increased. That is why human misery has increased. People do not have enough money even to meet the commitments that they have entered into, far less to enter into new commitments that would enhance the quality of their life.

We would do a disservice to those affected by this sort of legislation in the past and those who will be affected by it in future if we did not recognise that they are victims of an economic system and economic circumstances that have led to a vast and frightening escalation of debt and poverty in Scotland. They are not guilty parties.

When the Prime Minister visited Scotland shortly before the general election he was interviewed by the *Glasgow Herald*. He was asked—perhaps this was one of too few occasions during those weeks—what he intended to do to deal with the problems created by poverty and deprivation. His reply was memorable. "Poverty," he said, "what poverty?" It is clear that he is truly insulated from the realities of human experience for thousands of people in communities within a few hundred yards or a few miles from where he was speaking that day. He could have gone to any part of Britain and been told of the same circumstances, but he would still have replied, "Poverty, what poverty?"

There is grinding poverty. There is lack of income along with unemployment, the failure of social services and the failure of public provision generally to provide a safety net. That is why people live in circumstances that no society in the western world in the last decade of the 20th century should find acceptable. That is the reason why personal——

Mr. Bill Walker: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am not aware that what the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) is talking about is to be found in the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) is straying rather wide. I have been tolerant. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will return to the contents of the Bill.

Mr. Wilson: I am about to conclude, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is the personal failing of the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) that he does not realise the connection between poverty and the contents of the Bill. When we give the Bill its Third Reading, nobody should be unaware of its root cause and the root reasons for it being necessary.

7.58 pm

Mr. Stewart: With the leave of the House, I shall respond briefly to the debate. I recognise that several hon. Members have set down points for further consideration.

I agree entirely with the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) that sequestration is never an easy option. I shall not weary the House with the figures, which disprove his final argument and point to a clear problem in Scotland that is not mirrored in England and Wales. I say that in the context of the way in which the law has operated since 1985.

The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) talked about widening the list of assets that should be exempted from resting with the permanent trustee. We fully discussed the matter in Committee and I agreed to reflect further on the treatment of compensation, especially for personal injuries. We concluded that it would prove impossible to introduce a workable general exemption in the Bill that did not itself create many anomalies. I shall write to the hon. Lady in the near future to explain in detail precisely why we reached that conclusion.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) asked me about the involvement of the accountant in bankruptcy. I can assure him that arrangements will be put in place to ensure that the accountant is not placed in a more advantageous position from that of other contractors in tendering for sequestration work. The hon. Gentleman made an entirely reasonable point.

I have no doubt that the Bill, when enacted, will bring significant benefits to the conduct of sequestrations in Scotland. I have in mind especially the introduction of summary administration procedures with the greater flexibility and lower costs that they will offer.

The Bill introduces a number of improvements to procedures that take account of practical experience of the 1985 Act. It has been improved by the comments of not only right hon. and hon. Members but organisations such as those mentioned by the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke).

We are committed to maintaining an efficient and effective sequestration service in Scotland. That was our objective on Second Reading and remains our objective on Third Reading. No doubt the House will debate on a future occasion aspects on which several hon. Members put down markers in today's debate, but meanwhile I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

LIBYA

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 5894/92, relating to trade between the European Community and Libya, and supports the imposition of European Community sanctions against Libya to give effect to United Nations Security Council Resolution 748.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

AGRICULTURE

Ordered,

That Mr. Eric Martlew be discharged from the Agriculture Committee and Jean Corston be added to the Committee. —*[Mr. Dixon, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

ENVIRONMENT

Ordered,

That Mr. John Battle and Mr. Tom Pendry be discharged from the Environment Committee and Mr. Kevin Barron and Mr. Roland Boyes be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Dixon, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

HEALTH

Ordered,

That Mr. Roland Boyes and Mr. David Hinchliffe be discharged from the Health Committee and Mr. Hugh Bayley and Tessa Jowell be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Dixon, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

HOME AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That Mr. Keith Vaz be discharged from the Home Affairs Committee and Mr. Donald Anderson be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Dixon, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

SOCIAL SECURITY

Ordered,

That Tessa Jowell and Mr. Ian McCartney be discharged from the Social Security Committee and Jane Kennedy and Mr. Jimmy Wray be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Dixon, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Ordered,

That Mr. Jim Cousins and Mr. Doug Hoyle be discharged from the Trade and Industry Committee and Mr. Malcolm Bruce and Mr. Michael Clapham be added to the Committee. —*[Mr. Dixon, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

TRANSPORT

Ordered,

That Mr. John McFall be discharged from the Transport Committee and Mr. Paul Flynn be added to the Committee. —*[Mr. Dixon, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

PETITIONS

M1-M62 Link Road

8 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): I present a petition signed by Mr. Roy Dobson of Grange moor and 7,000 other constituents, who oppose the construction of any link road between the M1 and M62.

Those who signed the petition are united in opposing both routes suggested by the Secretary of State for Transport, because the proposed link road would bring no benefits to local people or alleviate local traffic problems, but would environmentally damage the green belt and pollute the atmosphere. Such a link road would also threaten one of our present rail links and many homes. My constituents and I believe that the proposed scheme would be an outrageous use and waste of public money.

The 7,000 signatures to the petition—which were collected very quickly—demonstrate the strong feeling of local people. The petition ends with the words

> "Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will urge the Secretary of State for Transport to dismiss from further consideration all proposals for a link road between the M1 and M62 in the light of the destruction of homes and major damage to the environment and community life that this link road would cause."

To lie upon the Table.

8.2 pm

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): I present a petition signed by 9,214 of my constituents who oppose the Government proposal to construct an M1-M62 motorway link in West Yorkshire. In addition to that huge petition, I have received letters from hundreds of my constituents —and not one representation in favour of the scheme.

The petition opposes both the yellow and purple proposed routes. I am happy to wholly endorse the petitioners' demands, and congratulate them on their efforts. The petition states:

> "Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will urge the Secretary of State for Transport to dismiss from further consideration all proposals for a link road between the M1 and M62 in the light of the destruction of homes and major damage to the environment and community life this link road would cause."

To lie upon the Table.

Downpatrick Hospitals

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew MacKay.]*

8.3 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise in this Adjournment debate a matter of grave concern to my constituents—the provision of health and social services.

The Minister responsible sits in another place, but I am pleased that the Minister replying this evening has a deep knowledge of the subject, as he surrendered the portfolio only last spring. My constituents and I are concerned about an apparently concerted attack on hospital provision in South Down, which has two minor hospitals and one major hospital. One—the Gowan Herron hospital in Dromore—has already closed. The Mourne hospital in Kilkeel is about to be reduced to the status of a glorified general practitioners' clinic.

The centrepiece of hospital provision in South Down is the Downe group, and its future is of fundamental importance to the people of the Down and Mourne districts. I refer not only to the continued existence of proper hospital provision but to the quality of future services. While the debate must primarily proceed on medical and health grounds, there are strong and important undertones in respect of the entire district's economic and social future.

That debate has continued a long time. I remember attending public meetings and protests as long ago as 1966. The only criterion should be the proper provision of medical and health care, allied to a reasonable assessment of the cost of those facilities. It appears that decisions will be taken purely on a bookkeeping basis, financial restrictions, and cutbacks. The submissions of the Eastern health and social service board appear to be based solely on the financial shortfall of its budget for coming years. It lays the blame squarely on the Department of Health and Social Services, which is its funding authority.

It seems that the medical and health arguments follow financial dictums rather than the reverse being true. I remind the Minister that a delegation of councillors that visited the Department were assured that the Department had sole responsibility in this matter.

The question of hospital viability should revolve around clinical efficiency. A report produced two years ago by Professor Normand for the Eastern board found that the Downe group offered the highest order of clinical efficiency, and was the most efficient of all the hospital administered by the Eastern board—including the major teaching hospitals in the city of Belfast and its environs.

Over three decades, the board has denied proper capital investment in the Downe group, and there has been extreme penny-pinching in terms of personnel—presumably so that the group could be termed non-viable, because of the various restrictions imposed on it by the board.

Only last week, the Downe hospital made an application to the board for one junior doctor—which was refused. However, a number of appoints were made to the already fattened staff of junior doctors at the city hospitals. That illustrates an absence of pro rata provision as between Down and Belfast. Good luck to the people of Belfast, but justice and equity demands adequate, just and equitable funding and staff provision, in the Downe hospital group.

The Normand report was followed by an inquiry undertaken by an in-house project team. In April 1992, it categorically reported to the Eastern board that a new hospital should be built in the Downe group area, to replace the out-dated surgical and general unit there. I think that unit is about 170 years old. It is recommended that the new hospital should form an extension of the maternity hospital built and opened five or six years ago.

In June 1992, the Eastern health board published a document that has set health and social service provision on its head. The document, entitled "Framework for General (Acute) Services within the Eastern Health and Social Services Board Area", was published for so-called consultation. In July, I protested strongly, pointing out that no notice had been given to enable the House to debate that dramatic document, and that the consultation period coincided with the parliamentary recess and the summer vacation in Northern Ireland.

I should have thought that such a severe review of future hospital services would have been documented in depth. The board, however, has devoted a mere nine lines to the future of the Downe hospitals. I feel that the report pre-empted the consultative and research period by stating:

> "it is unlikely that the hospital would meet the future standards of clinical effectiveness required."

That is entirely contrary to the board's own in-house review, and contradicts the statistics that were available. The board had undertaken no audit of the services before making its statement.

When challenged, the board claimed that the Department had inserted that passage in its report. The Department denied it, saying, "It is the board's report." We now know that the passage was inserted by the Department, with the obvious intention of bringing about an early closure of the Downpatrick hospitals. I believe that there have been machinations involving the future of our health provision. None of it has anything to do with health; it is all to do with budgets, finance and short-term convenience.

I think that it was unfair and insulting to make such a statement. It was received with anger and hostility. In both medical and psychiatric care, the hospitals have often been at the forefront of advanced medical provision. They cater for 95 per cent. of presenting cases, and only 4 or 5 per cent. have to be transferred—as is proper—to the high-tech acute services that are available in some of the larger hospitals in Belfast. At this time of less intrusive surgery—microsurgery has now been provided in Downe—the argument should go the other way: such less intrusive methods should go out from the centre to the peripheral hospitals, rather than being brought to the centre. The same has been said about the London hospitals in the past week: the core has gone, so the periphery should be enhanced.

I believe that clinical effectiveness can be measured only by clinical outcomes. The board's own comparative performance indicators confirm that the acute medical and surgical wards in Downpatrick operate in an effective, efficient manner. The levels of outcome in acute medical and maternity wards in the Downe have outdone those of any of the other health board hospitals. The framework document, however, concentrates on inputs, failing to address the critical issue of outcomes, on a financial basis. The cost per patient admission is lower in the Downe than it is in any other acute hospital in the group.

As for medical and surgical expertise, the consultant surgeons currently employed in the Downe have a vast experience in a range of specialties: as I have said, they can deal with 95 per cent. of patient requirements, and they have reduced waiting lists to a level below the provincial average. It is interesting to note that all the major operations performed in the Downe hospitals are performed by consultant surgeons or consultant gynaecologists, and are attended by consultant anaesthetists. From a patient's first interview to the post-operative recovery stage, the patient is in the hands of a consultant; he is not dealt with by junior staff, as would happen in the larger hospitals in the cities. Such procedure is in accordance with the recommendations of the confidential inquiry into perioperative deaths—known as CEPOD—which provides the guidelines for conditions of operation.

Clinical effective indicators also show that, at all levels of staff, there is greater efficiency—whether those treated are in-patients, out-patients or day patients. The Downe group has performed very creditably.

The maternity hospital is threatened with closure. Since the opening of the Downpatrick maternity unit, there has been a substantial decrease in the perinatal mortality rate, which is lower than the Northern Ireland average. The Minister will know that the Northern Ireland average is itself much higher than that in any other part of the United Kingdom. I fear that the closure of the maternity hospital, which managed to bridge the gap, would lead to an upsurge in perinatal deaths.

Four years ago, we were told that, to be viable, a maternity unit must have a throughput of 1,000 babies a year. One would almost think that the subject of discussion was a cattle market. This year, we are told that the throughput must be 2,000 a year, and that that is required by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. I am extremely suspicious of such dutch auctions. I wrote to the royal college asking, "Is big beautiful? What about the smaller units?"

In a letter dated 14 September, the college replied:

> "It is appreciated that it is difficult to provide such cover for Units delivering less than 1,000 babies a year and this the case in over 30 per cent. of Northern Ireland Maternity Units. Indeed, about 90 per cent. of these deliver less than 2,000 babies per year. For . . . very small . . . Units, special local arrangements are usually made within the principles of HSS A5885/91. This may often include the development of Team Midwifery . . . Teams consisting of midwives, GPs and Consultants. Such Teams, when carefully developed, may make possible the safe continuing use of small Units provided there is good co-operation across the Team and adequate emergency services."

I believe that that letter belies the department's selective interpretation of the position of maternity services. What the letter says is required is exactly what is happening in Downpatrick.

One of the arguments for the retention and rebuilding of the Downe hospital concerns accessibility and population. We are very much aware in our area that the population of 70,000 increases during the summer months to between 120,000 and 150,000, with the addition of day trippers. It is a highly successful tourist area, because of the proximity of the Mourne mountains. The mountains themselves lead to medical services being needed at certain times of the year.

Accessibility, travelling distances and the geography of the area make it important for us to have rapid and easy access to acute hospital services. The area has no railway services and a very inadequate and inferior road transport

[Mr. Eddie McGrady]

system. If one looks at the social indicators, one sees that there is a very low level of private car ownership. Against that background, I suggest that accessibility is one of the major factors that demands that the Department should make provision for a new building programme in the area.

The patients charter tells us that patients have the right to choose where and how they should be treated. The people of this area have made a clear choice. On 12 September 1992, 20,000 people marched through the streets of Downpatrick and demonstrated their choice under the patients charter. I doubt whether the Department has taken any notice whatsoever of their views. The march was the culmination of about 15 rallies in various villages and hamlets throughout July and August. It was a massive demonstration of what people wanted. They made their choice with their feet and their petitions to the Department. Unless the Department is only paying lip service to those petitions and is ignoring all these people, it must do something about it.

The report of the board's project team stated clearly that, for a relatively modest sum of money—modest in terms of hospital building—proper new acute and modern facilities could be provided at the Downshire site in Downpatrick, and that they could be attached to and have a dual-purpose use with the maternity hospital. It is now within the competence of the Department to say to the people of South Down, "We have noted what you say. We note your cost-effectiveness, your efficiency and the need for accessibility. We note also that you have been given undertakings three times which have not been fulfilled."

I end by quoting from the Royal Commission on the national health service, which I quoted on another occasion. It is a somewhat ancient report, dated 1979, but it is still relevant today. It stated:

> "A fundamental principle of the national health service must be an equality of provision, so far as this can be achieved without an acceptable sacrifice of standards."

I believe that that dictum can be fulfilled on this occasion. The report also said:

> "If inflexibility is to be avoided, health authorities should implement national policy in the context of their particular geographical and demographic constraints."

Those two extracts from the Royal Commission's report are a good summary of what I have tried to say to the Minister and the Department tonight.

I hope that the Minister will provide hope of some succour for the people who are so distressed and worried not just for themselves but for future generations in the area of Downe and Mourne. I hope that he will also bear in mind that it would be economically disastrous and socially devastating if the Downpatrick complex of hospitals were to be closed.

8.24 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): I thank the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) for setting out in his usual clear, cogent and reasonable manner the concerns which he shares with many of his constituents over the future of hospital services in the Downpatrick area. It is another example of the time and effort which he devotes to safeguarding the interest of the people whom he represents.

The hon. Gentleman—I find it difficult at times, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not to call him my hon. Friend—is of course aware that ministerial responsibility, as he stated at the beginning of his speech, for health and social services, in Northern Ireland rests with my noble Friend Lord Arran, who, I know, is taking a keen interest in the debate. I must, however, declare at the outset more than a personal interest in the matter, having had the honour for 16 months of being charged with responsibility for health in the Province.

During that time, I became aware of the strengths of the services in the Province, and of the ways in which it might be possible to strengthen them still further within available resources. The hon. Member will therefore, I am sure, forgive me if I respond initially to his points by setting out some of the issues which I feel must be addressed if the quality of hospital services in Northern Ireland is to be maintained and, indeed, improved.

A great deal of work has gone into looking at ways in which this might be achieved. Last November, when I was the Minister at the Department of Health and Social Services, we published a regional strategy for the years 1992 to 1997, one of the central themes of which was to improve the use and quality of acute hospital services. The strategy expressed a number of aims, but I think the two most relevant to our discussion this evening—both of which, may I say, my noble Friend Lord Arran and I wholly support—are, first, that specialised hospital services should be concentrated on a smaller number of strategically placed sites, accompanied where appropriate by supporting services locally; and secondly, that there should be a substantial shift from in-patient to day and out-patient investigation and treatment.

Those are sensible aspirations which reflect the public's demand for the increasingly sophisticated and technically advanced services which lead to more effective treatment, shorter stays in hospital and better outcomes for patients. Less invasive surgery is in the interests of patients. I have often talked about the fact that many patients have to spend a considerable time in hospital recovering from the wound of the operation, let alone from what is going on inside them. Less invasive techniques mean that people have to spend less time in hospital. That must be desirable for us all.

However, I am under no illusions as to the difficulty of pursuing these aims, and, more important, the sensitivity and care that must go into achieving them. Hospitals are institutions which are particularly cherished by local communities. There is an understandable tendency for people to take the view that, while health boards or Ministers may say that, overall, people will receive a better standard of care if certain hospital services are provided at certain sites, nevertheless local hospitals must remain and, if anything, be developed further. We must balance those views against the need to achieve the best possible service for the greatest number of people within the resources placed at our disposal.

Perhaps I could put that last remark in perspective. In Northern Ireland, there are over 20 health service hospitals providing general acute services for a population of about 1·5 million. They range from large teaching hospitals such as the Royal Victoria hospital, with over 900 beds and more than 5,000 staff, to smaller hospitals such as the Route in Ballymoney, which has around 60 beds and 300 staff. The Downe hospital lies towards the latter end of this wide spectrum, having just over 100 beds providing services in general and geriatric medicine and general surgery, with a further 24 obstetric beds provided in the grounds of the Downshire psychiatric hospital.

The cost of those services is considerable. This year, more than £1,240 million will be spent on health and social services in Northern Ireland—an increase of more than £70 million compared with last year—and of that total, the Eastern health and social services board will spend about £470 million.

Given the scale of that expenditure, I am sure that no hon. Member would disagree that it is the clear responsibility of all those involved in planning and securing services to ensure that maximum value for money is achieved at all times. Every penny saved that was wasteful expenditure will go back into patient care. The health and social services boards, holding their new responsibilities as purchasers of services, have a major role to play.

In that context, I was pleased to learn of the publication on 11 June of the eastern health and social services board's consultative document on the framework for acute hospital services in its area, to which the hon. Gentleman referred. The document was not influenced by the Department; it was a matter for the board itself.

I know that the document has failed to find favour with the hon. Gentleman, but nevertheless, as the major purchaser in Northern Ireland of acute hospital services, the Eastern board must of necessity formulate a strategy for the future. I believe that its consultative document represents a constructive step towards achieving that goal.

The document explains why the existing pattern of hospital services needs to change to keep pace with modern developments and shows that, if performance in the main acute specialties in Northern Ireland were to improve to the same levels as in some English regions and some Ulster hospitals, overall bed numbers in the board could fall by more than 700, while the number of patients being treated could increase. That is very much in line with the thrust of the regional strategy of the DHSS, and it is an aim that I fully endorse.

It would be irresponsible to register such an aim without making it clear what needs to be done to achieve it. The Eastern board has done so in its document by outlining the standards that need to be met in hospitals that wish to provide acute services for the board in future. The board has been very helpful by assessing in its document the extent to which hospitals in its area meet the criteria that it has set down.

Some might not agree with that statement—I believe that the hon. Member for South Down might number among them—but only a few weeks ago, on 20 August, the hon. Gentleman met my noble Friend Lord Arran and expressed his dissatisfaction with the board's consultative document in general and with the section dealing with Downe hospital in particular. Such was his right. Last March, I well remember him expressing concern about Downe hospital in a meeting with me.

When he met my noble Friend Lord Arran, the hon. Gentleman made it clear that he found the section in the Eastern board's document relating to Downe hospital exceptionable, particularly in its references to the clinical effectiveness of the hospital. I have read the section, and it is quite clear that Downe hospital was assessed in the same way and by the same criteria as other hospitals in the eastern board.

I remind the hon. Member that the document published by the Eastern board in June was issued for consultation and does not represent the final views of the board on the future pattern of acute hospital services in its area. The consultation period ended on 30 September, and I have no doubt that a great many of the hon. Member's constituents have made their views known to the board. I know that they have argued the very point that he has aired so ably on their behalf this evening.

It is now up to the board, on the basis of the outline that it provided in the document and of the comments that it received from people and organisations interested in this matter—I can assure the House that it received many—to put together its statement of purchasing intent, which will give a clear sign of the sources from which it expects to purchase services from 1994-95 onwards.

The hon. Member will, I am sure, be particularly interested in seeing that document. I know that my noble Friend Lord Arran has pressed, and will continue to press, for its early completion and has received assurances from the chairman of the board, Mr. Norman Ferguson, that it will be made available as soon as possible—hopefully, early in January.

Finally, I confirm that any proposals for closure or change of use of facilities by the Eastern board stemming from its consultative framework document and the consultation process, whether they relate to Downe or any other hospital in the eastern area, if they are of a major controversial nature—I assure the hon. Gentleman that this would be so—be agreed by my noble Friend Lord Arran before they can proceed.

My noble Friend has confirmed that he will maintain the closest possible interest in the outcome of the Eastern board's consultation and will, in considering any issue that requires his agreement, take full account of the views of those affected by the proposals. He will endeavour, if possible, to meet them and their representatives to listen to what they have to say before taking a final decision.

I thank the hon. Member for South Down for his speech, which I am sure will be used for definitive reference in the months ahead. He has served his constituents not only honourably but effectively, as I know he does on so many matters. I know that we shall hear from him again on this issue, and I assure him that we shall listen to what he and his constituents have to say.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-four minutes to Nine o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 27 October 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

FIFE CHILD CARE INQUIRY

Ordered,

That there be laid before the House a Return of the Report of the Inquiry by Sheriff Kearney (together with extracts from that Report), set up by the Secretary of State for Scotland under the Children Act 1975, into the child care policies in Fife.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

ORKNEY INQUIRY

Ordered,

That there be laid before the House a Return of the Report of the Inquiry by Lord Clyde (together with extracts from that Report), set up by the Secretary of State for Scotland under the Children Act 1975 and the Police (Scotland) Act 1967, into the removal of children from Orkney to a place of safety in February 1991.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

European Fighter Aircraft

1. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made over the evaluation of the European fighter aircraft.

14. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on developments in the post-prototype additional studies for the revised EFA project.

15. **Dr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the European fighter aircraft project.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): In August the four Governments concerned commissioned studies into ways of reducing the costs of the EFA programme; we also agreed to review the operational requirement in the light of recent changes in the international security situation. The first of these studies has now reported. I am pleased to say that it shows that the production costs can be reduced by up to 20 per cent. while still meeting the military requirement in full; that further savings, up to 30 per cent., shows also possible; and that the EFA offers better value for money than the seven alternative designs which were considered.

Mr. Page: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that encouraging reply. As important as the European fighter aircraft is, does he agree that it is even more important that the United Kingdom retains its design and build capacity for not only the EFA but EFAs of the future, unless this country wants to be reliant upon foreign supply—probably a monopoly—with all the price and cost implications that that would mean?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, my hon. Friend is correct. If we were to purchase our fighter requirements from overseas rather than continue with the British design and British manufacture, that would make it difficult and complicate the possibility at any future date of fighter aircraft being designed and manufactured in this country.

Mr. Dykes: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that answer, which was extremely considered and careful. Will he confirm that what he said in his main and supplementary answers confirms conclusively that this vital and indispensable high-technology defence project must go ahead on the basis of the revised figures and that it will be possible to continue the project without our partners?

Mr. Rifkind: I very much hope that it will be possible to continue with all four countries participating in the programme. Both the Italian and Spanish Defence Ministers have indicated that they are impressed by the savings that have been identified by the report. I recall that Mr. Volker Rühe, the German Defence Minister, said on 21 September that the new fighter aircraft should cost not more than DM90 million. I hope that he will be encouraged to know that the work that has now been done identifies that that target can be achieved. I hope that, on that basis, Germany also should feel able to agree to continue with the project.

Dr. Strang: Does the Secretary of State accept that almost all the developing technologies that will feature in tomorrow's aerospace business, both military and civil, are part and parcel of the EFA development programme? Although many of us would like to see the companies that are involved in the EFA programme diversify more into civil products, is he aware that the short-term reality is that the continuation of the EFA programme is crucial to the future of our aerospace industry, which is of world class and second only to the United States in turnover?

Mr. Rifkind: That is the case. The arguments for the EFA programme must depend primarily on the United Kingdom's defence requirements, but the industrial implications are also significant. At the height of production about 28,000 jobs in the United Kingdom would be related to the EFA project and about 60,000 throughout Europe.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: May I offer my support to the Secretary of State and congratulations on the way in which he has dealt with this issue, especially in the past two or three days when the provocations must have seemed nothing if not extreme? Can he confirm that in the event of the project's proceeding in such a way that individual countries could, as it were, choose their own form of EFA programme, he is satisfied that the United Kingdom would acquire an aircraft adequate to meet all exigencies and provide a proper basis for any operations in which the Royal Air Force might find itself engaged?

Mr. Rifkind: Most of the work that has been done so far has involved the Rolls-Royce engines and the airframe. The technical study that has now been completed has identified that, even on the basis of current strategic requirements, savings of up to 20 per cent. could be achieved with the EFA programme. If we wish to go beyond that and reduce our requirement in terms of the components of the EFA programme—for example, in-flight refuelling or other specific qualities—savings of up to 30 per cent. could be made.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my right hon. and learned Friend examines the EFA programme, will he never lose sight of the fact that the RAF and its pilots of the future must never be committed to battlefield conditions without at least enjoying parity in terms of the aircraft that are likely to oppose them? With Soviet air force equipment finding its way around the world, there is every likelihood that RAF pilots may come up against some of the most sophisticated of former Soviet aircraft.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, I am conscious of the fact that twice in the past 10 years, unlike some European countries, our pilots have been called upon to use their fighter aircraft in actual combat—in the Falklands and the Gulf. We must be certain therefore that the aircraft available to our pilots are at least as good as those of any potential aggressor. We must also be conscious of the fact that Russia not only possesses sophisticated aircraft but has made it clear that it is willing to export them—including to unstable regimes in the middle east and elsewhere.

Dr. David Clark: When does the Secretary of State expect to receive the review by the four national chiefs of staff of the EFA's military requirements? When will the four Governments concerned subsequently be able to announce that the EFA programme will go ahead—which we on these Benches believe is essential for Britain's military and industrial requirements?

Mr. Rifkind: We expect to receive the chiefs of staff report in three or four weeks. It is likely that a meeting of the four Defence Ministers will be held early in December, but it is not possible to say now whether they will reach a conclusion. I remind the House that the original timetable did not envisage production decisions until the spring of 1993. Matters were brought forward because of the German budgetary problems that were raised in the German Parliament earlier this year. There is still time available, without interfering with the fundamental programme.

Defence Research Establishments

2. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of the defence research establishments.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): As part of our continuing drive for improved value for money, the Defence Research Agency has made a series of proposals to rationalise its operations and reduce costs. They were set out in a consultative document published last month and we expect to reach decisions later this year.

Mr. Adley: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer and for his diligence and courtesy in taking so much trouble to listen to my constituents' point of view. Does he acknowledge that the DRA's bridge-building facility at Christchurch is unique? The breadth of assumptions in the document to which he referred raise grave doubts—which I share—that any savings will be made by moving the expensive and irreplaceable capital equipment at Christchurch elsewhere? Will my hon. Friend confirm that the consultation will be genuine, and that my constituents will be given a further opportunity to make their views known to him?

Mr. Aitken: I was glad to visit the Christchurch site with my hon. Friend earlier this year, and I pay tribute to the excellence of the professional skills that its staff have consistently shown. Unfortunately, the site is under-utilised and over-large, and considerable savings have been identified by the DRA's chief executive. I confirm that the consultation exercise is genuine and that I will be pleased to learn the views of my hon. Friend and of his constituents when they see me on 4 November.

Mr. Flynn: Is the Minister aware that the defence research establishment at Aberporth in Dyfed has been used to test fire the Chilean Government's Rayo multiple-launch rocket system? Chile has made it clear that it is willing to sell that weapon to any country in the world that can afford it. Does that not make a nonsense of non-proliferation and of our attempts to prevent deadly weapons falling into the hands of third world and unstable Governments?

Mr. Aitken: It is the British Defence Research Agency, not the Chilean Defence Research Agency, and I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's comments are correct.

Mr. Ian Bruce: I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for also seeing a delegation of my constituents about DRA jobs. Can my hon. Friend say what capital repayment terms or payback period he would expect from moving people around? He will know from his days in private industry that it looks for a two to three-year payback. The Treasury seems to look for something like a 20-year payback, and many of the agency's proposals envisage something like a 10-year payback.

Mr. Aitken: The payback arrangements are governed by the normal Treasury rules, which may provide for a period of up to 25 years. When my hon. Friend visits me with his delegation, I shall certainly listen to the points about repayment that I understand that he wishes to make.

Diversification

3. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had on the establishment of an arms diversification programme.

4. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received regarding the establishment of a defence diversification agency.

Mr. Aitken: We exchange views with industry on a wide range of matters, and we participate in the Department of Trade and Industry's regional seminars to help companies to adapt to changing market conditions. However, we have no plans to establish a defence diversification agency.

Mr. Banks: It would have been rather more courteous of the Minister to advise his questioners of the linking of questions 3 and 4.

That was a stunningly complacent reply, even from this politically paralysed Government. Why should defence workers have to pay the price of the peace dividend with their jobs? Does not the Minister recognise that arms conversion schemes are vital to both eastern and western Europe? They are vital to eastern Europe if we are to stop it from sliding into political and economic chaos; they are vital to the west—especially this country—if we are not to put defence workers on the dole. When will the Minister stop fighting the battles of yesterday, and start looking for the opportunities presented by tomorrow?

Mr. Aitken: It is the hon. Gentleman who is fighting the battles of yesterday, and they are battles that have always been lost. If he recollects the days of quangos such as the National Enterprise Board, he will realise that Government attempts to second-guess the elements to which industry should give priority—in connection with any sort of conversion or new policy—usually end with the Government helping to pick losers rather than winners.

Mr. Bill Michie: May I echo the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks)? If the Government cannot at least have the competence and courtesy to inform us when two questions are linked, there is not much hope of their running the country properly.

If the Government can act so swiftly to destroy 30,000 mining jobs, why can they not act equally swiftly to ensure that jobs are created in the engineering and defence industries to prevent further unemployment?

Mr. Aitken: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) did not receive prior notification of the linking of the two questions—although I hardly think that it is an error of quite the magnitude that they have suggested.

The Government are spending £9 billion a year on the equipment programme. By any standards, that figure makes the Ministry of Defence British industry's biggest customer. Ours is a strong and credible industrial strategy, and—despite hard times—many companies are still managing to make good products and good profits.

Mr. Batiste: Is my hon. Friend aware that the last thing that successful defence contractors want is to be told by the Government how to run their businesses? What they need is good information about the nature of the Government's long-term plans, and plenty of time in which to make any adjustments that may prove essential to the planning of their businesses. Will my hon. Friend commit himself and the Government to the maintaining of good communications with the defence contractors, to help them to make long-term plans?

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend has made a good point. We are renewing our efforts to establish a strong and open dialogue with industry. In recent weeks, conferences such as the chief of defence procurement's suppliers' conference and the Seafacts '92 conference have provided excellent information about advance intentions in regard to defence spending, and about the current trends. All the industrialists whom I have met have been very satisfied with the amount of information that is now being provided. It has enabled them to make new plans in connection with diversification and other subjects.

Mr. Burns: Is my hon. Friend aware that, in the past few months, there have been substantial job losses at the GEC—Marconi companies in Chelmsford, which rely heavily on defence contracts? May I have an assurance that, where it is feasible, the British Government will place their contracts with British companies to protect British jobs?

Mr. Aitken: I can already tell my hon. Friend that more than 90 per cent. of Britain's £9 billion equipment budget is spent with British companies. That is a good record. If we were to seek deliberately to exclude foreign companies from business, we should in turn be excluded from the foreign export markets in which we are so remarkably successful. A balance must be struck, but I share entirely the sentiment expressed by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Foulkes: All the Minister has done is to repeat what was said in June. Have the Government not learnt from the débâcle over coal that market forces are not very good at determining an industrial strategy? If the peace dividend is to result in new jobs and new wealth for this country instead of more and more unemployment, the Government need to involve the unions and industry in devising an industrial strategy to replace defence jobs. The best way to do that is to set up a defence diversification agency.

Mr. Aitken: All that the hon. Gentleman is doing is to repeat the same old themes that his party produced at the time of the groundnut scheme and of the National Enterprise Board. If he thinks that politicians can do a good job by telling companies such as GEC how to diversify, he needs to think again.

Defence Equipment

5. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many jobs in the United Kingdom are dependent on defence equipment expenditure.

Mr. Aitken: We estimate that about 350,000 jobs in the United Kingdom are dependent on defence equipment expenditure, including those dependent on defence sales overseas.

Mr. Martin: I know that my hon. Friend does not need to be reminded yet again by me of the importance of defence expenditure to Portsmouth, so can he assure me that he will continue to remind the public as well as the defence industry that any alternative policy is one of swingeing cuts in defence expenditure, such as was proposed and passed yet again at the Labour party conference this year, that the Liberals are little better and that that policy is very much against the defence interests of this country?

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend is right, as he represents a Portsmouth constituency, to remind us of the extraordinary resolutions passed at this year's Labour party conference. If those resolutions, which call for devastating defence cuts, were ever to be translated into political reality, they would mean the disappearance of at least a quarter of our armed forces and the redundancy of at least 100,000 workers in defence industries. Only this Government have a strong and credible policy for Britain's defences.

Ms. Rachel Squire: Is the Minister aware that the largest industrial complex in Scotland is Rosyth royal dockyard? Is he in particular aware that 4,200 direct jobs and many hundreds more indirect jobs depend upon the assurances that the Government and their Ministers have given since 1985? In particular, will he remind the present Chancellor of the Exchequer of what he said in 1985: that the Government's commitment to Rosyth was clear from the massive investment that they were making in the dockyard to carry out the Trident refit? Will the Minister therefore give Rosyth the assurance of a future and its work force the assurance of jobs for all of them?

Mr. Aitken: I am well aware of the concerns that the hon. Lady expresses. Both my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and I have visited Rosyth and Devonport in recent weeks. No decision has yet been taken. Any press speculation and reports that have appeared are wrong. We are considering the matter carefully and we shall reach and announce a decision in due course.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: My hon. Friend will be aware that the German Defence Minister came to this country not many weeks ago to discuss the future of the EFA programme. In the light of the startlingly good progress that has been made in reducing the cost of this worthwhile aircraft, can my hon. Friend tell us what the reaction of the German Defence Minister has been to that progress?

Mr. Aitken: I should be unwise to second guess the reactions of the German Defence Minister, but I have no doubt that he has carefully and thoughtfully noted the fact that the new cost estimates are exactly in line with the requests that he made for a 30 per cent. reduction in the cost of the aircraft. I take considerable encouragement from the results that have been produced.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that the expenditure to which he referred, which will generate 350,000 jobs and £9,000 million worth of expenditure, will have a considerable economic effect? Is he aware that more than 50 per cent. of that expenditure will be made in south-east England, but less than 2 per cent. in Wales? Is not that a hidden regional policy working against areas outside the south-east?

Mr. Aitken: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's breakdown of the figures. My impression, without being able to check the figures, is that a much more substantial percentage of British defence spending goes to key aircraft factories, particularly in the north-west of England. I do not think that the imbalance is anything like as bad as he suggests. There is no regional policy in defence spending. We place our contracts on the basis of value for money and obtaining the best products at the best prices.

Mr. Streeter: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the all-important contract for maintenance work on the Trident boat, to which he has referred, will be placed on the basis of what is best for national security, cost effectiveness and value for money, and that, accordingly, it will be awarded to Devonport Management Ltd., on whose future many thousands of jobs in Plymouth depend?

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend is a forceful advocate of Devonport, just as the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms. Squire) is a forceful advocate of Rosyth. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I are ensuring that we take a fair and even-handed approach to the problem, which I hope will result in a fair and just decision.

Dr. David Clark: On jobs and defence, does the Minister appreciate that Labour believes that there are overwhelming strategic demands for the retention of the naval dockyards at both Rosyth and Devonport? Will he assure the House that no decision will be made to close either of the yards on narrow, short-term financial and ideological calculations?

Mr. Aitken: I can certainly give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that we shall take the broadest strategic view, although value for money is a strong and important consideration. I assure him that the decision will be a fair and carefully considered one.

National Employers Liaison Committee

6. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in the establishment of regional branches of the National Employers Liaison Committee; and what roles he perceives these as playing in the enhancement of the reserve forces.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): Contact at local level between employers and the reserve forces is via the 14 regional, territorial, auxiliary and volunteer reserve associations, each of which has its own committee to deal with employer support.

Those regional and local contacts provide valuable opportunities for employers to learn more about the reserve forces by attending briefings and by visiting reserve forces training and for their executives to take part in special weekend exercises known as executive stretch.

Mr. Brazier: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the NELC on the remarkable job that it has done, on a relatively small budget, in attracting employers' support for the reserve forces? Does he agree that there is considerable scope for the NELC to keep alive the interest of the business community in defence issues in these difficult and dangerous times?

Mr. Hamilton: I acknowledge my hon. Friend's comments. We value our links with the NELC highly, and it is currently involved in discussions on the mix of the regular-reserve forces. I certainly support that, and agree that, as we may become more dependent on reserves, links with the NELC are very valuable indeed.

Army Manning and Record Offices

7. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has to conduct a comparison of the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the services provided by the Army's manning and record offices and regimental pay offices in York, and of other Army manning and record offices and regimental pay offices, before he decides about the siting of any integrated Army personnel centre outside London.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A study is currently examining the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of establishing an integrated Army personnel centre outside London. That would involve the collocation of the adjutant general and military secretary's headquarters and their staff, with all the manning and record offices and regimental pay offices. The study is looking at the operation as a whole and does not entail a comparison of the relative efficiency of existing offices.

Mr. Bayley: When the Minister takes his decision, will he give due weight to the fact that already this year it has been announced that 1,200 Ministry of Defence civilian jobs in Harrogate will go, while 250 civilian jobs at the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers' workshop at Strensall have also gone? The losses come on top of a reduction from 9,500 to 5,500 in the number of Ministry of Defence civilian jobs in Yorkshire in the past decade.

Does the Minister accept that a decision to lose further civilian jobs at York will be met by anger and disbelief in a city with a proud military tradition and in a county that has contributed so much to the military over the centuries?

Mr. Hamilton: I can tell the hon. Gentleman that we are studying proposals to collocate all the offices in one place. We are thinking in terms of about 1,500 employees in 200,000 sq. ft. of office space. We are considering a number of locations, including York. We have the advantage that if we locate the new office in a place where we already have an office, we shall have a core of workers who will help to establish the new, much bigger collocated offices. No decisions have yet been taken and we shall consider all locations around the country.

Mr. John Greenway: The closures of the Harrogate and Strensall Ministry of Defence facilities have been greeted with dismay. Many people who have served the Ministry of Defence and the armed forces well over many years are pinning their hopes on the relocation of the integrated personnel centre to the York area. If York is good enough as a centre for the Department for Education, for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and for many other commercial firms, it should be good enough for the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Hamilton: I hope that I have already made it clear to my hon. Friend that there is no prejudice against York. We are considering a number of other locations as well, as is only fair.

Mr. Loyden: What criteria does the Minister use when he makes such decisions? Does he take into account the level of unemployment in the area and does he give the necessary information to enable the trade unions to make an objective judgment about whether the Ministry is right or wrong?

Mr. Hamilton: The basic criterion we adopt is that of value for money. Of course, we taken into account the local conditions of unemployment, because that improves our chances of recruiting people locally to man the offices. There are many different considerations in the process. Once we come to a proposal, we put it to the trade unions. There is always a consultation period during which the trade unions can put forward their ideas about how they see us going forward.

Cambodia

8. **Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will report on progress made by United Kingdom forces in the United Nations peacekeeping operation in Cambodia.

Mr. Rifkind: As part of the United Nations transitional authority in Cambodia, the United Kingdom has provided 38 military observers, 13 mine clearance training experts and 70 Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel to act as naval monitors. They are making a significant and high-quality contribution, in difficult and demanding circumstances, towards the success of the United Nations operation in Cambodia.

Mr. Banks: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that this is a further and very welcome example of the commitment of the United Nations throughout the world to achieving a major peacekeeping role?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, my hon. Friend is correct. In 1991, there were only 11,500 United Nations troops deployed in peacekeeping operations. Today, there are more than 51,000. The United Kingdom and many other countries are performing a far more enhanced role in contributing towards helping to deal with countries with significant problems of instability or internal strife.

Ex-Service Men (Housing)

9. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received regarding housing needs for redundant service men.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of representations regarding the housing needs of redundant service personnel.

Mr. Paice: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many local authorities, including South Cambridgeshire district council, do not believe that having been resident in married quarters in a district is sufficient contact with the area for the people concerned to be accepted on to the housing waiting list? As a result, when service men are being made redundant from bases in my constituency, they find themselves with nowhere to go. Will my right hon. Friend look again at the housing position, especially bearing in mind the fact that many of the bases have many vacant quarters on them, and find a way forward so we can ensure that service men who are being made redundant, many of whom have served in the Gulf, are not left homeless without anywhere to go?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, although I hope that the situation is not as bad as my hon. Friend suggests. We are doing all that we can to make available such married quarters as we have to service men who are due to be made redundant, bearing in mind the fact that we always try to organise matters so that service men who are to be made redundant spend their last six months in the United Kingdom. We are using our married quarters for that purpose.

Mr. Eric Clarke: Is the Minister aware that, compared with the figure for the United Kingdom as a whole, a very large proportion of the Scottish population is involved in the armed forces, and that the problem of demobbed service men is therefore a serious one? My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) and I had a meeting with representatives of the CO Scottish Command at Glencorse barracks in my constituency, who proposed the formation of an organisation that could be funded by the Government to buy houses and take over Ministry of defence properties to provide rented accommodation for service men which they could eventually purchase. That could be a way forward. As those representatives said to us, the present demand for houses is only the tip of the iceberg.

Mr. Hamilton: We already make married quarters available for service men to buy at discounted prices. We are also making it possible for service men to part-purchase private properties and pay rent on the remainder. We are also reaching deals with housing associations, and are negotiating the transfer to housing associations of some 1,100 married quarters. We would keep a number of the allocations of those premises for ex-service men or service men who were about to leave. We have addressed the problem, and a lot of effort is being put into it.

Mr. Cormack: Does my right hon. Friend realise that he could solve the problem at a stroke if he would do the decent thing as regards the Staffordshire regiment, and have regard to the needs of the infantry? If he would think again about reprieving the Staffordshires and the Cheshires, we would not have so many redundant service men.

Mr. Hamilton: I do not quite follow my hon. Friend's logic when he says that if we did not amalgamate the Staffordshire and Cheshire regiments, we would have no redundancy problems. The fact is that we have made decisions about the amalgamations and there is no reason to believe that they will not go ahead.

Mr. Martlew: On 28 April the Minister gave the House an assurance that ex-personnel returning from Germany would be given accommodation for themselves and their families. Does that promise still stand, and is the Minister aware that many ex-service men will be unable to buy their own homes because they will come straight out of the armed forces on to the dole queue? What is needed is low-cost rental housing. What does the Minister propose to do to tackle that problem?

Mr. Hamilton: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on the occasion of his first contribution on defence matters from the Opposition Front Bench. I am sure that we shall be hearing from him in the future.

Let me go back over what I have said. It is not true that service men cannot purchase their own houses. Many can do so, because the serious amounts of redundancy money that they receive can go some way towards enabling them to purchase their own homes. In addition, the deals that we are doing with housing associations will make it possible for people to rent premises through those associations when they leave the services. We will keep a number of the allocations available.

Mr. Butcher: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best way of solving the problem of housing redundant soldiers is to make fewer soldiers redundant, and that, given that the forces of reaction are gathering pace in Russia and that southern and south-eastern Europe are reverting to tribalism, this is not the time to pursue "Options for Change" with the vigour with which it has been pursued so far?

Mr. Hamilton: I hope that my hon. Friend will agree with me that one reason for our having large forces was that we were opposed by the massed forces of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw pact, both of which have now disintegrated. Given that the main strength opposing us had to some degree disappeared and had certainly been ameliorated, it was only right that we should look again at the level of defence expenditure that we were incurring.

Nuclear Weapons (Russia)

10. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with President Yeltsin regarding the dismantling of nuclear weapons in Russia and neighbouring states.

Mr. Rifkind: Following discussions between my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and President Yeltsin in January, we are proceeding with our plans to provide 20 nuclear weapons transport vehicles and 250 nuclear weapon containers to allow the Russian Government safely and securely to accelerate their dismantling of surplus nuclear warheads. Progress on this assistance will be reviewed during President Yeltsin's visit to the United Kingdom in November.

Mr. McFall: With Russia sliding into chaos, the need to control the 10,000 ballistic missiles on its soil is even more urgent. Given that the present rate of dismantling Russian weapons means that that will take 15 years, how many of the promised nuclear warhead containers have been constructed and how many have been delivered? Does the Secretary of State agree that unless we provide generous financial and technical assistance, we will undermine President Yeltsin in the same way that we undermined President Gorbachev? Is not a Marshall plan preferable to martial law?

Mr. Rifkind: All the containers are under construction and delivery will take place as soon as that is physically possible. The programme that we have already initiated is worth £30 million in that one area alone. That shows the seriousness with which we are seeking to assist President Yeltsin in the very important work that he is doing.

Mr. Rupert Allason: The Government's assistance to President Yeltsin in the dismantling of nuclear weapons must be welcomed and encouraged. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there is considerable anxiety nearer home about the future of nuclear submarines which are unused and in moth balls? Can he give the House any assurance about what will happen to those nuclear plants in the near future?

Mr. Rifkind: We have made an assessment of the number of conventional and nuclear submarines that the country requires. Obviously, some decisions still have to be taken with regard to the decommissioning of nuclear submarines in the longer term. That is also dependent on wider decisions which the Government are addressing at the moment.

Dr. Reid: Can the Secretary of State explain in what way he thinks that he is helping Russia's nuclear de-escalation or the political position of Boris Yeltsin when Britain is escalating its nuclear capacity in strategic ballistic missiles by 250 per cent. and at the same time absolutely refusing to respond to Boris Yeltsin's offer of a nuclear moratorium? Does he not realise that that undermines the process of nuclear de-escalation inside Russia and that it strengthens the forces of reaction in that country? Does he not also realise that unless he is prepared to show sufficient support and goodwill to the reform process in Russia, the sands of time for democracy in that country will run out all the more quickly?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman shows a total inability to understand the nuclear question. He is obviously not aware that even in 10 years' time, when Russia will have completed the process of reducing its strategic nuclear warheads, it will still possess more than 3,000 strategic nuclear warheads and that will be six times as many as the United Kingdom will have when Trident is deployed.

Mr. Robert Banks: My right hon. and learned Friend will know the difficulties with dismantling nuclear weapons. Is he aware of the discussions that took place between members of the Russian Government and members of the—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Ministers cannot hear questions being put to them for all the noise in the House. Will the House come to order?

Mr. Banks: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the discussions that took place between members of the North Atlantic Assembly and representatives of the Russian Government and other eastern European Governments when it was suggested that a dismantling plant should be set up in Russia to be run and administered jointly between Russia, the United States and possibly ourselves? Will he look into that suggestion?

Mr. Rifkind: It is totally desirable to do what we can to assist Russia and its neighbours further in the process that they have implemented. It is encouraging that already all tactical nuclear weapons have been withdrawn from the other Republics of the Commonwealth of Independent States into Russia. We will certainly look constructively at any proposals dealing with the dismantling of existing nuclear weapons.

Air-to-Surface Missile

11. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the future of the tactical air-to-surface missile.

Mr. Rifkind: The position remains unchanged: we are continuing to consider a range of options for Britain's future sub-strategic nuclear capability.

Mr. Bennett: Given that the tactical air-to-surface missile could cost more than £3 billion, given the very welcome American moratorium on nuclear tests which will make development of the warhead difficult, and given that the Germans are unlikely to allow it on their soil, would not it be better to abandon the programme now, use some of the money to make sure that we have sufficient conventional troops to meet the Government's increasing commitments and some of the money on the diversification of the defence industry?

Mr. Rifkind: The TASM is only one of the options that we are considering in order to continue with Britain's sub-strategic nuclear capability. The hon. Gentleman should realise that, in terms of our national interests and our commitment to the NATO alliance, the doctrine of flexible response requires there to be a sub-strategic capability if deterrence is to achieve its full responsibility.

Mr. Mans: Bearing in mind the experience of Tornado aircraft in the Gulf, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that if that aircraft is to remain viable into the new century it will need a stand-off weapon, or it will be obsolete?

Mr. Rifkind: There are certainly plans to consider the upgrading of Tornado. The precise question whether TASM is the answer to that requirement is being actively considered at the moment. There are a number of ways in which the United Kingdom's sub-strategic requirements can be met. It is desirable to deal with those in a full and comprehensive manner. We would expect to come to a decision some time early in the new year.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 27 October.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Watson: As the Prime Minister bobbles about helplessly in a sea of chaos, has he noticed the latest damning evidence of economic decline in today's Confederation of British Industry review, yet one of last week's U-turns—just one of them—promised economic growth? Before he finally slips beneath the surface, will the Prime Minister tell us what, if anything, he will do to prevent recession from turning into slump?

The Prime Minister: In the time that he spent preparing that question, the hon. Gentleman clearly did not read all of the CBI quarterly survey. If he had done, he would have seen output expectations up on September, export optimism up on July, the domestic prices balance at an all-time low and, for the first time ever, the balance of firms reporting unit costs actually being reduced. As to improving economic circumstances, the hon. Gentleman should note what has been done. Interest rates have been cut 11 times in two years. They are the lowest interest rates in Europe, and British firms also face the lowest corporate tax rates in Europe.

Mr. William Powell: My right hon. Friend will be aware of how welcome the declaration of the London summit on the conference on Yugoslavia was in relation to the war crimes that are taking place in Yugoslavia and also the subsequent action taking place at the United Nations. Unfortunately, of course, there is no permanent machinery for trying war crimes, although the General Assembly of the United Nations has been discussing such permanent machinery. Will my right hon. Friend encourage his colleagues in the Government to take a more constructive approach towards establishing such permanent machinery?

The Prime Minister: I am certainly content to give my hon. Friend that assurance. This was a matter that was raised at the London summit on Yugoslavia some time ago, and as a result of that, the whole matter is being examined in the United Nations.

Mr. John Smith: Could the Prime Minister explain how he takes comfort from a CBI survey which predicts that jobs will be down, output will be down, orders will be down, investment will be down and confidence will be down? Will he answer the question that was put by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson)? What action will he take to stop a slump?

The Prime Minister: For the second successive Question Time, the right hon. and learned Gentleman has failed to listen to an answer already given. If he had listened more carefully he would have heard what I said about output expectations, export optimism, the domestic prices balance and the balance of firms reporting unit costs actually falling. He would also know that manufacturing output has risen in each of the first two quarters, that car production was up sharply in September, and that retail sales have been up in both the second and third quarters.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister not understand that the complacency of that answer will shock the public? Does he not realise that the British public are now sick and tired of failed economic policies as well as bogus economic promises of recovery which are never ever fulfilled?

The Prime Minister: Throughout the last three years the economic policy of the right hon. and learned Gentleman has been the same as ours, but 1 per cent. less off interest rates. Exactly the same. His commitment to the central part of our economic policy was total and frequently stated. He always wanted lower interest rates. Will he now bear it in mind that we have the lowest interest rates in the European Economic Community—lower than we have had for a long time—and that there is no economic policy whatever from the Opposition?

Sir James Kilfedder: May I, as one who voted against the Government in the crucial Division last week on the pit closures and was opposed by a Tory candidate in the general election, from my critical position of independence congratulate the Prime Minister on the brave determination that he has shown—history will commend him for it—to put the United Kingdom at the heart of Europe? Will he take the opportunity as often as possible to spell out in simple terms to the people of this country the consequences, particularly for jobs, if Britain is left on the sidelines of Europe?

The Prime Minister: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for what he has had to say. Let me say this on the European Community and the Government's policy. I believe that we have had three historic mistakes over the last 30 years in European policy. *[Interruption.]* The first was when we failed to join the Community at the outset. The second was when twice other countries refused to accept Britain into the European Community. They were mistakes of great damage, to not just this country but the whole of the European Community. Today, with the possibility of enlargement through the changing policies in Europe, we have more of a chance than ever we have had before of building a European Community in the image that we in this country wish to see. It would be folly at this stage to throw that away by isolating ourselves in the Community and by ending our influence. That is the way that the sort of Community we do not wish to see—not the sort of Community that my right hon. and hon. Friends and I have been fighting for for some years—comes about.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Prime Minister not realise that the terrible damage done to his credibility and that of his Government by his foolish manoeuvrings over the last week have undermined the case for Europe, for which there is a majority in the House, as well as delaying the chance of recovery, for which there is such desperate need in the nation?

The Prime Minister: What undermines the case for Europe is the manoeuvrings of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) as well as the manoeuvrings of the right hon. Gentleman himself.

Mr. Roger Evans: Can my right hon. Friend give an assurance to the House that legislation will be introduced at an early date to strengthen the law against the curse of new-age travellers?

The Prime Minister: There seems to be some competition for legislation to be introduced in the House. We are examining the particular difficulties created by new-age travellers, and I hope that at the end of that examination we will be able to produce legislation to protect those who suffer from their activities.

Q2. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 27 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Illsley: The Prime Minister will recall that last Wednesday members of his Government said that there would be a meaningful, genuine, statutory 90-day review of the 10 collieries earmarked for closure. Bearing in mind the fact that there is no such thing as a statutory 90-day review, and that most of those collieries are now closed, does the Prime Minister accept that the House was apparently misled?

The Prime Minister: I shall reiterate to the hon. Gentleman what I said myself on the subject of the 10 pits. I made it perfectly clear then that the 10 pits that have no economic future will go through the full statutory review procedure. I made it equally clear that the Government would co-operate with the inquiry by the Trade and Industry Select Committee and that the President of the Board of Trade will give evidence if that is required.

Mr. Nicholls: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that he will never allow the EC to impose on us by the back door the social chapter that the Labour party would impose on us by the front door? Will he also confirm that he will fight for British interests and jobs in Euope, as he has always done?

The Prime Minister: I can most certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance. Before I went to the negotiations on the Maastricht treaty I indicated to the House that I would not come back having accepted a single currency being imposed on this House, and equally, that I would not accept the social chapter. I honoured both of those commitments and I propose to keep to them.

Q3. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 27 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Barnes: A sales manager of British Coal, Alan Aitken, has told customers that supplies will be supplemented by imports during the period of the pit closures. This is a disgrace. How much will be added to these imports by the agreement that the Prime Minister made with the Colombian authorities about the importation from that country of coal that is produced with the help of child labour?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is clearly reading the wrong articles, for what he has had to say is rubbish. I made no offer to stop British Coal's anti-dumping complaint. Nor did I in any way reach the sort of agreement that the hon. Gentleman suggests with the Colombian authorities—not at any stage. Since I spend a lot of my time, as the hon. Gentleman knows, seeking an agreement on GATT, it is hardly likely that I would support dumping.

Q4. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 27 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Knight: Does my right hon. Friend agree that not even the French farmers would benefit from a world trade war? Will he confirm that he will continue to pursue an early conclusion of the GATT round, which will be good for developing countries, good for Britain—including companies in my constituency of Erewash—and even good for France?

The Prime Minister: I can most certainly confirm that. The reality is that everybody would lose out from a trade war, including France and everybody who lives in France. In the last few days I have been in touch with the Americans and with leaders throughout the European Community to urge an early resumption of talks between the Community and the United States, both on a GATT agreement and on ending the dispute about oil seeds. I am glad to say that the two sides are in touch again and the United States is holding off from taking trade retaliation. We must seek an agreement both to end the dispute over oil seeds and a comprehensive agreement on the Uruguay round as speedily as possible. On the substantive point of my hon. Friend's question about benefits, it would produce £120 billion worth of extra world output were we to have a successful GATT outcome.

Mr. Cunliffe: Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that he may be out next week on 90 days' notice, without statutory review? Will he bear with me while I relate to him the humiliating experience, which is causing great distress, that miners at Parkside colliery suffered on Friday? They were told to report to the pit every day for 90 days but that they were forbidden to go down the mine. Will the Prime Minister condemn this unspeakable behaviour and have words about it with the chairman of British Coal?

The Prime Minister: I shall examine the case that the hon. Gentleman sets out and I shall see for myself what the facts are.

Q5. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 27 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend—*[Interruption.]*—to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) should not behave in that way.

Mr. Amess: Is my right hon. Friend aware that mortgage interest rates for first-time buyers are now at their lowest level for 25 years? Does he agree that that will have the effect of putting more money in people's pockets so that they can spend it on goods in the high street and thereby help our economic recovery? Does he further agree that that is very good news for home buyers throughout the country and particularly for my constituents in Basildon?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has the most famous constituents in the western world and I can confirm that the very substantial reductions in mortgage rates will help them a great deal. It will also make a significant difference to the amount of money available for high street purchases, though of course the central point is that each 1 per cent. off interest rates is worth £1 billion a year to industry, and that is vital for investment, for future prosperity and for jobs.

Dr. Kim Howells: Can the Prime Minister confirm that doubts about the future of the hugely important Al Yamamah defence deal, which the British Government have signed with the Saudis, increase day by day and parallel the decline in the influence of his predecessor, Baroness Thatcher? Will he confirm that interest in that deal increases as it looks as though his predecessor may be making a comeback, along with that grease-palming son of hers *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. *[Interruption.]* We want a question from the hon. Member.

Dr. Howells: That was my question, Madam Speaker.

The Prime Minister: I refute the hon. Gentleman's distasteful remarks about my noble Friend. As for the Al Yamamah contract, there is no doubt that the Saudi commitment to Al Yamamah remains as strong as it has been for many years. That has been stressed to the Secretary of State for Defence and directly to me by the king.

Child Care Inquiries (Orkney and Fife)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang) *rose —[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members leaving the Chamber please do so quietly so that we may get on with an important statement?

Mr. Lang: With permission, I shall make a statement about child care in Scotland. I have today published—

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Member is about to tell me that he cannot hear the Minister. I have already appealed for order. We can debate only within the framework of good order. I appeal for that.

Mr. Lang: I have today published as a Return to an Address of the House the report which Lord Clyde prepared of the inquiry that I asked him to undertake into the removal of nine children from South Ronaldsay to a place of safety on 27 February 1991. I have also published as a Return to an Address of the House Sheriff Brian Kearney's report on child care policies in Fife following the inquiry which my predecessor asked him to undertake. I am also placing in the Library later today letters that I am sending today to the chief executives of the two authorities concerned and also letters to the chief executives of all regional and islands councils about the action to be taken on the two reports.

These are two important reports which have major implications for child protection and for the management of child care policies.

Dealing first with the Orkney inquiry, I am grateful to Lord Clyde for completing such a full and clear report into circumstances which were both difficult and complicated. He has not only set out very clearly the facts of the handling of a difficult episode but has drawn helpful conclusions and made positive recommendations which have major implications for child care law and practice. I am also grateful to the expert assessors who supported Lord Clyde in carrying out his task, Miss Anne Black and Dr. Hugh Morton.

The report identified significant failings on the part of Orkney islands council social work department, the Northern Constabulary and the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, not only in the way in which the decision to remove the children was reached but also how it was implemented and how the interviews were carried out with the children. The House should be in no doubt that the report is justifiably critical of the way in which the affair was handled.

Lord Clyde goes beyond immediate criticisms, however, to make positive recommendations designed to prevent situations of the kind arising again in the future. At the same time, he recognises the way in which agencies —and, in particular, social workers—have to face very difficult decisions in carrying out their duty to protect children. In this case, in particular, he notes that all those involved acted in good faith.

I have examined the 194 recommendations of the report with care. Action is needed and I am anxious to see early progress. Some recommendations can be implemented without undue delay, while others require primary legislation or further consideration and consultation. A number fall directly to the Scottish Office for action, but others affect other agencies: local authorities, the police and the health service. I am minded to accept the great majority of the recommendations and to take them forward in consultation with the agencies involved as a matter of priority. Some recommendations will require further consideration, and my officials will be contacting the organisations concerned to follow those up.

I have it in mind to make changes broadly along the lines that Lord Clyde has recommended on emergency protection of children and their removal to a place of safety. Those would be implemented principally by primary legislation and I will include my detailed proposals for change in a White Paper on child care policy and law which I shall publish early next year. I am also minded to accept certain changes proposed for regulations, and revised regulations will be issued for consultation in the usual way. Those changes will be designed to increase the safeguards for children and parents involved in child protection investigations and procedures.

A considerable number of the changes recommended relate to central guidance. We are committed to revise the central Scottish Office guidance on "Effective Intervention", and this will be done in the light of Lord Clyde's recommendations. At the same time, we have established with the Association of Directors of Social Work a working party which will produce new practice guidance for social workers engaged in child protection. I shall ask the working party to embody Lord Clyde's recommendations in that guidance. One recommendation that I would particularly highlight, and which I endorse, is Lord Clyde's recommendation that removal of a child should be recognised as a course to be considered only where no alternative exists and the urgency of the risk requires it, and that caution must be exercised.

I have also established, with the Lord Advocate, a working party to draw up guidance on joint working and the interviewing of children. That involves the police, the Crown Office, social work and other expert interests. I shall direct them to Lord Clyde's recommendations as the basis for their work. I intend all that work to be carried out as a matter of urgency.

Training for child protection is identified as an area of major importance. This has already been recognised by the significant commitment to various initiatives, notably support of the development of courses at Dundee university and the introduction in 1992-93 of the new specific grant to help local authorities develop social work training. I propose immediately to increase substantially the amount available for specialist training for social workers in the islands this year and to give close attention to the need to improve training in the current public expenditure round.

The report provides an invaluable basis for moving ahead to improve child care. It not only analyses events within Orkney but draws conclusions and makes recommendations that should improve the way in which we afford protection to children in future. I also support what Lord Clyde says at the conclusion of his report that, at the end of the day, the welfare of the nine children involved should not be overlooked and every opportunity should be taken to overcome any effects of the inquiry and the incidents which prompted it. I am sure that the House would want to endorse those sentiments. I also endorse his plea for action to re-establish relationships between the Orkney islands council social work department and the local community. There will be an inspection next year in Orkney by the social work services inspectorate which I established earlier this year.

On the report of Sheriff Kearney's inquiry on child care policies in Fife, the inquiry was established because of issues which were brought to the attention of my predecessor about the child care policies pursued by Fife regional council. As a result of his inquiry, Sheriff Kearney has reached the conclusion that

> "very serious cause for concern exists as to the implementation of the Regional Council's Social Work Department's child care policy".

I accept that view. Sheriff Kearney makes a number of recommendations directed to Fife regional council to rectify those matters.

I also accept his view that the implementation of the recommendations of the report will not remove the deficiencies described by Sheriff Kearney until and unless the region and the director of social work are prepared to accept that those deficiencies exist. I have today written to the council asking it to let me have a report within eight weeks on how it proposes to implement the recommendations specifically addressed to it and what action it proposes to take on the issues of concern highlighted in the conclusions of the report. In particular, I have asked what action they are taking to improve working relationships within the child care system in Fife. My officials will meet regional council officials to discuss implementation and there will also be an inspection next year in Fife by the social work services inspectorate.

With regard to the general recommendations, I am minded to accept the great majority of the recommendations, subject in some cases to consultation, and I am writing today to a wide range of interests to draw some recommendations to their attention for immediate action. Other recommendations will be incorporated in guidance to be issued by me or in primary legislation in due course.

I am grateful to Sheriff Kearney and his social work assessor, Professor Mapstone, for the care that they have given to this complex remit.

I am very conscious of the difficult nature of the important task which confronts social workers, the police and other agencies in the whole area of child care—the dilemma that they face in deciding whether, when and how to intervene is often acute—but I am also conscious of the importance of public confidence in this work, which has such a major impact on the lives and wellbeing of children and their families. Above all there is the overriding obligation to ensure that in every action by the many bodies with responsibilities in this field, decisions are taken with care and the best interests and welfare of the children remain paramount at all times.

These detailed and substantial reports address very serious issues to which all concerned must respond. The action that I have announced today will be carried forward urgently by the Scottish Office in consultation with all the relevant agencies. It is my firm intention that it will result in improvements in procedures and in the quality of practice for the future.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I join the Secretary of State in expressing the gratitude of the House to Lord Clyde, whose professionalism, as well as that of his team, is enormously respected. We also express our gratitude to Sheriff Brian Kearney, who has produced a report that we shall consider carefully. Whatever view we may take of the recommendations, the reports clearly convey the anguish of the many people—children, parents, social workers, the police, and others—who have lived through these traumatic times.

All this inevitably invites the question: why did the inquiries take so long, and were they the best way to approach matters of such extreme sensitivity? The Fife inquiry was launched by the Scottish Office in March 1989 and was expected to take three months, but it was not delivered until June this year, by which time Fife regional council took the view that it had done everything possible to review its procedures in the interests of all concerned. Given the Secretary of State's comments, it is only fair that the House should hear the response of Fife regional council before we embark on an informed debate.

The Orkney inquiry was the second longest in Scotland's history. It was expensive, it was adversarial, it took 135 days, and it is said to have cost about £6 million. For reasons which are given by Lord Clyde, its remit was restricted to such an extent that even today we have no means of knowing the full facts. We know, however, that there was enormous heartache for children, parents, social workers, reporters, members of the children's panel, and others. Does the Secretary of State therefore agree that the reports invite more thorough debate than will be possible in the next half hour, and more detailed thought than is possible in newspaper headlines?

The right hon. Gentleman will agree that the two reports sometimes veer in different directions. For the sake of the children's safety and welfare, which must be the paramount consideration for us all, we need to examine carefully the circumstances in which children should be removed from their homes, when they should not be, and what are the best ways to cause the least possible stress to children who need our protection.

The Opposition welcome Lord Clyde's recommendations on emergency provision for children which would clarify an important aspect of the law as it stands. We also welcome his views in relation to removal of the child only when no alternative exists. The Secretary of State can expect our support for his recommendations on the need for primary and secondary legislation, if only because current legislation as summarised in the Scottish Office document "Effective Intervention" is clearly less than adequate. A study of Lord Clyde's report will reveal a genuine attempt to strike a balance between the need to ensure that the right of every child is paramount and the problem of having to take decisions on matters of such extreme delicacy.

The best way to show recognition of both reports is to consider the recommendations seriously. I therefore ask the Secretary of State whether he agrees that there is a need for improved training and that this is of the utmost importance. It is clear that these matters cannot be dealt with in the absence of proper resources and that the Secretary of State's response today on the specific issue of training falls short even of the recommendations contained in the report of Lord Justice Butler-Sloss. Perhaps that is a reflection of the discussions already taking place on public expenditure in Scotland.

Does the Secretary of State agree that it is equally clear that we need a system which properly protects children, properly guards parents' rights and properly provides guidelines which are clearly understood by professionals in this work in Orkney and elsewhere in the rest of Scotland?

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

When precisely may we expect the Secretary of State's review of child care legislation? When does he expect to re-examine the important role of children's hearings, and what thought has he given to the problems of voluntary organisations, and even individuals, who have exhausted their resources to give evidence to this type of inquiry?

There have been criticisms of some in the report, even though it is said that they acted in good faith. However, there can be little point in looking for scapegoats when clearly so much is at stake. Criticisms surely lie with us all, if only because we failed to recognise the deficiencies of the system in coping with these horrendous events. We failed to listen to children at their own pace. We failed to accept sufficiently that social workers and others are damned if they do and damned if they don't. We failed in the past; in the interests of our children, that is all the more reason for getting things right in future.

Mr. Lang: I begin by thanking the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) for what he said about the work of Lord Clyde and of Sheriff Kearney. These are two good reports which inform in an authoritative and detailed way our future consideration of this extremely important issue.

I understand the hon. Gentleman's feeling about the time taken, especially in producing the Fife report. I think that he will acknowledge that an immensely detailed report of almost 800 pages is one which needed careful consideration. It comes from a sheriff with a distinguished and authoritative record and it will repay the closest scrutiny.

The 135 comments and criticisms and 194 recommendations set out in the Orkney report summarise a report of 360 pages, which was compiled and delivered within one year. I think that Lord Clyde is to be congratulated on the efficient way in which he brought together all the strands of the immensely complex subject that he had to consider.

I agree that it is important to hear Fife regional council's response to criticisms of its social work department, and that it would be wrong to rush to judgment. I address those words to the press and other media in particular. Complex matters are involved, and it would be wrong to go on any kind of witch hunt or to over-simplify complicated, interrelated issues.

The hon. Gentleman gave a figure of £6 million as the cost of the Orkney inquiry. The cost to the Scottish Office so far is £2·25 million, though further expenses may yet have to be met. The taxpayer's contribution was confined to reasonable costs incurred by participants in the inquiry.

The removal of children from home is an aspect of great importance, and I urge the House to reflect carefully on Lord Clyde's comments and recommendations:

> "The timing of the removals was beyond serious criticism . . . Removal of a child must be recognised as a course to be considered when no alternative exists and the urgency of the risk requires it . . . The time for the removal of a child must depend on the whole circumstances of each particular case but the prime consideration must be the welfare of the child."

That aspect must be further carefully considered.

I welcome the hon. Gentleman's support for legislation, new guidance and the initiatives that we are preparing. He rightly emphasised the importance of training. There is a considerable commitment to training in terms of both effort and resources. In 1992, we introduced a specific grant for social work training to support £4 million of training expenditure by local authorities. That is additional to the £5 million that I spend directly, at my own hand, on social work training. Scottish Office grant was provided to enable the establishment of post-qualifying studies in child protection at Dundee university and it continues to provide financial support. In 1991 and 1992-93, an additional grant was made to Dundee to provide child protection training to islands authorities, and a further £40,000 is to be provided for islands child protection training this year. That important aspect deserves our continuing attention.

As to reviewing child care legislation—in that context, the hon. Gentleman mentioned children's hearings and the work of voluntary organisations—the White Paper that we plan to publish next spring will bring together a whole range of issues affecting child care, and will provide the basis on which there can be consultation, leading to subsequent legislation at an early opportunity.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of where criticism should be directed and where failure lay. Lord Clyde identified a large number of specific areas in which he discerned failure. It behoves the individuals and bodies in question to study his comments carefully and to give their considered reaction—I emphasise the word "considered" —so that the House and the country can go forward on an informed basis.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I seek the co-operation of the House. Right hon. and hon. Members will have noticed that the exchanges between Members on the Front Benches took longer than 20 minutes. I want to call as many Back Benchers as possible, but I ask for direct questions, and for the Secretary of State's co-operation in giving short answers.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware of the considerable concern felt in Scotland when these matters came into the public domain. It was right for the Government to commission a thorough investigation, although there may be some criticism of the vehicles used. However, there can be no dispute that we now have the facts and that the Government are introducing the necessary measures to right the wrongs. That should have the support of the whole House.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right. We must never lose sight of the importance which attaches to the circumstances of the child. There is always a danger of getting so caught up in procedures, regulations and guidance that we forget the overriding importance of protecting the interests of any affected child or children.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I hope that the House will allow me some indulgence, as the events concerned happened in my constituency. I shall restrict my comments to the Orkney inquiry; I hope that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) will catch your eye later, Madam Speaker, so that he can say something about Sheriff Kearney's report.

I join the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) in congratulating Lord Clyde on his report. At first sight it strikes me as thorough, and it certainly pulls no punches. I also congratulate him on the relative speed with which the report was produced, following the conclusion of the inquiry. For some time, a cloud of uncertainty and suspicion has hung over my constituency, and implementation of Lord Clyde's final recommendation—that we now start to improve the quality of relationships—cannot begin a moment too soon. We are very grateful to him.

I also thank the Secretary of State for the balanced terms of his statement. He has reminded us of the importance of remembering the social workers do a job on behalf of us all, and all of us—not least parliamentarians —have a duty to them to provide clear guidelines to enable them to continue that task. We should also remember that, ultimately, the interests of the children are paramount, not least those of the nine children involved in the Orkney case.

Can the Secretary of State give us some idea of which recommendations he intends to accept and which he is still considering? Although his announcement about the training of social workers in the islands is welcome, Lord Clyde's recommendations extend well beyond the position in Orkney. Training throughout Scotland is essential.

Is the Secretary of State in a position to tell us what he said in his letter to the chief executive of Orkney islands council? Does he recognise that the report does not clear anyone's name? Indeed, that was never part of its initial remit. I do not blame Lord Clyde, but Lord Clyde himself expressed concern about that point in the report. Will the Secretary of State consider, with the Law Officers, whether steps can now be taken to remove suspicion for good, and to clear the air?

It seems that, if Lord Clyde's recommendations had been followed, nine of my young constituents would not have suffered the trauma that they experienced in the spring of last year. In calling on the statutory and voluntary agencies to pay proper heed to the criticisms levelled against them, will the Secretary of State endorse my view that such criticisms should be viewed in the context of Lord Clyde's comments in paragraph 14.110 of the report? Lord Clyde states:

> "The purpose of this Inquiry has not been to find guilt or innocence or to distribute praise or blame but rather in recognising that things may have gone wrong, to endeavour to learn from past mistakes and to make suggestions as to how such mistakes may not be repeated in the future."

Perhaps, at the end of the day, some positive developments will emerge from what has been a very sorry episode.

Mr. Lang: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's opening remarks, and I agree with all the sentiments that he has expressed.

The hon. Gentleman asked me which of Lord Clyde's 194 recommendations we were minded to accept. I will try to help him, as I recognise his close constituency interest. We are minded to accept some 148 of the recommendations without qualification, and to accept a further 26 or so subject to consultation. We are willing to consider a further 20, but we make no commitment at this stage. It would be difficult to group the recommendations in a way that would make any clear sense to the hon. Gentleman, but I shall be happy to pursue the matter with him if he wishes. I should also be happy to send the hon. Gentleman a copy of the letter to Orkney islands council. I think that he would find that helpful. It is, however, difficult to characterise such a long and detailed letter.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of clearing the air, but he also recognised that that was no part of the remit of Lord Clyde's inquiry. Any question of guilt or innocence should be decided in a court of law. Lord Clyde uses the phrase "presumption of innocence", and I feel that we should found our approach on that phrase. The Crown investigations are not currently continuing.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I, too, congratulate Lord Clyde on producing such a short synopsis of an eight-month inquiry into matters ranging from the relevant but fatuous to the relevant and important.

The Secretary of State should examine the implications of the inquiry very carefully. It took eight months and cost 6 million quid; innumerable lawyers attended it, for the most spurious reasons, and evidence was called which was entirely irrelevant. The one thing that the inquiry was not entitled to decide was whether any, some or none of the children concerned were rightly or wrongly removed from the care of their parents. To have an inquiry at that cost, at that length, and with that number of lawyers, when the one question that the inquiry was about was not allowed to be discussed is absurd.

Mr. Lang: I am interested in what my hon. and learned Friend says. Since it comes from him, as a distinguished advocate, I have no doubt that his fellow members of the legal profession will note with interest what he has said. The form of the inquiry was a matter for Lord Clyde to decide in the case of Orkney, and for Sheriff Kearney in the case of Fife. It was important that they should have that discretion so as not to inhibit their search for the truth. I feel, however, that there must be a better way of conducting these affairs. It is a matter to which I am giving close attention, with a view to considering whether there may be a better, shorter and more effective way of proceeding with such matters, should the need arise in the future.

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): I warmly welcome the fact that a working party is to be established as the forerunner of a White Paper. If I may refer to the Fife inquiry, the Secretary of State knows that his predecessor, the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), said that the inquiry would take three months, but it has taken three years and seven months. There is huge disquiet among social workers, Fife regional council and others about the time taken to undertake the review.

May I also ask the Secretary of State about the costs involved in the inquiry and whether Fife regional council will have to pay part of the sum, which is estimated to be possibly £4 million? Finally, why was there no summary of the 800-page report, which was published today and which local Members were given the opportunity to see it only an hour before the statement was made? As the inquiry lasted for three years and seven months, one is also entitled to ask why there was no interim report and why no discussions were held between Fife regional council and the Scottish Office—if the Secretary of State is so concerned about the outcome of Sheriff Kearney's report.

Mr. Lang: I understand the hon. Gentleman's anxiety about the length of time taken. The inquiry took longer than I would have wished, and I suspect that it took longer than everyone on both sides of the House, and in Fife, would have wished. As I explained in answer to the last question, the conduct of an inquiry, once it is established, is a matter for the individual conducting the inquiry. A number of undertakings were given as to the final delivery

[Mr. Lang]

date, but they were not entirely met. The Fife report runs to nearly 800 pages. It is a detailed report which requires close study and I feel sure that it will inform the very important subject of child care considerations for some considerable time.

The hon. Gentleman referred to costs and who would be liable for them. I am still considering the position regarding costs. I estimate that the cost to the Scottish Office may be in excess of £800,000.

As for the publication of the report, it was published under the Parliamentary Papers Act 1840, which requires some constraint. That is normal in the case of all Government statements, since to make available advance copies would be regarded as a discourtesy to the House. That underlines the importance of considering the report carefully before rushing to judgment. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will encourage those with whom he has discussions on these matters to take that attitude.

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): I am sure that the whole House welcomes my right hon. Friend's announcement that he is to issue a White Paper in the new year. Will it involve a wide-ranging examination into child care law in its entirety, and will he therefore take full account of both the reports published today?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The White Paper will cover a broad range of child care issues. It will take account of both reports and also of the Finlayson report into the function of reporters, as well as a number of other working studies and reports that have been carried out in recent months, together with those which may be triggered by the announcement that I have made today.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Does the Secretary of State agree that the report has immense impact and is applicable throughout Scotland? Paragraph 14.3 says that the timing of the removals was beyond serious criticism. Paragraph 14.10 says that medical examinations should have been undertaken before the removals. Paragraphs 15.40 and 15.41 recommend that parents should be told immediately of suspicions and that proper examinations should be made before removals.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of a case in my constituency, in which people were arrested in a dawn raid and children removed after a so-called six-month investigation when neither the parents nor the children had been interviewed and no medical examinations had been made? Will the right hon. Gentleman state clearly that such dawn raids, which are clearly fishing expeditions, are to be deprecated and should cease? Does he appreciate that we have all felt revulsion at the allegations, we all believe that the interests of children are paramount, and we all understand the tremendous pressure on social workers, but in considering the paramountcy of children we should also consider the enormous damage that can be done to children by action being taken precipitately where allegations are found to be unproven? If investigations and action are taken too quickly, it could lead social workers later to draw back when they should go forward.

Mr. Lang: I understand the hon. Gentleman's points and recognise his close interest and experience in investigating such matters. I understand what he said about dawn raids and the anxiety that exists; indeed, I share it. He will recognise that Lord Clyde suggests that a child should be removed only when no alternative exists. It is most important to try to find alternatives, but implicit in the outcome of the report is the fact that there could be occasions of high risk or great emergency when it might be necessary for immediate action to be taken. For that reason, it would be dangerous to curtail or in any way to increase the constraints on the actions that are possible.

The then Minister of the State, Scottish Office, looked fully into the inquiry into Grampian children, and the present chief inspector of social work examined the facts and reported to my hon. Friend on the lessons that might be learned. Certain points were drawn to the attention of Grampian regional council, and in the light of that it was not considered necessary to hold any form of public inquiry. I know that the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) was informed of that at the time, but he is right to draw the link between the two because many of the recommendations and findings of the two reports that I have published today will have application for social work departments all over Scotland and beyond.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): Will my right hon. Friend take this further opportunity to re-emphasise that, with almost 200 recommendations, the last thing that we require in the House—or, much more importantly, outside—is hasty judgments and quick decisions? What is essential is time for measured and thoughtful reflection on this most emotive and sensitive subject.

Mr. Lang: I thank my hon. Friend. He will have noticed that I emphasised the urgency of proceeding in some areas. I regard eight weeks as an appropriate time within which to ask Fife regional council social work department to respond to the specific directions which apply to it. Where there is an opportunity to make immediate progress which can improve the operation, guidance and handling of these matters, we must take it. My hon. Friend is right, however—we must look at the broader issues at length and in depth before proceeding.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I am tempted to suggest to the Secretary of State that these formidable documents deal with matters so serious that we should have an early debate on them in the Scottish Grand Committee. If the primary concern is the welfare of children caught up in these dreadful events, why is it always the child and not the alleged perpetrator who is removed from the home? I am no lawyer, and Members will wince at the suggestion, but I hope that the working party will examine the alternative of removing the alleged perpetrator rather than the child from the home.

Mr. Lang: I am not sure about the practicality of that suggestion and I should like to reflect further on it. Importance attaches not only to the question of removal, but to taking the child to a place of safety. There are a number of considerations which must be thoroughly investigated, and Lord Clyde makes a number of recommendations in that regard.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it would be appropriate to have a debate on these matters at some stage. Whether that should be before or after the publication of the White Paper is a matter for consideration. I certainly agree that these matters should be debated.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I welcome the report, which is very useful for child care. Does my right hon. Friend accept that ritual abuse takes place throughout the United Kingdom and that paedophiles have found a way to get total control of a child's mind and body by devil worship and satanism? They put the fear of the devil into children so that they have total command over them. I hope the Secretary of State agrees that the only way——

Madam Speaker: Order. I know of the hon. Gentleman's interest in these matters, but we are putting questions on a specific report. I should be obliged if the hon. Gentleman would do that.

Mr. Dickens: Does the Secretary of State feel that, to save us from such reports in the future, if a child is interviewed on video the first interview after the allegations are made should be in comfortable surroundings, as the Piggott committee recommended? That might save all the heart searching and anguish for parents and children.

Mr. Lang: I am interested in what my hon. Friend says. I venture to suggest that matters are not quite so straightforward as he suggests. I urge him to consider carefully the number of detailed recommendations on interviewing made by Lord Clyde. My hon. Friend is right to identify that as an important area in which shortcomings were clearly found, and I agree that it is an area in which change is necessary.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Does the Secretary of State agree that it is a matter for considerable regret that application of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, which has been internationally regarded as a milestone in the treatment of children and their care, should be the subject of such controversy in its application within Fife region? The degree of divergence between the views of the head of the social work department and those of Sheriff Kearney is significant and considerable. In the light of that, will the Secretary of State assure us that careful consideration will be given to the question of what lessons are to be drawn from the report?

Having regard to the fact that the public interest must be served and that public confidence in the system must be seen to be established, will the Secretary of State tell us whether he intends to make public the recommendations in Sheriff Kearney's report with which he agrees and those with which he does not agree? His statement is a little oblique on that point, at least at present.

Mr. Lang: I am minded to accept all Sheriff Kearney's recommendations, subject to some further consultation on some of them, with the exception of one—I believe that it is No. 22—which applies to aggressive children and which I believe is too sweeping in its application.

I agree that it is unfortunate that it is thought appropriate to recommend amendments to the 1986 Act. Nevertheless, if amendment of the Act is considered appropriate, we must consider it so as to ensure that the Act as amended continues to fulfil its purpose.

I agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman on Sheriff Kearney's comments on Fife and on the need to restore confidence, and I hope that that was implicit in my statement. Two important points from Sheriff Kearney's report focus on those points. First, he says:

> "We believe we have demonstrated . . . that very serious cause for concern exists as to the implementation of the Regional Council's Social Work Department's child care policy."

In paragraph 27 of chapter XVI of part J, he says:

> "We do not, however, believe that the implementation of these recommendations will remove the deficiencies which we have detected in the implementation of the Region's Social Work policy by its Social Work Department until and unless the Region and the Director of Social Work are prepared to accept that the deficiencies which we have described exist."

That is the key to the restoration of confidence.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be an affront to the parents and children involved if our subsequent discussion of the report confined itself merely to general systems, training and resources, because gross errors of judgment were made which perpetrated a nightmare for those affected? Does the report help us to solve a mystery which was raised by investigative journalists at the time? They pointed out that, in the United States, there was a sudden interest among social workers in the link between satanic rituals and the abuse of children. Among some social work circles here, that interest seems to have crossed the Atlantic, yet there has subsequently been no proof whatever of any link between so-called satanic worship and child abuse. How do these things happen? *[Interruption.]* This is relevant to what happened to the children in Scotland——

Madam Speaker: Order. This is not a debate.

Mr. Butcher: —and it is also relevant to the sort of training that was given in the past.

Mr. Lang: I emphasise that it was not the purpose of the inquiries—in particular, the Orkney inquiry—to establish guilt or innocence. Lord Clyde referred to the presumption of innocence, and that is the basis on which we must proceed.

My hon. Friend referred to a nightmare. Certainly, it would be a nightmare for any of those children if they were subject to abuse of whatever type. There is also a nightmare that can be identified—the way in which their cases were handled during and after their removal from their homes. Those are matters which we can address and which Lord Clyde does, indeed, address. He makes a number of detailed and important recommendations, and there we can and must act as swiftly as is sensible to ensure that that avoidable nightmare does not recur.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): Does the Secretary of State agree that, every hour of the day, social workers throughout Scotland provide great care and show great concern for children in need, and that they are highly professional? It is against that background that the tragic events in Orkney must be seen. Does the Secretary of State further agree that there is a need to improve training to ensure that social workers enjoy the same professional status as other professional staff within local government? Finally, will the Secretary of State undertake to ensure that, when social work responsibilities are transferred to the new local authorities, those local authorities have the capacity to ensure that the responsibilities that we have placed on social workers in Scotland can be discharged?

Mr. Lang: In answer to the hon. Gentleman's last question, it is certainly our purpose to ensure that that is the case. I recognise that social workers have a difficult job; I hope that I acknowledged that in my statement, which recognised the dilemma and the anguish that they face in reaching decisions on occasion. As the hon. Gentleman clearly recognises, it is important that they should make their decisions on the basis of the best possible training and that there should be the best possible application of the right principles in judging a case. There should be proper interaction between different agencies. Decisions should be properly reached, formulated and recorded, and all aspects of the matter should be handled in a very professional way. That means more and better training, and that is what we have been seeking to achieve through the initiatives that we have taken in recent years and through the further initiatives that I have announced today.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): My right hon. Friend referred to the position in Scotland, but said that some of the recommendations would have a wider application. Will my right hon. Friend and his colleagues bear in mind the fact that in England and Wales there has been a sea change in emergency protection of children since the Children Act 1989 came into operation last year? It is most important that that should be recognised in considering the recommendations especially as, since the Children Act came into operation, there has been a substantial decrease in the number of children who have been removed under the emergency provisions.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend clearly recognises the importance of this subject as one which crosses frontiers. The formal recommendations in the reports apply to Scotland, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health takes a close interest in these matters, and her officials and mine are in close contact on all aspects. Just as we learned from Cleveland, and took a number of initiatives immediately after the inquiry, I am sure that my ministerial colleagues south of the border will be studying the reports closely.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I welcome the reports, which I think will engage the minds not only of hon. Members but of many individuals and agencies outwith the House. I seek an assurance that the Secretary of State will ensure that the recommendations that are to be accepted immediately are not only sent to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) but circulated to all hon. Members and to the regional authorities responsible for social work.

As the Secretary of State knows, I am very interested in training, as I was previously involved in it and was paid by the Scottish Office to do so. I therefore emphasise that while we obviously welcome any additional funding for the training of social workers, there must be a very careful assessment to ensure that there is practical training and not solely academic training. To ensure that the best principles of practice are engaged in reaching such criteria decisions, time should be given during the training process for as much practical field work as possible for the trainees.

Mr. Lang: On the hon. Lady's first point, about recommendations to be accepted, I will try to find a way of informing the House more widely on progress. The hon. Lady will recognise, however, that we are consulting on some of the recommendations and awaiting a reaction from the councils and social work departments involved. It may therefore be a few weeks before we can publish a clear and coherent list.

I acknowledge the importance of what the hon. Lady has said about training. Knowledge and practice in relation to child care have advanced considerably in recent years and are still advancing. It is very much our purpose to ensure that the quality of training improves and advances to take account of new information and understanding as that becomes apparent.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Can the Secretary of State assure me that a central element in the deliberations arising from the reports will be the question of burden of proof? I ask that because I believe that the public do not always understand that the burden of proof required in order to act to protect a child is, of necessity, much lower than the burden of proof required to prosecute one or more alleged abusers of children. Because that confusion exists in the public mind, it is often thought that, because the burden of proof required to protect a child is lower it somehow diminishes the necessity to protect children or belittles the social workers who act on that lower proof.

It is essential that we define that difference and ensure that it is propagated as widely as possible so that the public understand the difficulties under which social workers act, and that, when they act to protect children, there may not of necessity be a criminal prosecution against one or more individuals. Unless that is done, I am afraid that social workers will be caught once again between the devil and the deep blue sea and, in the long run, will be unable to win whether or not they take children into protection.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point. Our purpose in seeking to improve the quality of training and the interaction of the different bodies in their handling of such matters in future is to minimise the risk of a wrong decision being taken and to strengthen the possibility that the decisions taken in future will be well founded and right. That would narrow the difference that the hon. Gentleman discerns.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Does the Secretary of State agree that the very difficult decision for social workers of reconciling the rights of parents with the safety of children is made infinitely more difficult by the sensationalism of certain sections of the media, not just in Orkney but also in Ayrshire, where social workers were harassed by the media at their homes in the early hours of the morning? How does the Secretary of State intend to grasp that nettle?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. That was included in the terms of reference for Lord Clyde, and he has made a number of recommendations on that front. He also makes recommendations on the rights of parents, to which the hon. Gentleman referred. Very close consideration must be given to those rights to ensure that the minimum is done to cause difficulties in families in cases in which it subsequently transpires that there was total innocence.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): In our brief discussion today, we have been dealing with the avoidance of errors which have caused great distress to children and to innocent parents. Will the House send the message today to every child who is suffering abuse that the House is determined to ensure that that terrible crime will not be tolerated and that all the judiciary should understand that there is never any excuse for abusing children?

Mr. Lang: I absolutely agree with the hon. Lady and I am grateful to her.

Pit Closures

4.24 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

> British Coal's actions at the Taff Merthyr colliery, which are in breach of the assurances given by the President of the Board of Trade and the Secretary of State for Wales to the House on 21 October.

In the debate last Wednesday, two Cabinet Ministers, and indeed the Prime Minister at Question Time today, gave categoric assurances that no action would be taken to prejudice the outcome of the genuine consultations that should take place under the 90-day statutory procedure relating to the 10 pits. Taff Merthyr colliery was one of those pits. But last Friday, British Coal announced that it was stopping all coal production. Indeed, as men were receiving the news, lorryloads of shale started arriving at the colliery site with the sole purpose of filling in the shaft. Such an action makes a mockery of two Cabinet Ministers' assurances to the House.

Over the weekend, the National Union of Mineworkers and the local lodge commissioned a senior mining engineer to produce a report. It was completed yesterday afternoon, and I delivered that report to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry's office yesterday evening.

The report by that senior mining engineer states that, unless British Coal continues to produce coal, the one face of this pit, the roadways leading to it and the machinery will be speedily and fatally damaged. Thus, British Coal's decision not to produce any more coal again makes nonsense of the Minister's assurances to the House. The report demonstrates also that, if the colliery continued to coal and men continued to have jobs and worked, even during the 90-day period, it could make up to £3 million profit, instead of spending nearly £500,000 a week allowing men to remain idle.

Earlier today, I am glad to say, I received at least modest comfort from a message from the President of the Board of Trade's office that British Coal has now agreed not to send any more lorries of shale. But, as yet, it has not met the other fundamental requirement identified in the mining engineer's report—that we need to continue to produce coal at Taff Merthyr colliery in order that assurances by Ministers are upheld.

The pressure of parliamentary debates last week and the assurances that were obtained during those parliamentary debates led to the commitment to genuine consultation for those 10 pits. I therefore ask you, Madam Speaker, at least to allow a further debate so that we can expose British Coal's shabby, indecent, hasty actions to close Taff Merthyr prematurely.

Madam Speaker: I have listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) said. I have to give my decision, as he knows, without stating any reasons. I am afraid that I do not consider that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 and I therefore cannot submit the application to the House.

4.27 pm

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): The specific nature of this request for a debate arises from the virtual obliteration of any jobs for my constituents in what were once three thriving mining villages, Havercroft, Hiendley and Ryhill. I was notified last night by constituents that the management of Grimethorpe are setting up salvage teams to perform work which will essentially destroy the fabric of the pit, rendering resumption of coal mining there impossible. The men are also being told that, unless they take their compulsory voluntary redundancy this Friday, their redundancy pay will be reckoned from the 13th of this month. In other words, they will be paid at a considerably lower rate and will lose considerable sums should redundancies come about.

I have talked to the Minister for Energy about this matter, and he has promised to intervene personally with the management at Grimethorpe. But even so, unless urgent action is taken, the pit will be closed, against the wishes of the House and against the stated intention of the President of the Board of Trade.

On Monday, the salvage team will go down to dismantle machinery. It will be the death of a pit, in spite of the promise by the President of the Board of Trade in the House. Moreover, in spite of what the President said, that pit, in association with Houghton main colliery, made a profit of £223,000 last week. Scarcely any of that profit was made from the electricity supply industry. The factories and plants that receive coal from Grimethorpe have been put in an impossible position. They are compelled to contract to buy foreign coal, which is £1 a tonne dearer. How does that help the balance of payments, or for that matter inflation?

The President of the Board of Trade must come to the House urgently. He must join in debate, and put Grimethrope and the other nine pits back on the list with the 21. Otherwise, we shall know that the consequences for Grimethorpe colliery will be a foregone conclusion.

However, more important than the pit that will close are the three communities that will be devastated and the 500 families who face a bleak future—the 1,500 men, women and children whose Christmas sacks will come not from Father Christmas but from British Coal. I beg you, Madam Speaker, to let Parliament speak up for the three communities which urgently and importantly do not want to see almost half of their men on the dole, but would rather see them toil in dignity.

Madam Speaker: Yet again, I have listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) has said. As he knows, I must give a decision to the House without giving reasons. I do not consider that the matter that he raised is appropriate for discussions under standing order No. 20 and therefore I cannot submit his application to the House.

Points of Order

4.31 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I rise to ask for your assistance and guidance about a difficulty that has arisen, which involves both a Standing Committee and a Select Committee of the House. The difficulty has arisen inadvertently, but nevertheless it exists.

Tomorrow, European Standing Committee B is to consider a motion from the Government on a European Community document on cultural goods, and the Standing Committee is to be asked to endorse the Government's policy on that matter. Last Thursday, the National Heritage Select Committee decided to conduct a speedy inquiry into the matter. If the Standing Committee makes its decisions tomorrow, the inquiry by the Select Committee will be rendered otiose and the Standing Committee will not have available to it the report of the Select Committee. It is intended that the report will be completed and made available to the House speedily, bearing in mind that the Internal Market Council of the European Community is to consider the matter on 10 November.

There is a further difficulty in connection with the document. There are two European Community documents which, although they have been distributed to some members of the Standing Committee, are not available to all members of the Standing Committee. The documents have not been deposited and are therefore not available to members of the Select Committee or to the House in general. That being so, it seems to me and to several right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House that advantage will be gained if the Standing Committee can defer its consideration of the document for a few days, to enable the document to be made available to the House and to enable the Select Committee to deliver its report.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, South): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I wonder whether you could give me guidance. If it is not possible to defer consideration of the document, as the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) suggested, and if the meeting takes place, the motion is passed and the Select Committee then makes an adverse report, perhaps even producing new information, would it be in order under Standing Order No. 20 for such a matter to be raised to enable a Select Committee report to be considered? I do not ask you to rule about the merits of the argument, but would it be procedurally possible to ask, under Standing Order No. 20, for a debate to take place in the light of the decision that has been made, but clearly should not have been?

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Is it on the same point of order?

Dr. Godman: Yes, it is on the same matter. Speaking as a member of European Standing Committee B, I feel that my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has raised a valid objection to the meeting of my Committee going ahead tomorrow. We have in the past complained about the late circulation of documents to hon. Members. In this case, I am one of those who received his documents timeously, but nevertheless, I would not disagree with the request that the Committee be adjourned until next week or the week after.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I think that I have had enough points of order on this matter to enable me to deal with it. I understand the objections raised by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), but he knows as well as anyone in the House that Standing Committees have considerable autonomy. It is for the Chairman to decide to determine the business of the Committee and how it should be conducted, and when the Committee should issue reports.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would let me finish.

It is not for the Speaker to interfere in the work of Standing Committees, and there would be a great deal of objection if any Speaker did so. The hon. Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst) gave me a lot of supposition and hypotheses on which I cannot at this stage rule. I do not enter into what may happen if some eventuality takes place: the hon. Gentleman and the House would not expect me to do that.

Mr. Hardy: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am in no way challenging your ruling about the two Standing Order No. 20 applications, but will you consider a further aspect of the matter?

On Friday, the information that I received from the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers led me to telephone the office of the Minister for Energy to draw attention to the failure of British Coal to ensure that the assurances given in this House, and in the other place by the noble Lord Wakeham, were implemented. I was told that those in the office would come back to me, and I am still waiting.

I know that you will have looked, Madam Speaker, at the assurances given to right hon. and hon. Members of this House, but the assurances given by the noble Lord in the other place were rather more generous and helpful than those given here.

In view of that, if you have a further application for a debate of this type, will you take into account the inaction of the Department of Energy in providing the information that I was entitled to seek? Secondly, will you ensure that the assurances given by the noble Lord in the other place are properly taken into account in your decision on these matters?

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I understand that you had to refuse the individual applications from my hon. Friends the Members for Merthyr Tydfil (Mr. Rowlands) and for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) but if you put the two together, will you be able to consider that as a separate matter? If that strengthens the argument for a debate, I would be able to explain that the 4,500 mining jobs in my constituency that were lost in the 1980s have still not been replaced and that we have the highest level of unemployment in the country.

Madam Speaker: I am sure that hon. Members are not challenging my ruling. I look carefully at these matters before I come to the Chair.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I apologise for not having given you notice of this point of order, particularly as I am a member of the Chairmen's Panel. Could you tell me and the House whether you might consider, under the procedure for a breach of parliamentary privilege, a letter sent out by a senior management executive of British Coal to staff of British Coal, which said——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is a long-standing Member, and I will advise him carefully. I cannot consider any privilege questions across the Floor of the House. I am aware of what the hon. Member is saying. If he will write to me about it, I will consider the matter and deal with it right away.

Mr. Winterton: I am happy to accept, and thank you for, that ruling, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I call on you, as the defender of the rights of Back Benchers and as the final arbiter on the admissability of parliamentary questions, to rule on a point?

Yesterday, during question time, I received an answer from the Solicitor-General that had no connection with the question that I had asked. That was not unusual. Unique about it was the fact that the Solicitor-General said that there was no connection, and in reply to a supplementary question from me, he said:

> "That is the answer to the question that the hon. Gentleman should have asked".—[*Official Report*, 26 October 1992; Vol. 212, col. 770.]

That is an indication of the arrogance and petulance of Ministers. They are now determining the questions we should ask. That seems to represent an extension of the powers of the executive and a denial of the rights and privileges of Back Benchers.

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, as a persistent Back Bencher, will pursue that matter effectively.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I have listened carefully to your remarks responding to the requests concerning the two collieries in Wales and Yorkshire. I appreciate that you are not expected to reveal the reasons behind your rulings. Indeed, I have listened for the past 22 years to other occupants of the Chair saying precisely that. I do not suppose that we shall resolve that mystery today.

I fear that we are reaching a sorry pass when some of my hon. Friends are continually referring to the fact that various Ministers have made categoric statements about those 10 pits and we have reason to doubt the accuracy of those statements. We are not supposed to call Ministers liars or to say that they are deliberately misleading the House. Despite that, we are drawn to the conclusion that events are a lot like that.

I am glad to tell you, Madam Speaker, that there is a way out of the problem. The Government have scheduled for next Wednesday a debate on Maastricht, although they are as yet uncertain about the type of motion to table. My proposed solution would solve not only your difficulty but that of the Government, who should withdraw the

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

Maastricht debate and agree to our debating those 10 pits. That might enable us to save those pits and put the Ministers concerned on the line. They would then have to answer for what they have said in recent days. We might at the same time save several thousand miners' jobs.

I urge that negotiations take place immediately through the usual channels. The Government have got themselves into a big hole. The whole problem could be resolved in the way I have described.

Madam Speaker: I am always glad to have the understanding and help of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). I wish that he could solve all my problems so easily.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

CUSTOMS AND EXCISE

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (Amendment No. 8) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 2623) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

DANGEROUS DRUGS

That the draft Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990 (Modification) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

ARMS AND AMMUNITION

That the draft Firearms Acts (Amendment) Regulations 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Europe Agreement establishing an Association between the European Communities and their Member States and the Republic of Hungary) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Europe Agreement establishing an Association between the European Communities and their Member States and the Republic of Poland) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Question agreed to.

Obscene Publications (Amendment) Bill

4.44 pm

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the Obscene Publications Act 1959.

I raise a subject of considerable concern to hon. Members in all parts of the House and to millions of people throughout the country. The unprecedented national concern is vividly illustrated by a petition signed by over 350,000 people which I shall be formally presenting to the House later today on behalf of the National Viewers and Listeners Association.

The current obscenity laws are not working properly. The Secretary of State called them "unsatisfactory" and the Minister of State described them as "inadequate." The right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) and the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) and many others have called for action now to remove deficiencies in the law. I shall show why the Government must take that action. My Bill will set that process in train, requiring areas for reform to be identified.

The law in the United Kingdom on obscenity and pornography is a patchwork quilt of provisions. We have different statutes dealing, for example, with broadcasting, videos, films, the theatre, sex shops and child pornography. This patchwork quilt of provisions is overlaid with a blanket called the Obscene Publications Act 1959, which started life as a ten-minute rule Bill introduced by the then Roy Jenkins.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Our Woy?

Dr. Spink: Yes, Woy the Wadical.

That measure is designed as a catch-all, defining the content of material which can be held to be obscene. The police use the 1959 Act to control the most severe kinds of material such as videos, child pornography and films. For some of those, other statutes are already in place. But for other kinds of material, the 1959 Act is the only statute that can be used. For example, it is the only restriction on the sale of books and magazines.

So it is clear that the 1959 Act is the keystone in the legislative arch of our obscenity and pornography law. The problem is that not only is the arch shaky and incomplete, but as a keystone, it is fundamentally loose. The source of that weakness lies essentially with the discredited "tendency to deprave and corrupt" test. That test is fast becoming impossible to prove and the authorities are reluctant to prosecute cases involving even the most extreme material, such as de Sade's "Juliette." The Government readily acknowledge the problem, so it is not tenable for them not to take action. It is the job of a caring Government, however difficult the task, to protect society and set sound standards. It is not the job of a private Member.

Hon. Members may recall the evil and vicious murder of Rachel Nickell on Wimbledon common, and I am glad to see in his place supporting me the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox). The psychologists employed by the police investigating that murder believe that the man who carried out that brutal killing was addicted to reading pornography. It is clear that the Government must act.

Only this month we have seen the sad spectacle of Madonna, a confused and perverted woman, making millions by linking sex with violence in a way which normalises that link and so puts decent women at risk. Ten years ago that could not have happened, but society's standards are slipping year by year as familiarity with pornography erodes our contempt of it.

Valerie Howarth of the now sadly impoverished Childline, which receives thousands of calls, reports:

> "Many distressed children say they are shown pornography and are asked to perform similar acts."

It is fortuitious that I should be moving my Bill so soon after the statement on child abuse that was made to the House earlier. Tim Harding, director of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, says:

> "Pornography is used to entice other youngsters into child sex abuse."

That is irrefutable evidence of the link between child pornography and the sex abuse of children. Superintendent Hames, head of New Scotland Yard's obscene publications squad, has called for tougher laws to enable him to fight what he calls

> "a rising tide of child pornography."

He goes on:

> "The vast majority of murderers, serial rapists and child molesters indulge in pornography."

I want their oxygen of depraved violent pornography cut off, and I make no apology for the imagery that I use.

If more evidence is needed, we can examine the situation in Oklahoma city, which clamped down on pornography in 1984. Since then, the crime of rape against women has fallen by over 20 per cent., whereas in the rest of the state, the pornography laws having remained unchanged, the incidence of rape increased by 20 per cent. We must fight to protect society from evil monsters who purvey pornography for profit. We must join my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) and the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) in denouncing sick people who claim that the mutilation, torture and murder of children and women for sexual gratification can somehow be acceptable as art or literature. That is not freedom of expression. It is rubbish.

For those who think that I am faint hearted, may I quote my gallant and hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan), who said:

> "I spent about 15 years in the Army. I may have seen more pornography in barrack rooms than most hon. Members, and I can promise my hon. Friend that I have never seen anything in my life so depraved, disgusting and repulsive as this book."—[*Official Report*, 2 July 1992; Vol. 210, c. 1068.]

The book was de Sade's "Juliette", which remains legal in our shops today. The Director of Public Prosecutions said that he could not proceed against that book. I want hon. Members to join me today to give the DPP the tools to do the job. My hon. Friend the Member for Medway (Dame P. Fenner) told us of her "revulsion and horror" at the book which, disgracefully, is even available in prison libraries as recreational reading for perverts and convicted sex offenders. How daft and irresponsible can we get? The Home Office must act on that now.

Scotland Yard called for action because the law is unworkable. Let us be clear about the fact that policemen and women were not saying, "The police don't want to enforce this law—it's in a muddle so get rid of it." On the contrary, the policy must see and deal with the victims of sexual attacks that are depicted and described in pornography. Those police officers are saying, "Please, please give us a law that works. We want to tackle the problem and get rid of that evil."

The Bill would require the Government formally to review the operation of all the legislation in that area and would bring forward provisions for the Government to change the law. It is, therefore, a paving Bill—quite fashionable these days. It encourages the Government to suggest alternative routes for reform, perhaps in a Criminal Justice Bill, with a free vote for the House. I am sure that all parties would co-operate closely and scrutinise such legislation.

The forefeiture of pornographic items, which dropped from more than 1 million in the early 1980s to 800,000 in 1987, was down to only 5,000 in the first six months of 1992. That is a drop to only 1 per cent. of previous forfeiture achievements in just one decade. Standards are slipping. The Bill would reveal such statistics and enable the House to monitor the police's ability to enforce the law. It would allow the House to consider new types of pornography such as so-called "education sex videos", European Community satellite broadcasts like "Red Hot Dutch" and new computer-based pornography.

Mr. Skinner: Is that the Common Market?

Dr. Spink: Yes, it is the Common Market.

By granting permission to introduce the Bill, the House will be demonstrating our demand for a properly conducted review of the law. We shall be saying that the Government should give clear leadership on that issue of deep public concern, listen carefully to the views of relevant parties, and regulate, monitor and report on the operation of the Obscene Publications Act 1959.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill order to be brought in by Dr. Robert Spink, Mrs. Ann Winterton, Mr. Michael Alison, Mr. Michael Stephen, Rev. Martin Smyth, Mrs. Margaret Ewing, Mr. Mark Wolfson, Mr. Donald Anderson, Mr. Andrew Robathan, Dame Peggy Fenner, Mr. Win Griffiths, Ms. Liz Lynne, Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman.

OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS (AMENDMENT)

Dr. Robert Spink accordingly presented a Bill to amend the Obscene Publications Act 1959: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 4 December and to be printed. [Bill 70.]

Orders of the Day

Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (Allocation of Time)

4.55 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move,

That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill:—

Report and Third Reading

1.—(1) The remaining proceedings on consideration and Third Reading of the Bill shall be completed at this day's sitting.

(2) The proceedings on consideration shall be brought to a conclusion at Nine o'clock.

(3) The proceedings on Third Reading shall be brought to a conclusion at Ten o'clock.

(4) Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) shall not apply.

Dilatory Motions

2. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, proceedings on the Bill shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Order of proceedings

3.—(1) No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which proceedings on consideration of the Bill are taken, except by a member of the Government.

(2) The question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Conclusion of proceedings

4.—(1) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order and which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others).

(a) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question that the Schedule be added to the Bill);

(c) the Question that such of the amendments 14, 31, 55, 66 and 64 as remain be made to the Bill;

(d) the Question that all remaining amendments standing in the name of a member of the Government be made to the Bill;

(e) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded;

and on a Motion so made for a new Schedule, the Speaker shall put only the Question that the Schedule be added to the Bill.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(3) If at this day's sitting a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) stands over to Seven o'clock, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Supplemental orders

5.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion made in the House by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(2) If the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before the time at which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion under this Order, no notice shall be required of a Motion made at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

6. Nothing in this Order shall prevent any proceedings to which the Order applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by the Order.

Recommittal

7.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings at those stages respectively, for on or in consequence of, recommittal.

(2) No debate shall be permitted on any Motion to recommit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and the Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

I shall speak briefly, for one reason which the House will guess at if it studies closely the content of the timetable motion, and because the House will want to get on quickly with the discussion on the Bill, for which the motion provides.

It would be fair to say that the House has had a full opportunity to make itself familiar with the issues involved. The original Private Bill had its Second Reading in the other place as long ago as 23 February 1989. The Lord's Select Committee considered it for 13 sitting days as well as visiting Cardiff. Their Lordships gave the Bill a Third Reading on 12 July 1989. In the Commons, that Bill received a total of twenty-five and a half hours of debate. It was carried over at the end of the 1988-89 Session and given a Second Reading on 19 December 1989. It was carried over again at the end of the 1989-90 Session and, as opposed private business, was considered for sixteen and a half hours, including an all-night sitting. In addition, the Select Committee of this House considered the Bill for 27 sitting days, including three days of evidence-taking in Cardiff.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales made clear the Government's view that the Cardiff Bay barrage scheme will bring immense benefits to the local economy, and it is well known that it enjoys considerable support in Wales. Accordingly, when consideration of the Bill was adjourned, the Government brought forward the hybrid Bill that is presently before the House.

This Bill, which is the same for all practical purposes as the earlier Private Bill, has now had 14 days consideration by the Select Committee, including three days in Cardiff. In the House, it has had a total of twenty-one and a half hours debate. Committee stage took twelve and a half hours. Report stage was adjourned a week ago after five hours 20 minutes, when only the second group of amendments had been reached.

I set out all that in detail so that no one—in this House, in Cardiff or anywhere else—can be in any doubt that issues raised by the Bill have received the most thorough and detailed consideration. In the Government's view, the time has come to enable the House to reach a conclusion in an orderly way.

The timetable motion before the House therefore provides in paragraph 1 that the remaining stages of the Bill—Report and Third Reading—shall all be completed today, and that that will be achieved by bringing Report stage to an end at 9 pm, followed by Third Reading at 10 pm.

In paragraph 4, the motion contains the usual provisions for questions to be put when those time limits are reached at 9 pm and 10 pm. I draw attention to paragraph 4(c), which specifically ensures that amendments 14, 31, 55, 66 and 64—all of which the Government have made it clear they will accept—can be put as a single question at 9 pm if they have not already been decided by then.

I believe that, against the background of the lengthy consideration which the Bill and its predecessor have received, the arrangements in this timetable motion should be very much for the convenience of the House.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the Leader of the House come to a different viewpoint? As my hon. Friends who represent Welsh constituencies clearly believe that more time should be given to the Bill—I take their word that it is essential that that should be done—why do not the Government get themselves out of their difficulties by having a continued debate on the Bill next Wednesday? The Government would no doubt be united, however misplaced that unity would be. Bearing in mind how the Government are in total disarray and crisis over what will happen on 4 November, why not use that day to continue the debate on the Bill?

Mr. Newton: I think, Madam Deputy Speaker, that you might take it amiss if I were drawn into the discussion that the hon. Gentleman has initiated——

Mr. Winnick: I was only trying to be helpful.

Mr. Newton: I have observed the hon. Gentleman for many years in my various capacities, and I have learnt to take with some caution any claims from him of being helpful to the Government. I see no reason to abandon my caution today.

In my judgment, no one can pretend that the issues in and arising from the Bill have not been fully aired. The Bill and its predecessor have now had 62 hours of consideration on the Floor of the House and have been the subject of more than 40 sitting days of examination and evidence taking by the Select Committee. It is now right to make it possible for the House to complete these discussions and to make decisions. I commend the motion to the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before I call the next speaker, I must point out that we are debating the merits or otherwise of the timetable motion, and I hope that Members will not be drawn down the broad path to destruction by seeking to discuss the merits of the Bill itself.

5 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Despite the words of the Leader of the House, the House is rightly wary—indeed, downright suspicious—of Governments bearing guillotine motions. Today we are being asked to guillotine the rest of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill, to curtail further debate and to enforce a timetable on the remaining stages.

It always worries me when I hear that the Government have such intentions. A certain cynicism born of experience does creep in. The Government have, after all, employed the same device more than 50 times since coming to office in 1979. It would be fair to say that the device has most often been employed on matters of considerable national importance. A glance at the record suggests that the Government have guillotined through at least one crucial and often complicated piece of legislation almost every year since 1979.

In 1980, the Government guillotined a housing Bill, in 1981 a transport measure, in 1982 an employment Bill, in 1983 a telecommunications measure, in 1984 a Bill on the rates, in 1985 a local government measure, in 1986 a social security measure, in 1988 the poll tax, in 1989 water privatisation, in 1990 a Bill on community care and in 1991 a local government finance measure—not to mention several Bills last year as the tidying up for the election took place.

Even the most cursory glance at this list of measures that the Government have chosen to guillotine shows that curtailing parliamentary debate is not necessarily conducive to good government. Many of the issues on which debate was so summarily drawn to a close are precisely those on which, because they were not properly thrashed out or properly discussed, the policies have fallen apart, often with devastating consequences for the economy and the people of this country.

The list also exhibits a further worrying tendency. The reasons for which the Government have sought a guillotine have gradually and more blatantly evolved. There is a famous quotation by a constituency predecessor of mine, Sir William Harcourt, who claimed that he feared great constitutional measures would

"be pushed through in a fortnight",

and who said:

"all our safeguards are swept away".

Perhaps his fears are even more justified today than when he expressed them.

Many of the Bills which have been guillotined were of considerable importance, but the reason for their being guillotined has often given rise to much concern. The Leader of the House will recall as vividly as I do the guillotining of the Social Security Bill in 1986, when he and I were opposite numbers. The Bill was guillotined not because of undue delay or improper scrutiny—a properly timed and worked out programme for its scutiny was actually well under way. It was guillotined simply so that the Government could introduce extra chunks of the Bill—large sections of legislation of a highly controversial nature: the introduction of statutory maternity pay, for which little evidence or justification was offered, and of the industrial injuries scheme, with its devastating impact. Those measures were introduced after the guillotine had fallen; they had not been notified when the Bill had its Second Reading; they had not been open for debate; and by the operation of the guillotine, discussion of these issues in Committee was also circumscribed.

In this case, therefore, as in many of the other examples that I have adduced, the guillotine was introduced not to facilitate or to timetable parliamentary debate but to avoid the consequences of proper parliamentary scrutiny. Such avoidance has often had damaging results. One thinks of the poll tax Bill, with its net cost to the taxpayer of about £14 billion—it was guillotined through the House. If proper debate had been allowed, perhaps less damage would have been done to local government and the country's revenues, and perhaps fewer problems would have been created for the British people.

The Government failed to learn the lesson of the poll tax debacle. They even guillotined through the legislation that forms the basis of "son of poll tax", the council tax; and just as with its predecessor, problems with the council

[Mrs. Margaret Beckett]

tax are beginning to emerge. There are problems with the valuation that was drawn up, based as it was not only on a somewhat cursory examination but on a cursory examination based in turn on house prices in 1991—since when, as we all know, those prices have fallen in many parts of the country.

The number of guillotines and the pattern of their use make it clear that they are being used less and less to avoid filibustering and more and more for the convenience of the Government. Other issues highlight the fact that this may be the problem. A look at the parliamentary reference book shows that the expectation used to be that, once a guillotine had been brought in, a business committee would discuss the precise timing and manner of the business of the House. The assumption was that that would be the subject of discussion and agreement across the House. There seems to be an increasing tendency to avoid the necessity of consultation by the simple device of including in the guillotine motion the timing of the debates which would then ensue. It is clear that that timing is resulting in less and less chance to explore the issues in debate.

There is also an increasing tendency not only for the timing of the curtailment to be included in the motion—so there is no business committee or chance to discuss matters —but to take out of the overall time for debate the time spent discussing the guillotine motion itself. Overall, the freedom of manoeuvre that used to surround the guillotine system is being curtailed more and more sweepingly by the Government.

Today's guillotine is particularly unusual because of its timing, its relative abruptness and its circumstances, which are sufficiently odd for it to behove the House to be wary of the possible precedent being set. We are discussing a motion to guillotine a Bill that started life as a private Bill and, as the Lord President said, in that form was never brought to fruition in debate—primarily, as far as I can see, because the issues raised by the Bill were and remain issues of great local contention.

This is to some extent a matter for the people of Cardiff, but the implications go wider. Apparently unable to secure the passage of the Bill as a piece of private legislation, the Government chose to reintroduce it as a public Bill, part of their own programme. Now, as the Lord President said, because it affects private rights and interests, it has been defined as a hybrid Bill.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): Will my hon. Friend reflect on the fact that a commitment to the barrage was not included in the Conservative party's manifesto on which it fought the last election in Wales? On previous occasions, the Government have claimed that manifesto commitments now have a mandate and are therefore appropriate subjects of guillotines. I can assure the Secretary of State for Wales, who is advising the Leader of the House at this moment, that there was no mention of a barrage in the manifesto put to the people of Wales. Does not that invalidate the legitimacy of the guillotine motion?

Mrs. Beckett: That is an interesting point. It is yet another example of the arrogance of this Government. The election is still very recent, yet already, on a number of issues, including this one, steps have been taken that were not foreshadowed in the manifesto. The privatisation of Scottish water is another good example, and the closure of the coalfields was not mentioned by Conservative Members in their campaign or manifesto. This is just another example of how the Government keep their programmes secret when an election campaign heaves into view.

It is extraordinary and more than a little incompetent on the Government's part that, having failed to see a Bill through the House when it was a private measure, when they had a majority of 100, they apparently feel now that, even with a majority of 20, they cannot see the measure through as a public Bill and part of their programme without introducing a guillotine motion.

It is not even as if we were late in the Session, with the Government's legislative programme under serious pressure or in disarray. That is one of the most worrying aspects of what is being done today. We are not even at the end of October. In a normal parliamentary year, we would not even have had the state opening of Parliament by now. We have far more than a full parliamentary year ahead of us, yet at this stage, for the Government's convenience, they seek to introduce a guillotine motion. Surely the case cannot be sustained that it would be impossible to resolve the issues that surround the Bill if debate were to continue without a guillotine motion.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Government are tired of the Bill, that they are tired of all the agonised debate about whether its economic effects would be as its proponents hope or as its opponents fear. There has been debate about how damaging the Bill's environmental effects could be. The Government have set a significant precedent with the first extinction, as I understand it, of an entire site identified as one of special scientific interest.

The Government have tabled a guillotine motion not because that is the only way out for them but because they cannot be bothered with full parliamentary procedures even when there is plenty of time for them to be followed. They are showing a dangerous arrogance of which Parliament should be aware. That arrogance is not of theoretical significance only. This guillotine might set a direct precedent. I understand that it is estimated that 48 of the 130 estuaries in the United Kingdom are subject to some form of development plan. Some of the plans include proposals for marinas and others include barrages. No doubt each in their time will be, or would be, the subject of considerable local debate, as has the Bill. Such debate could be curtailed in future.

Moreover, the Lord President, when referring to the debates that have taken place on the Bill, talked primarily about its consideration when it was a private measure. We should today be regarding it solely as a public Bill. That is what should concern the House, and it is in its present form that the Government claim that there is a need for a guillotine.

A further precedent seems to be being set in terms of the time allowed for debate in Committee. On average, a Bill is considered in Committee for 80 to 100 hours before it is thought necessary to impose a guillotine. I understand that, as a public Bill, this measure has been considered in Committee for only twelve and a half hours. That, for a start, will considerably reduce the average time that a Bill is considered in Committee.

I understand that some of the matters raised in debates are unresolved as yet. My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) referred to some of these issues in the House only last week. There is the call for independent assessment of the environmental impact of the proposal and the legal implications of insufficient scrutiny. Technical studies of how to deal with the groundwater problem—a source of anxiety from the start—are not yet complete or available. There was the late delivery of an updated economic assessment of the impact of the scheme. All these matters have given my hon. Friends cause for concern. The economic arguments and the economic case for the scheme caused great anguish, given the background against which the state of the local economy must be judged.

Britain is in its third year of recession, the longest recession that we have had. Officially, unemployment is nearly 3 million. It is acknowledged even by the Department of Employment that the true level is over 4 million if those not receiving benefit though looking for work and those on Government schemes rather than in work are included. Our trade balance is deteriorating, and business failures and home repossessions are at record levels.

The picture is the same in Wales. In Wales alone, almost 4,500 actions for mortgage default were begun in the first half of the year. Over 1,800 businesses failed in the first nine months of the year, more than a third more than the failures last year, and almost 130,000 people are out of work, more than twice as many as in 1979 when the Government came to power. There is all that before the devastation that coalfield closures and others will bring. Small wonder that fear of unemployment is rife in many areas. Against that background, it is natural that anxiety that there should be proper scrutiny and secure development should run high.

What is certain is that the Bill has from the start been the subject of great local contention. It has aroused strong differences of view. It is equally clear that the danger of setting damaging precedents cannot be overlooked, especially when we are faced with a Government who are so blinkered and short-sighted in the policies that they devise and so arrogantly and casually incompetent in their execution. I fear that the Leader of the House has not convinced us, the Opposition, that we would be wise to risk the precedent that he invites us to set. That is why I shall be advising my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote against the motion.

5.14 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I shall make only a brief contribution to the debate. Its brevity will be entirely consistent with your strictures when it started, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I respect some of the opinions that have been expressed strongly by Labour Members, although it is right to say that they do not all agree about the barrage. Indeed, why should they necessarily agree on the issue, which in essence should not be a party political one? Within my party, there are disagreements in Wales on whether the barrage is overall a good thing or a bad thing. Many of us, such as myself, strongly support the activities and aspirations of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and other organisations.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Carlile: No. I wish to be brief.

We support the society and other organisations that are concerned with the environment. On the other hand, some of us believe that it is foolish to spit in the eye of important economic progress.

I have in mind an old adage—it is one of the first things that anyone who joins my part of the legal profession is told. They are the wise words of one of the great advocates of the past, who said to a pupil, "You are paid not for your doubts but for your opinions."

It is my view that guillotines are entirely inappropriate in many of the situations to which the shadow Leader of the House, the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), referred. We have been given several examples of politically contentious legislation that the Government drove through the House by introducing guillotine motions. In that way they sought to avoid important political debate, and that is illegitimate.

No one could sensibly say—it defies common sense to make the suggestion—that every issue relating to the Bill has not been fully debated. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that I believe every snail, slug and newt in Cardiff bay feels that it has been fairly represented by one, if not more than one, of my colleagues on the Labour Benches who represent seats in the Cardiff area. As a matter of principle, once an issue has been fully debated, as the barrage has over several years, we should come to a decision. It is common sense to decide upon it, and it is time to decide upon it. I shall be advising my colleagues to support the motion in the unusual circumstances of tonight's debate.

5.18 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I cannot regard the contribution of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) as a helpful one, but it told us something about the Liberal party.

Mr. Carlile: The hon. Gentleman is in favour of the barrage.

Mr. Michael: I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman will contain himself.

As I have said, his speech told us more about the Liberal party than about the Bill or the motion. There was disagreement between Liberals when there was more than one Welsh Liberal Member in the House. What we heard from the hon. and learned Gentleman sounded to me rather like the one remaining Welsh Liberal Member disagreeing with himself about the value of the Bill.

We can be clear that the hon. and learned Gentleman is just about 50 per cent. against the guillotine motion—well, perhaps he is 51 per cent. for it and 49 per cent. against it. We know that the Liberals will drive on to either side of the political road, or both sides, if they perceive an advantage to be gained in so doing. The hon. and learned Gentleman's contribution to the debate is typical because, in the Cardiff area—in Grangetown—local Liberals tried to capitalise by opposing the barrage. As a result, they were hammered in the local elections, as they deserved to be.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and I have argued in the interests of our constituents and the people of Cardiff—not of the slugs that apparently prompted the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery to take his principled stand and to lead his tattered army through the Lobby tonight.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): I am concerned about the reference to newts because I do not believe that there are any in Cardiff bay. I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman was not referring to ladies and gentlemen of an alcoholic persuasion who stop to rest at the pier head.

Mr. Michael: I am sure that the hon. and Learned Gentleman's concern for endangered species is merely fellow feeling on his part. The Liberals are pretty much an endangered species.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. One endangered species are hon. Members who do not stick to the point.

Mr. Michael: I stand abashed, Madam Deputy Speaker. I regret being led down that path by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells).

My opposition to the guillotine motion is partly prompted by my regret at missing the opportunities that would otherwise exist for Welsh Members of Parliament to gather to debate the Bill late into the night on many occasions. It has aroused great interest also among right hon. and hon. Members representing seats in other parts of the country.

The Government are not proposing a guillotine for the health of right hon. and hon. Members, or to protect my hon. Friends the Members for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) and for Cardiff, West from the threat of laryngitis, or because they want to give the Bill proper but speedy consideration.

The development area falls within my constituency, but the Bill's effects go wider. The Minister was right to say that the barrage enjoys considerable support across a wide area of Cardiff and south Wales, and has enjoyed support in the House from hon. Friends representing constituencies in Newport, Swansea, and other areas. Support for the Bill has also been demonstrated in elections. However, that is no reason to introduce a guillotine and to rush consideration of reasoned amendments tabled by my hon. Friends on the Front Bench. Allowing the axe to fall at 9 o'clock will not allow proper consideration of important amendments and must be resisted.

The Government's earlier mishandling of the Bill created an element of rush at this late stage. It was originally introduced as a private Bill, and I pay tribute to South Glamorgan county councillors for that. In the second stage, the Bill was introduced jointly by South Glamorgan county council and the development corporation. The action of South Glamorgan councillors in the first stage of investment—in putting money where their mouths were by building the new county hall at Atlantic wharf—demonstrated great bravery and a willingness to work through the processes of the House to achieve the desired end of a barrage Bill.

South Glamorgan had to produce a private Bill because of Welsh Office decisions, and many of the problems leading to tonight's guillotine were a consequence of that original mistake by the Welsh Office. The weaknesses of the private Bill system have been totally exposed. I hope that that will prove terminal for the procedure—at least in respect of contentious measures rather than any enjoying widespread agreement. The private Bill procedure is as unfair to the Bill's supporters as it is to its opponents.

The free discussion and lack of direction on both sides of the House at the private Bill stage engendered many problems, which haunted the hybrid Bill when it came before the House as a public measure.

Conservative Members have also failed to progress the Bill before now. The Leader of the House mentioned the series of occasions on which it has been debated, as if that were a failing on the part of the Opposition. The failure is that of the Government's business managers, who let down Welsh Office Ministers when they sought to battle on with the Bill. They must take a large share of the blame, rather than argue blatantly for a guillotine motion tonight.

The public Bill has been cursed by problems engendered by the private Bill. I am as keen as anyone to see the Bill on the statute book. The barrage will improve the environment, increase employment, and enhance the economy in an area that extends beyond my constituency. It will provide housing—particularly social housing—which will be of benefit to people and to communities in my constituency and beyond. Instead of expressing fury at our initiative in taking the debate to such lengths, Conservative Members should compliment us on the comradely fashion in which we have discussed the measure.

Among the positive amendments that should be properly debated tonight is amendment No. 13:

> "At least 8 weeks prior to the commencement of any works, the Development Corporation shall consult South Glamorgan County Council on the proposed pattern of traffic movements during the construction period, including the hours of operation. At least 6 weeks prior to the commencement of works the Development Corporation shall publish proposals, amended in the light of those consultations, for a 2 week period of public consultation."

There will be an element of disruption during the construction. We have seen that with the building of the new road in south Cardiff, which considerably inconvenienced my constituents in Butetown and Grangetown. The guillotine motion does not discriminate as to the time that can be spent on debating each group of amendments. That amendment should be seriously considered by Ministers and receive a proper response.

Another amendment, which the Government accept, will allow for local authority representation on the advisory committee and another provides for the development corporation to report properly on its actions to the advisory committee. Those limited but important issues should not go undebated because of the Government's desperation to go home early tonight. Even if a guillotine is needed—and I do not accept that—the motion goes over the top in so severely truncating debate. Another failing of the motion is that it gives no fixed time for debate on each group of amendments.

As we all know, unless the terms of a guillotine motion are careful and measured, ensuring at least some time for debate on each group of amendments, things become extremely messy. Moreover, an excessively truncated debate may lead to the Government's intentions being overlooked. Let me place on record my opposition to this ill-thought-out motion: the Leader of the House has let down his Ministers as well as the House.

5.30 pm

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): It is always a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael). He knows a great deal about this subject, and I share his concerns.

I agree, for instance, that there should be affordable housing in an area that contains the greatest concentration of deprived wards in Wales and, possibly, in the United Kingdom as a whole. Cardiff badly needs the proposed developments. I also feel that we need further time in which to debate whether the £150 million which is to be spent on the construction of the barrage will deliver value for money in terms of jobs.

Following the events of the past 10 days or so, that time is more valuable than ever. The urgency of the position is clear to those of us who live in the hinterland of Cardiff—the coalfield area. A shadow lies across the question of whether we shall receive value for the money that the Welsh Office is allocating to quangos. I have searched the text of the motion in vain for some indication of the value for money that has been provided by the sums spent so far on creating jobs in Wales. Given the nature of the motion, I fear that we are unlikely to extract a figure from the Secretary of State or the Under-Secretary.

We need to know, for example, whether a figure is attached to the creation and protection of jobs in Wales over the past three or four years. The minutes of evidence provided by the Public Accounts Committee for a report entitled "Creating and safeguarding jobs in Wales" suggests that the cost of creating or safeguarding a job is about £1,700. That is a very small amount. According to a Welsh Office report entitled "The Government's expenditure plans 1992-93 to 1994-95", the figure is about £3,500. We should bear that sum in mind when considering whether to allocate £150 million to a single large civil construction project.

I am not opposed to the allocation of such sums to projects like this, and I do not for a moment denounce the efforts of hon. Members on both sides of the House to push for a scheme that could create many jobs. I am simply arguing that this may not be the best way of spending a shrinking public-expenditure resource. I shall be interested to learn whether the Secretary of State has any news for us yet about whether the £150 million will be taken from the overall cake of public expenditure on Wales.

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): The proposals affect the economy of north Wales as well as that of south Wales. In the past 10 days, a moratorium and potential closure have been announced for the Point of Ayr colliery in my constituency: 500 mining jobs may be lost, as well as many more jobs connected with mining. Does not the guillotine motion deprive many of us of an opportunity to explore the possibility of unemployment in north Wales? The colliery closure will hit my constituents especially badly.

Dr. Howells: I thank my hon. Friend for that invaluable intervention. We have been given the excuse many times that the barrage will bring jobs to our constituents—for example, to my constituents in Taff-Ely and Pontypridd, from which many people travel to work in Cardiff. We have been told that we should be grateful for this development. The Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary, however, would be hard pressed to argue that it will benefit my hon. Friend's constituents by creating jobs. If we are serious—as I believe the Secretary of State has been on many occasions—in saying that we in Wales should be allowed more independence in deciding how sums allocated to us are spent, we must address ourselves to my hon. Friend's question.

Perhaps even more important is the involvement of a constitutional issue. In such a short debate, we may not be able to discuss how it can be decided whether a quango—in this instance, the Cardiff Bay development corporation, which the Welsh Office has appointed without consulting those likely to be affected, in the valley constituencies as well as in and around Cardiff—is doing a good job, and will spend its money well. How can we come back at the corporation and question its decisions? That is an important question, and the construction of the barrage lies at the heart of it.

Some of us are keen for the development to take place in our constituencies, but we do not want decisions to be made as they are in Cardiff. Often, it seems to be a case of "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" in the old boy network and what in Welsh we call the crachach. Such people appear to be members of almost every quango in Wales, and almost all of them live in castles around Usk and have double-barrelled names—although Lieutenant Colonel Inkin, a dynamic individual in many ways, is an exception to that last rule.

Many of us feel strongly that an issue of constitutional importance cannot be dealt with properly in the short time allocated to a guillotine motion. I hope that the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary can tell us whether we are to see the institutional changes that so many of us have demanded. Such changes would allow the people of Cardiff, and the people of Wales in general, to debate these matters much more coherently and comprehensively.

The quango that we are discussing has access to £33 million of public money this year alone. That is an enormous sum. I have talked to my constituents about what could be done with £33 million. We could, for example, revive the town centre of Pontypridd, which now contains 15 or 16 empty shops. Pontypridd is a market town, which has traditionally drawn people from the Rhondda, Cynon and Merthyr valleys to its famous market. Now it is dying on its feet for lack of vital investment.

I hope that the Secretary of State and his colleagues do not describe this demeaningly as the politics of envy. The people in my constituency will be very glad to see the developments. I hope that we shall benefit from them. However, when they cannot obtain £5 million to complete a road system that would get rid of the congestion that is such a black spot in Pontypridd, they then see that £150 million is granted for the building of a dam across a filthy river—filthy because no investment can be obtained to clean up the sewage works that lie upstream from Pontypridd. These are constitutional as well as financial issues which I hope will be discussed within the terms of the guillotine motion.

Many infrastructure jobs are desperately required in Cardiff, Newport and Swansea, as well as in the valleys of south Wales. We——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but it seems to me that he is now dealing with other matters. We should be considering the merits or otherwise of the guillotine motion that is before us.

Dr. Howells: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for that guidance. I am trying to point out that in terms of the guillotine motion there will not be sufficient time to discuss its important ramifications for all those interested in the scheme who live outside the barrage area. If the guillotine motion has any relevance, it is relevant to my constituency. It is a neighbouring constituency to Cardiff, through which the two rivers run that are to be, both literally and metaphorically, dammed.

[Dr. Howells]

Very many jobs need to be done in the capital city of Wales, as well as in our various constituencies. They include the repair and renewal of some of the worst housing stock throughout Europe. Many of my hon. Friends will want to draw attention to that fact. Many of us believe that if we are to benefit from the Cardiff bay barrage, if and when it is built, we must have a proper road and rail infrastructure to enable our constituents to travel to Cardiff to work. The A470 is an extremely dangerous road because of traffic congestion.

The rail network is in extreme danger because of the closure notices that have been served on the collieries. The rail network serves Cardiff bay directly. My constituents would think it remiss of me if I did not raise that issue and if I did not say that the guillotine means that there will not be sufficient time for my colleagues and me to express our great concern about whether we shall be able to enjoy whatever advantages may arise from the Cardiff bay barrage.

Mr. Michael: I support my hon. Friend's point. There is also the question of communications within the city of Cardiff and communications between the centre of Cardiff and the Cardiff bay barrage area. My hon. Friend made a telling point, not least because the present state of the railways, such as the Penarth to Cardiff railway link, is appalling. None of us can depend upon it when we wish to travel around the area.

Dr. Howells: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. That is precisely what I am talking about in terms of the guillotine motion. Without discussion of that issue, we shall discuss this great civil engineering project in the abstract. We are not placing it in context. Furthermore, we are not explaining to people why hon. Members are so angry about the fact that a quango that is answerable to nobody is allowed to allocate such huge sums of money to this project while the rest of us have to settle for the crumbs that fall off the edge of the resource table.

The question of what we do about cleaning up the two rivers that flow into the lake which is to be created by the barrage is of great importance in terms of the guillotine motion. It is impossible to discuss it in the short period of time available. We need answers from the Secretary of State for Wales and the Under-Secretary of State to the question of what they intend to do about forcing Welsh Water to get on with the job of cleaning up the sewage sites further upstream. I live right on the edge of one river. I am sick of seeing the filth that flows down it. The Secretary of State for Wales and the Under-Secretary of State have not provided a good answer in any of our debates to the question of how they intend to clean up those rivers, which would enable us to turn our town centres round again to face the rivers.

If we were given a fraction of the £150 million that has been allocated to the barrage scheme, the valleys could begin to do that. I know that the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary of State feel strongly about the issue, but I should like them to say what action they intend to take that would allow us to start doing that in the valleys.

Another question that is at the heart of the guillotine motion is, what is to happen when, and if, work on the project begins? That question must be discussed now; we shall be able to discuss it at no other time. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth drew attention to amendment No. 13. He knows as well as I do that we have not had a straight answer to the question of where the materials for this great project are to come from. Will they come from the limestone rim at the southern end of the coalfield that occupies such a large part of my constituency? That would lead to the expansion of quarrying in the area, coupled with dangerous lorry movements. It is not simply a question, as the amendment says, of discussing and negotiating with South Glamorgan county council. There must be negotiations with Mid Glamorgan county council.

The Conservative Benches are empty. Conservative Members are throbbing with indifference. Since they are always proclaiming their love for Wales, I should have loved to see some of our nationalist colleagues present, but not one of them is here. Apart from the occupants of the Treasury Bench, no Conservative Members and no nationalist Members are here. We never see our nationalist colleagues in these debates. They usually stay away from controversial issues. I have not even heard them talk lately about the nuclear power stations issue.

I oppose the motion. I know that many of my colleagues agree with me. I only wish that some of those who sit on the Conservative Benches would do the same.

5.47 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I support what was said by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and shadow Leader of the House, my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett).

Many of those who have spoken have already made the point that those who arrange the business of the House seem to have developed the expectation that during any 12-month period at least one day will be devoted to the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill. It has almost become a fixed part of the parliamentary calendar. There is Budget day; there is the autumn statement; there is the Loyal Address and the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill at one of its stages—Second Reading, Report, or Third Reading—either as a private Bill or as a public Bill. Whatever else happens, there must be the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill in any parliamentary Session.

People may think that it is all going to come to an end tonight and that this is the last that we shall see of the Bill, but, despite the timetable motion which guillotines proceedings on the Bill, I hope that the Minister replying the debate will not be prevented from making clear whether that is so or whether the Bill will be back again next year. I understand from some of the local authorities concerned that there is a strong possibility that the Bill will be in a different form when it is introduced in another place as the Government accept that the Bill is already defective due to the effluxion of time.

Another reason why timetable motions should be opposed is when the Government accept, as I understand is the case in this instance, that the Bill in question is defective. They will therefore have to alter it in another place and we shall have to consider Lords amendments some time next year. The Government owe us an explanation as to why they are timetabling a Bill which they know will have to be altered for various technical reasons. I may be wrong, but that is what I understand from one of the two local authorities involved. Timetabling a Bill that the Government know to be defective is a dubious procedure.

Are there any precedents for timetabling or, to use the common parlance, guillotining a hybrid Bill? I understand that this is the first time that it has been done, although there is nothing to prevent it: if the Government want to ram through legislation willy-nilly, they can do so. It behoves us, however, to stop and think about whether a hybrid Bill should be guillotined. The rights to petition Parliament on a hybrid Bill are protected, but nobody to whom I have spoken is aware of any previous hybrid Bill having been guillotined.

I freely inform the Government, in case they do not know, that a hybridised Bill—the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries (Amendment) Bill —was indeed guillotined, but that Bill was declared hybrid by Examiners three quarters of the way through its parliamentary consideration, whereas the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill has been hybrid from the outset. I understand that today's motion sets a precedent; we should consider whether it is a healthy precedent.

I hope that Ministers will say whether they are aware of other hybrid bills being guillotined. We believe that the motion is a thoroughly unhealthy development because individual citizens will lose their rights. Earlier, I asked the Minister to say whether the Bill will be changed when it is presented in another place, because if it is, it will create a new class of petitioners against it.

"Petitioners" sounds a rather cold term, but they are ordinary individuals who do not have the resources to pay accountants, lawyers and parliamentary agents to advise them. They can be small business people, householders or anyone whose way of life is directly affected by a Bill. Will their rights be curtailed if we accept the precedent of guillotining a hybrid Bill? We must think carefully about that before agreeing to it, and I hope that Ministers are taking careful notes to enable them to respond properly.

The Leader of the House—who, sadly, is no longer in his place—in making a raw arithmetical calculation said that the justification for the motion was simply that, in its different forms, the Bill had been debated for many hours. The 1988 Bill was first presented in another place, considered here and then dropped and converted into a Government Bill. That simple, raw arithmetical calculation implies that the Bill is exactly the same now as when it was introduced in another place in November 1988, but we know that, as people have come to learn more about it and its consequences, it has altered enormously. The design of the barrage and our knowledge of its side effects have altered, and legal judgments in the European Court of Justice directly affecting the status of the site of special scientific interest have been made since the original debates.

The mathematical justification for the guillotine advanced by the Leader of the House is irrelevant. It means nothing because new material is continually emerging, and hon. Members whose constituencies are directly affected by the barrage must have time to do their jobs as parliamentary representatives properly. I will give just three examples of recent completely new information —some of it emerged as late as last Friday—which is material to our consideration of the Bill but which is in danger of being precluded by the motion.

Last Friday, the Treasury minute in Cmnd. 2074 was published and made available in the Vote Office as a preparatory step towards the Public Accounts Committee's debate tomorrow. It refers to the parliamentary accountability of bodies such as the Cardiff Bay development corporation. The corporation, as has been hinted at already by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), is almost unique as a non-departmental public body or quango. It is the only quango with a large budget but almost no parliamentary accountability.

In the Treasury minute to the Public Accounts Committee, the Government said that they intended to do something about that. I hope that, before we agree to a motion to confer enormous enhanced spending powers on the Cardiff Bay development corporation, we shall have a clear sign from the Government as to how they intend to strengthen parliamentary control over the way in which the corporation spends its money. It would be wrong for us to pass the motion without the Government coming clean about what they intend to do to fill the corporation's black hole of parliamentary non-accountability.

Conclusion (xii) of the Treasury minute said:

"the Comptroller and Auditor General is able to identify control weaknesses of this type and bring them directly to the attention of Parliament as he did in"

the case of the Development Board for Rural Wales. In response, the Government said that the Comptroller and Auditor General

"should have rights of access to the body's"—

in other words, the quango's—

"papers and records so that he may bring to Parliament's attention, whenever he considers it appropriate, any material departures from the requirements of regularity and propriety."

He cannot do that with the Cardiff Bay development corporation. It is the only big-spending quango where the Comptroller and Auditor General cannot bring to the attention of the House any departure from the rules of regularity and propriety. The Government further said:

"These rights are frequently provided by statute".

Yet for some strange reason the Cardiff Bay development corporation was exempted from the rule. "Sponsor departments"—the Welsh Office—

"will seek to secure such rights in cases where they do not exist at present."

We want to know how the Secretary of State for Wales intends to provide, by statute or in an undertaking from the Dispatch Box today, the normal degree of parliamentary accountability for the Cardiff Bay development corporation before the corporation is given the enormously increased powers to spend money and to commit itself to a massive increase in expenditure and powers over the development area with all the side effects which spread into adjoining constituencies such as Cardiff, West. We must know exactly how Parliament will maintain the normal standards of parliamentary accountability over the increased spend. I hope that we can do something about that tonight, as we found out about it only last Friday. That is why the timetable motion is so dangerous.

In the late stages of the summer recess, we heard that the development corporation had proposed a new method by which to help to keep the groundwater levels down. The water will be pumped out, so if it is 15 ft below the surface now, it can be maintained at that level. That is known as de-watering wells. We know only that, by the time the Bill is in Committee in the other place, the corporation will have carried out field tests in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr.

[Mr. Rhodri Morgan]

Michael). The tests will be carried out using a couple of wells and the corporation will present the results to the Committee in another place next February.

Is this procedure good enough for the House? We are being asked to pass a timetable motion on a Bill for which a key item of evidence will not be available until next February. As the Member of Parliament for Cardiff, West I do not feel that that is satisfactory and I am extremely unhappy about the timetable motion on that account. There is no hon. Member for Cardiff, West in another place. If the job is not done in this House, it will not be done at all. There are estimable people in the other place and I do not criticise them, but there is no local constituency representation. It therefore falls to us to ensure that we have the right amount of information before we pass the Bill. That information must be explored across the House, which cannot be done if the timetable motion is passed.

Should the Government try to timetable a hybrid Bill which has specific effects on, for example, 6,000 houses and which has side effects on small business premises? Timetable motions are dangerous. They are unprecedented and doubly dangerous for hybrid Bills and should be opposed. I am glad that we are opposing the motion today. New material has just been presented and we have simply not had the opportunity to discuss it properly. The timetable motion will curtail, if not remove altogether, our ability to discuss that evidence, depending on how much time we have left for amendment and debate.

What will the impact of waterlogged soils be on health and domestic heating, with the cooling effect of an impounded lake? That question has come up only recently. It was first touched on in evidence to the Committee, but it was not in a validated form. The paper given by Dr. Max Wallis and Mr. Munro at last month's European environment conference in Nottingham raised all manner of questions which we have not yet had a chance to discuss. We may or may not be able to come back to those questions, depending on how draconian are the pressures on later debate. That, too, makes me unhappy.

As we may have a chance to discuss the matter later, I will touch only briefly on it today. The broad thesis of the two academics is that domestic heating costs will rise in the area adjoining the lake because the lake will cause a drop in temperature of 2 deg C for long periods of the year. They suggest that infant mortality rates will rise and that general morbidity, in terms of people with chest problems, will be exacerbated. Through creating additional fogs and mists, the lake may create additional traffic accident risks.

The question of whether that thesis is true is material to the Bill. The Minister may shake his head; that is fair enough. He may have a point of view and he may be well briefed. Then again he may not be—I do not know. We may find out, but with a timetable motion it is far more difficult to find out.

I can only briefly give the House the view of the National Rivers Authority, which was first told of the thesis following the publication of the original document this February. Lord Crickhowell, who will have some responsibility in the other place as chairman of the National Rivers Authority, wrote to Mr. Munro this July saying the NRA had taken the responsible attitude of asking for independent validation of the Wallis-Munro report given in evidence to the Committee in February and then published as an occasional paper of the University of Wales in the same month.

The NRA needed to know whether the two academics were a pair of cranks talking through the top of their heads or whether they were good scientists who had simply come up with a different approach to the side effects of the barrage. I shall read briefly from the letter from Lord Crickhowell to Mr. Monro of 2 July——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Does the letter refer to the timetable motion? If it does not, it is not in order. The hon. Gentleman has raised a point which he wants answered on Report. I hope that he will not pursue it further now and that he will move on to some other points.

Mr. Morgan: You may, Mr. Deputy Speaker, be willing to accept that I have today discussed the timetable motion with Dr. Wallis, one of the scientists. That is how I got a copy of the letter: he supplied me with it through the wonder of the modern fax machine. The NRA said in its letter of 2 July:

> "We employed a well-respected independent consultant, Middlesex University (formerly Polytechnic) Flood Hazard Research Centre earlier this year to consider your results. They concluded that the statistical analysis was sound and the relationship between the factors"—

that is, the waterlogged soil, and the rises in infant mortality, in morbidity and in traffic accidents—

> "appears to be confirmed."

That is the basis on which we should not curtail debate by a timetable motion.

We should be saying that the thesis opens up an area which Parliament must consider without the restriction of a guillotine. It would be wrong for us to say, "Guillotine the discussion because we know everything there is to know about the Bill." Perhaps the Leader of the House, who has just returned to his place, will remind us of the arithmetic. It has been said that there have been plenty of hours of discussion and that nothing new has been discovered, so the guillotine is a fully justified method by which to bring what has become a repetitive debate to a close. That simply is not true in light of the letter which you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were good enough to allow me to read out as it was so obviously in order.

The letter showed that, at least for the NRA, a first look at the results by its independent validation group at Middlesex university seemed to show that there was something in them. We as parliamentarians should say, "The evidence was not fully considered on Second Reading because nobody knew about it; should we now consider it?" The answer is obviously yes.

The Government now have something to prove. They could say that they accept the broad thrust of the evidence, as the NRA seems to be doing following the validation of the thesis—in which case Parliament needs to consider at length the possibility of extending the right of compensation. We have tabled amendments on that, although they are last-minute amendments because of the lateness with which the information has come to light.

Should there be a right to compensation for people living in the affected area whose houses will be colder? Should their additional domestic heating costs be paid by the development corporation? We do not want to tell people, "Do this through your solicitor: go to the courts and sue." The whole principle on which we have discussed the Bill for the past four years has been that people should not need to go to court for compensation for the damaging side effects on their peaceful occupation of their houses or business properties.

Compensation must be built into the Bill. We must debate the matter thoroughly on the Floor of the House to ensure than any rights that people should have because they will be adversely affected are covered in the Bill and properly considered so that no one feels that he has had a bad shake from Parliament. People should be able to feel that they had a reasonable opportunity to petition against the Bill and that, if they could not petition, we have done our job as constituency Members in bringing matters to the attention of the House and screwing some reply from the Ministers responsible, however reluctant they may have been to give a reply. We should ensure that any right to compensation which may occur in later years is clearly defined by Parliament so that people know what the price of the barrage will be in terms of side effects and in terms of the compensation for which we must legislate.

That point is even more important in light of the problems about the Barnett formula. If the Secretary of State for Wales has less access to funds, it is all the more important that we should tie him down, before the Bill leaves the House, to a clear understanding in negotiations with the Treasury. He must understand the true price of the barrage. He must know how much it will cost in terms of civil engineering and construction, and he must understand how much the compensation bill is likely to be.

Will that need to be extended to cover domestic heating costs and claims from people who say that they have been made more ill by the increased cold and damp or have had a car crash in a November mist caused by evaporation from the impounded lake? These matters must be put on record. We need to know whether the Minister will say, "No, the right will not be extended," or whether he will be willing to find the extra money to extend compensation rights in respect of matters which have come to our attention so late in our consideration of the Bill.

Will the Minister be covering another difficulty which arises now that the Bill is a public Bill? Certain matters are not covered in debate unless we specifically raise them, and I do not know whether we shall have the opportunity today to cover fully the agreements which were explicit in the private Bill but are implicit in the public Bill. If we allow the timetable motion through, our debate on consideration will be curtailed. I therefore ask what has happened to the explicit agreements in the private Bill which have become side agreements in the public Bill.

If we accept the guillotine motion, discussion of what has happened to the side agreement between the development corporation and Wiggins Teape, the paper-making company in my constituency at which 220 jobs are to be lost on 27 November, may be squeezed out. That company is in an area which was directly covered by a specific set of clauses in the private Bill but is now covered by side agreements. It is now proposed to remove the last paper-making machine in that plant. I want to be sure that, if the guillotine motion is accepted, we shall have the opportunity to raise that matter later or that the Minister will write to me to cover the point.

I now have no way of getting access to the information that I require. Under the original agreement, the development corporation would have paid for the company's additional water treatment costs, but as the present agreement is private, I no longer have access to the information. Is it true that the company is being paid compensation by the development corporation in respect of the extensive water treatment required if one is to manufacture paper at a paper mill? I find that extremely worrying, because I am to lose the mill, which is the guts of the plant.

The lake will convert certain industrial plants, including that paper mill—hitherto a coastal plant able to discharge treatment water into a tidal reach—into inland plants and unless the development corporation has a duty to pay additional water treatment costs, that will render its position less sensible than at present. Negotiations under the 90-day requirement laid down in the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1975, about which we have heard so much in the past seven days, are currently under way. The period expires on 27 November. I hope that we shall have adequate time to consider this matter, or that the Minister will agree to write to me about it.

The Government have made some almighty mistakes in trying to rush the Bill through, and we are worried that they are rushing it again today without our having adequate time to discuss all the new material. The Government foolishly sought to ignore the rights of Welsh Members to serve on the Standing Committee. I fear that they are going down the same alley today, saying that the swifter our consideration of the Bill, the better it will be. We know the Government's record of incompetence—and the swifter our consideration of the Bill, the greater will be the Government's mistakes.

6.13 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I oppose the guillotine motion—indeed, I was amazed that the Government bothered to think of using such a device during a period in which they are not under any pressure to push major Bills through the House.

The Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill will go down in history as a Bill whose passage through Parliament has been consistently mismanaged. The Government's only chance of getting the Bill enacted now is to introduce a guillotine motion. On two crucial occasions during the lifetime of the two Bills, the Government have not even been able to count on their own supporters to be in the Lobbies. The present motion represents a last-minute attempt to try to get the Bill out of the way at a time when such action is least easy to justify.

Let us go back to the fateful night in March when the private Bill had to be withdrawn. The present Bill was then introduced. Since then, the Government have been so worried about the amount of time available to deal with parliamentary business that they gave us a summer recess at least two weeks longer than any recess in the last decade. Let us be generous: we need at least a week to consider the Bill more fully. Could not the Government have seen that in July? Why could not the House have continued to sit for another week then, or returned a week earlier? We should have been quite prepared to come back to debate these fundamental issues.

In explaining his reasons for reluctantly taking the guillotine to the Bill, the Leader of the House said that it had been fully debated over a long period. In fact, the circumstances in which the Bill has been debated have been shifting like the sands of the Sahara when the Harmattan is blowing. We shall have barely two hours to consider more than 90 amendments. What sort of discussion will we

[Mr. Win Griffiths]

be able to have? We shall hardly have time to touch on some important issues that have changed the circumstances surrounding the Bill's introduction.

Let me give an example: we were presented with the updated report on the number of jobs that would be created by the barrage on the very day of our original debate. Yet now that we have had a chance to look into that new report in a little more detail, the Government have introduced the guillotine to preclude the possibility of a proper debate. To my mind, the authors of that report could do with at least an afternoon's grilling in Committee concerning the circumstances surrounding the updated assessment they have made of the jobs benefit of the barrage.

The report refers to a mid-October assessment. However, it is not entirely clear whether, on the day before the report was published, the authors made a final conclusion about the jobs benefits or whether that matter had been under consideration over the summer. It is not clear whether any account was taken of black Wednesday —23 September—when Britain ignominiously had to pull out of the ERM. Have all the changing circumstances since mid-September been considered in the updated jobs report? The jobs report refers to property values in the bay area and I believe that those references are highly contentious.

We will consider 90 amendments in seven groups in this debate. I cannot see how we can examine the detail and question the assumptions in the new report. The assumptions deserve to be examined very carefully as they comprise new material which has been made available to us only on the day of the debate. The Government have let themselves down badly and have not given the House a fair chance to debate the issues.

I wish that we could rely on the Government to accept that they have presented us with so much new material and that there have been so many changes that the Bill is worthy of at least another two or three days' debate at a time when we are not overwhelmed by parliamentary business. Bearing in mind the Government's difficulties with other legislation, they could quite easily provide time to consider the issues and not whip the Bill through tonight with Conservative Members who, on at least two other occasions, proved that they did not care what happened to the Bill because the Government had to pull up stumps as Conservative Members were not in the Chamber to support them.

I make a last plea to the Minister to give us a few more days to discuss the issues seriously, because we will not be able to do that in two hours this evening.

6.22 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): We are living in truly remarkable times. The Government are sitting like a group of rabbits paralysed by a car's headlamps. The Government machine and the economy of the country are collapsing around them. The Government are divided as they have never been divided before, yet they have to come to the House in prime time tonight with a guillotine motion. What is even more astounding than the divisions in the Conservative party is the fact that the Government have managed to unite the Labour party today. All Opposition Members realise how deep the divisions have been, but the Minister and his colleagues are so inept that they have contrived a situation today in which all the Welsh Labour Members will vote in the Lobby against the motion. That is a clear sign of the Government's ineptitude.

Erskine May describes guillotine motions as

> "the most drastic method of curtailing debate known to procedure . . . it cannot be denied that they are capable of being used in such a way as to upset the balance . . . between the claims of business and the rights of debate."

We heard nothing about the flood of business that is pressing the House when the Leader of the House opened the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) referred very eloquently to the long recess. The only whipped business before the House this week is the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill, and there was virtually no business before the House last week. I understand that the business managers are in such a state that they barely have any business to put before the House this side of Christmas. However, the Government are asserting today that the guillotine must apply and the rights of debate must be set to one side because of the demands of Government business.

Mr. Hanson: One need only consult yesterday's *Official Report* to discover that business finished at 8.36 pm. Surely that is not a packed programme.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend has made the case directly.

Over the past five or six years, we have had plenty of experience of an arrogant Government determined to press their legislation through who then had to repent at the leisure of the people of this country. Even the Government must accept that the poll tax was a very good example of that. We heard all the pleas that it was necessary to curtail debate because the poll tax was a vital piece of legislation. We were told that we could not have further discussion of it. It was driven on to the statute book. What happened? It was driven on to the statute book without proper debate and that resulted in a mess.

That legislation brought down a Prime Minister and should have brought down the Government. However, the Government have learnt nothing from that experience because they are still demonstrating the same attitude. They believe that the needs of business must take precedence over debate. The Government are incapable of learning from their own mistakes.

Dr. Kim Howells: Just like the poll tax.

Mr. Davies: Indeed, the Secretary of State was responsible for that fiasco.

I am sorry that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), the Liberal party spokesman, is no longer in the Chamber. His comments were breathtaking in their ignorance and arrogance. In a throwaway comment, he said that it did not matter about the slugs, snails and newts in Cardiff bay. From your careful observation of our debates, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will know that the case for Cardiff bay is not about slugs, snails or newts. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) who is a great expert on the ecology of Cardiff bay knows, there are no slugs or newts in the bay.

It was typical of the Liberal party that its spokesman should make a few throwaway comments in a patronising and condescending way and completely offend the interests in Wales which have been arguing the environmental case. He set those to one side. We need more debate about the matter so that we can educate the Liberal party on environmental and ecological matters and put to them the fact that the case for Cardiff bay rests on the site of special scientific interest. That case depends on the bird life in the bay.

When the Leader of the House opened the debate, it was interesting that his Parliamentary Private Secretary was the only Tory Back Bencher in the Chamber. Where are all the Tory Members who regard the Bill as a matter of fundamental importance?

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): They are in Strangers Bar.

Mr. Davies: I can only suggest that my hon. Friend has just come from the Strangers Bar. He might be bringing some news hotfoot. The Government's troops are simply waiting for the green light from the Secretary of State; they will then rush to the Chamber sufficiently lubricated to make passionate and powerful speeches in favour of the guillotine motion.

The truth is that the Government and the Tory party could not care less about the measure. If Conservative Members supported the barrage, they would have been in the Chamber tonight. They would have been here when the Secretary of State sent out his pathetic little letter last year. The Secretary of State had to write to Cabinet members asking them for support to get the private Member's Bill on the statute book, but the Government could not muster the 100 Members necessary to force the closure at 11.30 pm—so much for the commitment of the Secretary of State and Conservative Members. Their recognition of the vital nature of the debate is demonstrated again by their absence tonight.

I intervened on my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), the shadow Leader of the House, and pointed out that the Government have no mandate for this measure. That makes the guillotining of the debate even more important. The traditional defence of a guillotine is, "We have a mandate for it; it was in the manifesto; the people have voted for it; it is being deliberately obstructed on the Floor of the House; if we wish to put the people's view into practice, we have to guillotine it."

There is no public mandate for this measure. The only mention of it in the Conservative party manifesto was a very brief sentence which states:

> "Land made derelict by old industries has been reclaimed on a massive scale. The Cardiff Bay development and the Ebbw Vale garden festival are outstanding examples".

That is hardly a plea for public endorsement or an unequivocal plea to the people of Wales: "You must vote Conservative because, at the heart of our economic policy, we will press the regeneration of south Wales by building a barrage across the mouth of the Taff estuary." It is a bit like the claim that the centrepiece of the Government's economic strategy is the maintenance of the value of the pound within the exchange rate mechanism—and it has about as much weight.

Mr. Hanson: I need not remind my hon. Friend that, even if that were an endorsement, after the general election on 9 April the Conservative party found itself with six seats in Wales, only one of which is represented in the Chamber this evening. Twenty-seven of us were elected, and we have friends in other parties—four in Plaid Cymru and one in the Liberal Democrats. So even if the subject had been in the Conservatives' manifesto, that would hardly be a ringing endorsement as they lost the election in Wales just as they will lose the vote on the motion.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend is correct but over-generous. I do not think that six Welsh Tories can claim to support the Bill. The Minister himself is the very Minister who blocked the Bill's predecessor. He has given no explanation of that, so I think that there are five and not six. The Minister has the cheek to say that we should have no further debate, when he is the very individual who blocked the previous legislation. We are at least entitled to an explanation of how the blinding light fell upon him and determined him in this new course of action. In the Conservative party these days one does not need much persuasion. The argument is that one gets carried away by events. The Minister will say, "I was carried away by events; I was swept up by the tide of popular enthusiasm and made a Minister in the Welsh Office."

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the Minister will not respond on the committal motion.

Mr. Davies: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is why, on this guillotine motion, it is very inappropriate for the Minister to be here.

I have to accept that, as a diehard opponent of the Bill, along with my hon. Friends, I have played my part in trying to talk out the legislation. That is no secret—we all know what we have been doing. We filibustered the previous measure and we have filibustered this measure as best we can. The attitude of any responsible Government facing such diehard opposition would have been to say, "We are going to get a guillotine motion; now accept the fact that we are going to push the measure through." Despite all the objections and reservations raised by my hon. Friends, they should have said, "We are going to guillotine the motion, but let us have an appropriate debate on the outstanding matters."

We know from the selection of amendments that there are vital matters for debate, but the guillotine motion will allow only about two hours' consideration of the amendments. My hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend referred to that point. If we decided to vote on each lead amendment, there would not be sufficient time to vote on the amendments, let alone debate them. If the Minister wanted to ensure that the real concerns of the people of Cardiff were addressed—for example, the problems of groundwater, water quality in the bay, water quality in the lagoon, and the replacement of lost sensitive environments —he should have produced a guillotine motion which at least allowed reasonable time for discussion.

The guillotine motion is draconian, to say the least. It will not even allow us the opportunity to say yes or no to each group of amendments. It is a particular disappointment that a Minister and a Secretary of State who pride themselves on wanting to develop consensus—at least, that is what they say—should bring forward this guillotine motion instead of saying, "We are going to guillotine the measure, so let us have a motion which allows an appropriate response."

We know that the Government will win the vote on the motion. The pity is that they will deny reasonable debate. As on many other occasions, they will get their legislation, but other people will have to pay the price. In this case, the priceless natural heritage of Wales will be destroyed and

[Mr. Davies]

the people of Cardiff will pay a much higher personal price for the lethargy, indolence and myopia of the Secretary of State and his colleagues in the Welsh Office.

6.25 pm

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): As always, this is a matter of great interest to us all. I was interested in what my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) said when he pointed out that the Government's incompetence in handling the Bill has united Labour Members. Only a few Sundays ago, I happened to switch on the television and see a programme about teaching English to foreign students. On that programme my hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) argued the merits and demerits of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill. It is amazing that, if the Government are united on anything, it can only be the guillotining of Welsh business.

The Leader of the House gave us facts and figures relating to the hours that have supposedly been spent debating the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill, but he failed to tell the House that there were separate Bills. In a sense, they dealt with separate issues. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West has told the House how the Bill has considerably altered, as has the nature of the barrage, over the months and years. The Leader of the House also failed to tell the House that the barrage has involved immense controversy. Therefore, it is only right and proper that appropriate time should be given in the House of Commons so that representatives of the people of Wales may discuss these matters.

We are concerned also about the precedent being set by guillotining a hybrid Bill. Perhaps most significant for Welsh Members of Parliament is the fact that, in a sense, the motion is an English guillotine motion. I say that not in a nationalistic sense, but out of 38 Welsh Members of Parliament only six are Conservatives. With the possible exception of the sole Liberal Democrat for Wales, the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), the overwhelming majority of Welsh Members require greater scrutiny than has been afforded this Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West and others referred to the fact that, some months ago, Standing Order No. 86—an 85-year-old parliamentary tradition—had been deliberately overturned by the Government because they did not want all Welsh Members discussing what is to take place in their capital city. The Government are doing that again today. Opportunities for all Welsh Members to discuss the details of the Cardiff bay barrage are limited. If Welsh Members had not served on the Standing Committee, the number of hours in which to discuss these important issues would have been far more restricted than was implied by the Leader of the House.

Several of my hon. Friends referred to the Cardiff Bay development corporation and said that it was not subject to sufficient scrutiny by the House. If we had not faced a guillotine motion this evening, we could have given much more time to the public scrutiny of that body.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) suggested that admirals ran public bodies in Wales. As far as I know, there may well be an admiral or two running a committee somewhere in Wales; there are certainly colonels, generals, squires, unsuccessful Tory candidates and defeated Conservative Members. The irony is that, the more seats the Conservative party loses, the more jobs it gives itself.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) said that many amendments on local accountability had yet to be debated on Report. For example, there is a host of amendments on setting up a Cardiff bay advisory committee. The Leader of the House referred to the House of Lords Select Committee. That Committee said that an advisory committee was a matter for the House of Commons to discuss in some detail. The opportunity did not properly arise in the Standing Committee, and we shall certainly not be given the opportunity on Report because we shall have a limited amount of time.

My hon. Friends the Members for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) and for Caerphilly referred to all the other issues which stand before us and may not be debated. Those issues include the flora and fauna associated with Cardiff bay, the sites of special scientific interest which have been debated outside the House but not sufficiently inside the House, the quality of the water in Cardiff bay, the needs of those who fish, groundwater levels and flooding, which are still matters of grave concern to thousands of people in Cardiff, and the intertwined roles of the National Rivers Authority and the Secretary of State. Those issues will not be discussed today.

Perhaps the most important issue which will not be completely and properly discussed is the amount of money that will be spent to build the barrage. The most important role of the House is to scrutinise public expenditure. Hundreds of millions of pounds are to be spent on the barrage proposal, much of which is public money. We have been told that at present the Cabinet is examining what we know as the Barnett formula, and will reduce the amount of public expenditure in the Principality. The Standing Committee certainly had evidence of sloppy management of the finances of the Cardiff Bay development corporatiton.

All the matters that I have mentioned make it vitally important for the House to be allowed to fulfil its traditional role of scrutinising public spending, particularly when such spending is at risk. When the Government had a majority of 100, they used to browbeat and bully the House. As we saw last week, however, the world has changed for the Government—they now have a majority of only 21. The Government have neither the mandate, nor the right or the authority to impose their shaky will on the House or on the people of Wales. I urge the House to vote against the motion.

6.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): I am glad that we have had one of our traditional, good-natured Welsh debates on this important timetable motion.

The debate was opened by the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), who should be congratulated on the textbook nature of her contribution. Unlike a few other Opposition Members, the hon. Lady was in no danger of being called to order by the Chair. She produced a traditional litany against timetable motions, with only the slightest reference to this motion. It was ironic that she criticised the Government that for not having passed the subject of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill when it was a private Bill. It was not a Government Bill. There was no Government Whip on that Bill. But it was noticeable how few Labour Members bothered to participate in the debate or the divisions on the private Bill.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) reminded us of the benefits that will flow from the redevelopment, which will include the construction of the barrage. Like my right hon. Friend the Lord President, the hon. Gentleman referred to the widespread support in South Wales for the proposal. He was typically generous in describing the speeches from his own Front Bench, which he described as reasoned. That is a comment which only the hon. Gentleman can make about his own Front Bench. Perhaps he was even more honest when he said that Opposition Members had conducted the debate in a comradely fashion. If that is a comradely fashion, they must be wearing bullet-proof vests and every sort of protection from knives in the back.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said that amendment No. 13 dealt with an important matter which he wants us to examine this evening. I accept that amendment No. 13 is a constructive proposal. The spirit of that amendment is fully accepted; it is compiled with in the publication of the environmental assessment.

I hope that I shall have the opportunity later this evening to point out to the hon. Gentleman that most of the materials for the construction of the Cardiff bay barrage will be transported by water or by rail and that the main site access will be through Queen Alexandra dock. I am sure that I can satisfy the hon. Gentleman that it will not be necessary for him to press amendment No. 13 to a vote later this evening.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) reminded us of the importance of considering the worth of the moneys that will be spent on the proposal. His desire for action for the valleys is most appropriate. He is absolutely right to put that forward. As the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said, an integral part of the Bill is the substantial benefits that it will bring. They will not be confined to Cardiff, but will be of material advantage to the whole of south Wales.

I am reminded that the hon. Member for Pontypridd has told me that he is typically one of the yuppies on his side of the House. He lives alongside the water himself, so he is likely to benefit directly from the improvements that will be brought about for Cardiff bay and River Taff by the barrage. I hope that he will benefit, and that his constituents will benefit.

Dr. Kim Howells: I never knowingly described myself as a yuppie. I should like to know whether the dam will be high enough to make the reservoir stretch as far as Abercynon. The reservoir needs to stretch that far if it is to affect my constituency. Will the barrage block up the river and swallow up Abercynon and presumably the whole of Cardiff?

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman knows well the improvements that will flow for the River Taff and for south Wales generally, and we must make progress with that.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) asked whether the Bill was defective and would be changed in another place. He knows full well the answer to that question. He will recall that the Select Committee required the Government to amend the Bill to widen the land drainage powers of Cardiff city council. The matter has been discussed and agreed with the city council, and the Government will make an amendment to the Bill as it is presented in another place.

However, it is erroneous to suggest that the Bill is defective in any way. I can certainly give an assurance that anyone who is directly affected will have the right to petition in another place. The timetable in this House will have no effect whatever on that right.

Mr. Morgan: The Minister must accept the use of the word "defective" to describe a Bill that will be altered after it has left the House, particularly when the only reason why the alteration was not made in this House was that the Bill would have to go back to Second Reading. It will now be hybridised in the other place. The hon. Gentleman is asking the House to pass a Bill on the basis of a promise that it will be put right in another place. To say that it will be put right in another place is to accept that it is defective as it goes through this place. There can be no other meaning of the word.

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman's pretence that the Bill is defective is yet another wild stretch of his fertile imagination. The Bill is not defective. Everybody knows what is happening, and no one will lose rights as a result of the Bill or the timetable motion.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about financial matters, but those will be much more appropriately discussed when we resume the debate that we adjourned on Tuesday last week. Sadly, we had reached only the second group of amendments by 10 o'clock last Tuesday, and that group dealt with financial elements of the Bill.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of dewatering. That is an irrelevant argument, because, as he full well knows, no dewatering powers are sought under the Bill. Full protection is already included in the Bill for any changes that might come about to groundwater as a result of the building of the barrage. Dewatering may improve the situation, but I can say no more than "may". It will be exhaustively studied, but it does not affect the groundwater protections provisions in the Bill.

The hon. Gentleman went on to rerun those old claims about the micro-climate of Cardiff Bay. Somehow, the barrage will affect heating costs, traffic accidents and even, in his most sensational claim, infant mortality. My technical advisers suggest that any changes in the micro-climate as a result of barrage construction will be negligible. It is inconceivable that a temperature difference of 2 to 4 deg C would occur in the local atmosphere. The relative size of the bay compared with the Severn estuary is indicative of the magnitude of any change that could occur.

As the hon. Member said, Dr. Wallis appeared before the Select Committee earlier this year to make those claims. He expanded on his views at length, but the Select Committee was deeply unimpressed. The hon. Gentleman's attempts to resuscitate them now is a typical example of his willingness to use any scare story, no matter how far-fetched, to oppose the barrage.

Mr. Morgan: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: Yes, I will give way.

Mr. Morgan: I am grateful that the hon. Gentleman has given way but he will agree that he had to do so because he made a disgraceful slur against my reasoning in using

[Mr. Morgan]

that argument. He will recall—he has not touched on this—that I was allowed by you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to read out a letter from Lord Crickhowell which referred to the Middlesex polytechnic flood hazard research centre having confirmed the soundness of the statistical procedures used by Dr. Wallis and Mr. Monro. That is not to say that I agree with them, but their views have been confirmed and validated quite independently, and externally, by a body chosen by the National Rivers Authority.

That is why I was at pains to say that this was not my thesis but that of Dr. Wallis and Mr. Monro. I have not externally validated it—not being a scientist, I could not do so. Instead, the body chosen by the NRA has validated it. The hon. Gentleman should withdraw his disgraceful slur.

Mr. Jones: As I have said, my technical advisers have reassured me that such claims are inconceivable. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman is backing off from any suggestion that he is supporting those claims—or is it another attempt by him, in the vernacular that he would use, to slag off health provision in Cardiff and South Glamorgan?

The hon. Gentleman also referred to another matter, but it would be best if I told him that, if he were brief, to the point and relevant—perhaps I am asking too much of him—we could consider all those points in the time available to us this evening.

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In fact, there are two points of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I should prefer one at a time.

Mr. Davies: I was just trying to save you time, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am happy to make my points one at a time. First, throughout the debate you have made it clear that we had to restrict our remarks to the terms of the motion before us. For the past five minutes, the Minister has been wandering everywhere, and he has not referred to the motion. Is it not time that he directed his remarks to the terms of the motion?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but I allowed the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) to quote from the letter to the NRA, and the Minister was responding to that. Therefore, that was not a point of order.

Mr. Davies: On a second point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister accused my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West of being neither brief nor relevant, and said that he was guilty of being repetitious. Is that not a direct slur on you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because if my hon. Friend were guilty of irrelevance and repetition, you would have called him to order?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is right. Had the hon. Member for Cardiff, West been unduly repetitious, I would have called him to order. He was not, and I did not hear any criticism to that effect.

Mr. Jones: The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) asked for time to consider the latest economic appraisal. I give him the same answer that I gave the hon. Member for Cardiff, West.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) was at last totally frank on this subject. All he has been engaged in is a filibuster. Equally, he admitted that his case is bankrupt. He cannot succeed by persuasion, and all he can do is resort to filibuster.

Mr. Davies: Let me make it clear, so that there is no misunderstanding. I told the Minister that I was opposed to the Bill, and that, if necessary, I would resort to filibustering to try to defeat it. It ill becomes a Minister whose Back Benchers have not made one contribution to the proceedings, either tonight or on previous occasions, to talk of the value of persuading other people by the force of debate. He has never had anyone to listen to him.

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman need only reflect on the dearth of his colleagues who have turned out in debate and in the Division Lobbies to support him on previous occasions.

The hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) made sure that we concluded our proceedings in the good-natured manner that we had maintained throughout. There was a twinkle in his eye when he claimed that the Government had managed to unite his colleagues on this subject. I know that he does not even believe that himself. That is as true as the merriment that there has been among Labour Members since the vote last week on new clause 1. They were united on that vote last week, but that meant that they were united on voting down the only success that the hon. Member for Cardiff, West has achieved in all his contributions to our debates.

As my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House said, the House has already had extensive debates on the concept of a barrage across Cardiff bay in the context of the private Bill promoted by the Cardiff Bay development corporation and South Glamorgan county council. The barrage proposal, the operation of the barrage, the management of the inland bay and the outer harbour and the ground water protection scheme were extensively examined on the Floor of the House, in Committee and in another place. The examination of this Bill, which would achieve the same ends, has been rigorous.

Mr. Win Griffiths: The Minister once again says that the barrage scheme has been well debated, but will he not admit that last week there was a further update on the economic effect of the benefits of the barrage that could not be done justice to even if we spent the whole of the two hours that we have on that issue alone?

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman has already made that point, and I have already replied to it.

The opponents' determination to slow up proceedings on the Bill was evident last Tuesday, when the House was discussing new clause 1. Although we were considering a large group of other amendments, most of the three hours spent on them was taken up with attacks on the Government's new clause 1 and related amendments. The Government had tabled those amendments to meet in full—indeed, to extend—amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Cardiff, West in Standing Committee.

Of the 125 or so amendments tabled in Committee by Opposition Members, well over half had been tabled again. Having heard the same points made on Second Reading and in Committee, it was not unreasonable to expect opponents to come forward with something that we had not heard before. The evidence of last Tuesday was that further consideration of the Bill was to be yet another rerun of familiar arguments from some Opposition Members. That is not to dismiss the real issues arising from the Bill: the Government have addressed those by ensuring that adequate safeguards appear in the Bill.

On Second Reading on 25 November, the Opposition tabled an amendment about the adequacy of the groundwater protection scheme, about public consultation on the Hydrotechnica studies and about water quality in the inland bay. There were ample opportunities in Standing Committee to discuss the ground water protection scheme and the Bill's provisions relating to water quality. Public consultation on the Hydrotechnica studies, a separate issue, was dealt with fully when my right hon. Friend announced his decision on public funding in the light of those studies on 20 January this year.

The National Rivers Authority has declared itself satisfied with the way in which its responsibilities, including water quality, are dealt with in the Bill. In the circumstances, therefore, the motion is entirely reasonable. As the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) said, once a motion has been fully debated—and this subject certainly has been—it is time to make a decision on it. He is right, and I urge the House to support it.

Question put:

The House divided: Ayes 296, Noes 201.

Division No. 77] **[7.01 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom-Ewell)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony

Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Alan Meale.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill:—

Report and Third Reading

1.—(1) The remaining proceedings on consideration and Third Reading of the Bill shall be completed at this day's sitting.

(2) The proceedings on consideration shall be brought to a conclusion at Nine o'clock.

(3) The proceedings on Third Reading shall be brought to a conclusion at Ten o'clock.

(4) Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) shall not apply.

Dilatory Motions

2. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, proceedings on the Bill shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Order of proceedings

3.—(1) No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which proceedings on consideration of the Bill are taken, except by a member of the Government.

(2) The question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Conclusion of proceedings

4.—(1) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order and which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others).

(a) any Question already proposed from the Chair;
(b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question that the Schedule be added to the Bill);
(c) the Question that such of the amendments 14, 31, 55, 66 and 64 as remain be made to the Bill;
(d) the Question that all remaining amendments standing in the name of a member of the Government be made to the Bill;
(e) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded;

and on a Motion so made for a new Schedule, the Speaker shall put only the Question that the Schedule be added to the Bill.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(3) If at this day's sitting a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) stands over to Seven o'clock, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Supplemental orders

5.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion made in the House by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(2) If the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before the time at which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion under this Order, no notice shall be required of a Motion made at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

6. Nothing in this Order shall prevent any proceedings to which the Order applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by the Order.

Recommittal

7.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings at those stages respectively, for on or in consequence of, recommittal.

(2) No debate shall be permitted on any Motion to recommit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and the Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [20 October] on consideration of the Bill, as amended (in the Standing Committee).

Clause 1

CONSTRUCTION OF BARRAGE ETC. AND OTHER WORKS

Which amendment was: in page 1, line 7, at the beginning to insert the words—

'Subject to subsection (8) below'. *(Mrs. Ann Clwyd.)*

Question again proposed, That the Amendment be made.

7.16 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West):I resume the debate on this group of important amendments in the absence of my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), who is in Hong Kong. He was in mid-flight when he was so cruelly cut off by the Government's failure to keep their troops here at 10 o'clock a week ago. That may have been the beginning of the degeneration of the Government's authority over their Back Benchers, of which we have seen so much more evidence in the past seven days——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have complained about the lack of time to debate the amendments. Can we please get on to debating them?

Mr. Morgan: I agree, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are talking about Cardiff, not Maastricht. Were we discussing Maastricht, there would be no guillotine motion because the Government would be unable to impose it. That is the only point that I was trying to make. Maastricht is the Cardiff of Holland—the capital of an area that used to contain coal mines, which have now all closed down. That is what we have been trying to prevent in the past week.

The amendments to which we should pay further attention tonight concern whether the updated version of the cost-benefit analysis provided to us by KPMG Management Consulting is adequate for us to proceed with, or whether it is a doctored analysis done specifically to assist the client to get permission to spend taxpayers' money on a vast scale but not something that a consultancy firm would feel proud of or want to enter for consultancy study of the year competitions next Christmas. It is probably fair to say that it falls into that category and that the House must therefore provide the element that consultancy studies do not reach—namely, a realistic and objective look at the costs and benefits that need to be applied to the barrage proposal, given its size, implications, side effects and importance in the Welsh public expenditure budget.

We want to ensure that the House considers whether the cost-benefit analysis that has been done so far meets the terms that it properly should.

The trouble with cost-benefit analyses of this sort is that they tend to be done to please the client so that the company concerned obtains follow-on business. That is not to say that they are full of porkies, but they tend to be attuned to the client's wishes; sometimes they are even rewritten when the client is not too happy with the first shot. Tonight, we need to discuss whether the cost-benefit analysis has taken full account of the change in the economic climate since the earlier analyses were done.

[Mr. Morgan]

They were done without examination of the demand for land and property development of the London docklands type.

When the scheme was initiated, it was thought that office-led developments were a good thing—they appeared to bring prosperity, and it was thought that they could replicate in Cardiff the sort of prosperity that was being created by the £15 billion-worth of private sector investment in London docklands in 1987 and 1988.

All this has now gone into reverse. What concerns me is whether the cost-benefit analysis, although officially updated, has really been updated, or whether the consultants still believe that replicating Canary wharf in Cardiff on a smaller scale is still a valid idea. Have they been able to leave behind the mind set of 1987-88 and adopt a mind set suitable for 1992's economic conditions?

Last week, the blue book issued by KPMG was given us for reading and debate. The problem is that people have assumed that, if the supply is provided, the demand will inevitably follow. We must ask ourselves whether any equation that does not include the demand side is valid at all. My hon. Friends and I are all convinced that the demand side should have been studied much more closely by KPMG for the updated report. That is why amendment No. 91 still calls for an effective cost-benefit analysis. None has yet been done, and it is not possible for the consultants to do one usefully unless they can shake off the feeling that what Cardiff needs is another Canary wharf. Cardiff needs that like a hole in the head.

We must learn the lessons of what has happened in the east end of London. If we do not, we will build the wrong infrastructure, make the same mistakes and create another white elephant of the same type. I do not believe that KPMG has been able to take a step back and think again about the new conditions of 1992. It has not examined demand in south Cardiff in the light of what has happened in the past five years. The consultants' appraisal still looks far too much at the supply side of land and property at the expense of demand.

There are 20 million sq ft of surplus office space in central London, not to mention in docklands. The price of this space has collapsed, with the resulting tortuous negotiations in which the Government are engaged to try to save Canary Wharf by working a deal with the Jubilee line and shipping out 2,000 civil servants—who might otherwise have considered moving to Cardiff. We should think about the potential loss of jobs in Cardiff under the Government's office relocation schemes. Their top priority will be to organise relocation from central London and Whitehall to the Canary wharf area, and they will probably spend the next 10 years trying to fill that great white elephant.

The 2,000 civil servants from the Department of the Environment in Marsham street—the Government are toying with the idea of moving them to Canary wharf—might have been candidates for Cardiff, but they will not come for the next few years while the huge surplus of space remains in London. The KPMG report gives the flavour of none of this. It refers to the changed climate, but it does not really scrutinise the problems of supply. There is also the problem of price. The price of office space in London docklands has collapsed from £30 a square foot four years ago to £10 today—or even as low as £5 if the office in question is not new. Canary wharf is available at £14 or £15 a square foot.

Welsh Office Ministers sought to deny us certain information last week, but the news is nevertheless astonishing. It concerns the rental being paid by the Welsh Office-sponsored quango, the Welsh Health Common Services Authority, the first pre-let tenant of the Grosvenor Waterside development. The information comes to us in an updated press release from Grosvenor Waterside; it was initially issued only to the technical press. At any rate, the rental to be paid by the authority for its new 150,000 sq ft of office space, a relocation from central Cardiff to Cardiff docklands inner-harbour area, will be £14·50 a square foot—50 per cent. higher than the rentals on offer in London docklands.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Does my hon. Friend recall how we were told in Committee by the Minister that this information, now apparently in a press release, was commercially confidential? Has the Welsh Office withheld information on this as on many other issues?

Mr. Morgan: I apologise; I said that the Minister refused us the information last week—it was actually in Committee that he did so. As my hon. Friend said, he refused it on the grounds of commercial confidentiality.

The Grosvenor Waterside press release described the lease for the first five years as at £14·50 per square foot. That is to be compared with the rent offered by Canary wharf's receivers for the relocation from Marsham street. The circumstances are similar, although the distances are greater in London, but the distance from Marsham street to Canary wharf is comparable with that between Newport road, where the Welsh Health Common Services Authority is, and Cardiff docklands.

The rationale in London is the considerable savings to be made from leaving central London, but the move to Cardiff docklands was a one-off letting organised under heavy pressure just before the election in an attempt by the Government to help Associated British Ports to move to Grosvenor Waterside inner harbour development. And the rental for that bears little resemblance to the collapsing rents of central London.

It is amazing what can be organised in a pre-election splurge of public expenditure to get some development going, with taxpayers' money, around the inner harbour. That needs close examination; it may get it from the Public Accounts Committee at some stage. In any case, such a move would not appeal to the private sector. We cannot rely entirely on public sector jobs moving at public sector-organised rentals which may have been arranged at a higher rate at least in part to stop the Government getting egg on their face.

If the private sector is to move to Cardiff bay, it will want rents well below those prevailing in London docklands. No one will move from London to Cardiff when there are cheaper rents to be had in London.

Mr. Rowlands: I apologise for interrupting again, but the full impact of the information now available is creating growing resentment. I begged the Minister three times to give us an illustration of the rents for the services authority. I was told repeatedly in Committee that they were commercially confidential. Unless the Minister interrupts my hon. Friend to say that the press release from a private property company is wrong, surely we can conclude that the Minister should have readily provided us with the information when we pressed him in Committee.

Mr. Morgan: I am obviously grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones) *rose*——

Mr. Morgan: I am glad to see that the Minister wishes to intervene. I give way to him.

Mr. Jones: I am grateful. I hope that it will be helpful if I try to respond to both the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands).

They are right to say that, when they raised the matter in Committee, I told them that the details were commercially confidential. The terms of the lease prevented the details being released without the prior consent of both parties. However, the figures have been released by the developer, and I can confirm that the average rent for the first five years will be £14·50 per sq ft. That is consistent with the range of £14 to £15 that is used in calculating initial land values for the barrage scheme in the latest economic appraisal.

7.30 pm

Mr. Morgan: I am grateful to the Minister for the information that he has provided. We face a difficulty, because there is no date on the press release of Grosvenor Waterside. We may be able to obtain the date from the technical press, to which the press release was sent. That may help to clarify the situation at the time when the Minister was saying that the information was still commercially confidential. That is what he told us in Committee. Was the relevant information being given to the technical press at the time but he was not willing to disclose it to the Committee to avoid embarrassment, or whatever the reason may have been? We shall not know what the situation was without the date of the press release.

Mr. Rowlands: The Minister's intervention was even more pathetic than the contributions that we have come to expect from him. I understand that the press release appeared in October 1991. That was long before we discussed these matters in Committee.

Mr. Morgan: If that is the position, I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend. Perhaps the Minister will wish to intervene again. If the press release appeared a year ago, that is a material fact to set against the Minister's refusal to disclose details in Committee. I am trying to recall the month when we discussed these matters in Committee.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I cannot help, because I do not have the precise date. I have set out the advice which I was given. The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, having been in my position at the Welsh Office, may understand that the terms of the lease kept the details confidential, subject to disclosure by both parties. As I have said, they were made clear in a press release that was put out by the developer. On becoming aware of that, I intended to confirm the information that was put out. I am happy, however, to take the opportunity now.

Mr. Morgan: We look forward to a further explanation when the Minister replies to the debate.

The critical issue is how we are to measure demand in Cardiff over the next 20-odd years. We are talking primarily of office relocations, on which the viability of the barrage proposals depend in terms of betterment value, which will not exist if the present manufacturing and docks domination continues. It will be possible to pay for the barrage only if there are enormous increases in land values. Land values will have to be increased to much higher capital-based land values, by the construction of offices, five-star hotels, an opera house, high-class residential properties and some retail developments, for example. That will be a move away from the traditional manufacturing and docks domination in the area.

If it is not possible to move into a Canary Wharf-type development, it will be extremely difficult to meet the civil engineering cost of the barrage and its running costs and maintain water quality in the man-made lake, for example, into the future.

It is necessary to consider whether the recession is a temporary blip or whether we are seeing a fundamental change within our economy. It has been going on for rather longer than something that could be described as a temporary blip, so we must consider whether it is a sea change that will have an effect on demand within the economy for offices on the one hand and for leisure, housing and manufacturing developments on the other. It is a difficult area but it must be considered in the context of the KPMG cost-benefit analysis, which is sadly lacking in any realistic assessment.

Having read the KPMG attempt at producing an updated cost-benefit analysis, we take the view that it is inadequate. It considers the supply of land and assumes that there will be demand for whatever use is contemplated. The critical factor is whether there is demand. That is why so many Opposition Members think that the barrage proposal, with its dependence on trying to get firms to move from London to Cardiff when prices are so low in London that it is likely that they will remain there for the next 10 or 20 years until the surplus office space is soaked up, is ill-founded. It seems that the Government are trying to impose a Welsh Canary Wharf on Cardiff. They are bringing forward what I think it is fair to describe as 1987 answers to the problems of 1992.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Morgan: I have finished my speech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I did not hear the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). Is he giving way to the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards)?

Mr. Morgan: No, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have finished.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): First, I apologise to the House for missing the debates which took place last week. The reason for my absence was tonsillitis. This afternoon I read the *Hansard* reports and noted especially the contribution made by my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands).

Amendments Nos. 80 and 88 turn on the public spending involved. They are designed to impose a cap on that spending, which has increased in the form of estimates over the years. Amendment No. 91 is, in effect, a request for an updated cost-benefit analysis of the scale of public

[Mr. Alan W. Williams]

investment proposed. Like everything else, costs increase over the years. The latest figure that I have is contained in a letter that the Minister wrote on 30 June to those of us who served on the Standing Committee.

The public sector contribution is assessed at £405 million. It is estimated that the total cost of construction and the associated infrastructure will be £662 million. Expenditure of £405 million of public money on the one project is on a scale far greater than that for any other projects in Wales. I wonder whether that money would not be much better spent on a series of other projects to improve our infrastructure. It is proposed to spend £405 million of public money on one project at a time when we are talking of public spending cuts or constraints. It seems extravagant to invest such a sum in one major project.

There will be a multiplier effect, and it is one that is calculated to attract private sector investment. We in the Labour party are interventionists: if we can use public money to prime private sector investment, that is fine. I question, however, how much private sector money will be attracted to the project, especially at a time of recession. In the documents issued over the past couple of years, it has been estimated that the multiplier will be a factor of seven. In other words, every £1 of public money will attract £7 from the private sector. That will amount to about £2 billion and the creation of 23,000 to 25,000 jobs. That is the scale of the estimates made by the Government and the development corporation.

In an article which appeared in the *Western Mail* last Saturday, the Minister is quoted as saying that the private sector investment that will be attracted will be more than £1 billion, or slightly more than £1 billion. I do not know whether that is the result of the recession or whether an error has been made. The Minister still believes that the scheme will create 23,000 jobs. In that same article, he described those who oppose the barrage as Luddites. That is incredible, coming from a Government who have brought the loss of 2 million or 3 million manufacturing jobs. Only last week we saw the debacle over pit closures, which affected Taff Merthyr and the Betws pit in my constituency. I hope that the Minister will reflect on the inappropriateness of his comments.

We have witnessed the serious problems encountered at Canary wharf over the past year. An economic boom may be the moment to realise prestige projects, but at a time of recession—when schools, roads, housing, and hospitals are underfunded—it is incredible that the Government should be pursuing this Bill.

There is an overwhelming need to reinvest in Britain's manufacturing base. The Library research notes suggest that the barrage scheme will create jobs—other than those in construction—in respect of shopping centres, commercial offices, schools and hospitals, industrial and high technology estates, tourism, cultural attractions, leisure amenities and 5,000 housing units. The emphasis is on service industries, which are suffering particularly badly in the recession. The project does not address the economic problems of the past two or three years.

Having attended every debate on the barrage in the past five years, I have reached the conclusion that the £400 million public money involved would be better spent in other ways. It is Welsh Office money and should be distributed throughout Wales. I accept that jobs are desperately needed in the Cardiff area, because three out of the four Cardiff constituencies figure in the top five suffering the worst unemployment. Cardiff is seen as a wealthy capital city, but in truth it suffers high unemployment. However, my own constituency, which is 60 miles from Cardiff, will not benefit to any extent—and that is true of the whole of north and west Wales.

The trickle-down theory has it that investing a lot of money in Cardiff will benefit the valleys and the rest of Wales, but it will not. It would be wiser to invest the money across the whole principality.

Public expenditure on the barrage should be capped, and a detailed cost benefit analysis made this year and next year to see whether jobs really will be created and whether there are not far better ways of using that public money.

7.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) has been suffering from tonsillitis and the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) from bronchitis—which occasions his much-changed appearance before us this evening. I hope that both hon. Gentlemen will soon fully recover.

Most of last Tuesday's debate took the form of a sermon by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands). That was appropriate at the time, because two days previously the hon. Gentleman and I had an opportunity to be in a state of grace—having attended a St. Luke's day service at St. David's church, Merthyr Tydfil, at which our mutual friend Canon Bill Morgan officiated.

Last Tuesday, I found myself listening to a self-confessed deja-vu-ist, when the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney made a sweeping condemnation of the economic appraisal. He does not like it, but he fails to produce any grounds for the claims that he makes. He casts the most unfair aspersions against reputable and professional firms. It was not KPMG alone who produced the appraisal but Chesterton, Conran Roche Planning, and Cooke and Arkwright. The good name and reputation of such firms is their most precious asset, and they would not lightly put their names to any appraisal——

Mr. Rowlands: In the valleys communities, Cooke and Arkwright is known as the hardest ground landlord of all. The Minister does not improve his case by reminding us that Cooke and Arkwright is involved in the concoction.

Mr. Jones: All four of the professional firms involved worked long and hard to produce the economical appraisal. If they were to attach their good names to a false appraisal, they would risk the reputations which are their best hope of future business.

The hon. Members for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney and for Carmarthen referred to barrage-related costs of £662 million. That figure is correctly described as the total cost of a development strategy including a barrage. As the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) pointed out, those costs are not strictly barrage-related. None the less, I confirm that the figure of £497 million in the updated economic appraisal is equivalent to the £662 million given in my letter of 30 June.

If Opposition Members compare the table on page 12 of the appraisal with the equivalent table in the January 1990 appraisal, they will see where the differences lie. As to the reduced costs of the peripheral distributor road, it is standard procedure in any economic appraisal to exclude money already spent when calculating net present value. The sums spent were excluded from both the with and without barrage scenarios, so both were treated equally.

The hon. Members for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney and for Neath (Mr. Hain) asked about the public sector contribution. Table A8 of the appraisal shows the public sector investment to be £349 million, which is equivalent to the £405 million given in my letter of 30 June.

Mr. Rowlands: Is the ratio of public to private expenditure higher or lower in the revised figures than it was in the original?

Mr. Jones: I shall come to that in a moment.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West asked whether there had been any further change in the estimated cost of barrage construction since the revision of the figures. There has been no further change since the figures that I gave him in Committee. Echoing the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, the hon. Gentleman asked whether the job estimate had been based purely on estimates of office space. The answer is no—the estimate of office space is based on detailed estimates of the commercial demand for such space. That is reinforced by, for example, the success of developments around the existing water edge in the Tarmac development.

The hon. Gentleman misquoted Chesterton as saying that nothing had changed in the property world. Chesterton has made modest adjustments to the growth rate, but significant cuts in the base values from which it started.

Mr. Morgan: The Minister is being terribly unrealistic if he is asking us to accept that there is anything in common between the Tarmac development at the top edge of Atlantic wharf—which is really the southern tip of the present commercial centre of Cardiff—and any developments near the pier head. Many of us know Tarmac's Atlantic 2000 development well, because members of our families are working on it. It is within easy walking distance of the city centre: that is one of its attractions. Other areas are very different, and cannot be considered extensions of the city centre.

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman is not being consistent. He cannot have it both ways. He cannot make that point while claiming, as he did in an earlier debate, that the dockside area alongside the Tarmac development is in need of management. Similarly, he related all his claims about the inland bay to that dockside area.

The hon. Member for Neath asked which utilities were covered by the reference on page 12 of the appraisal. The description is the same as in earlier appraisals, and covers gas, electricity and water. The £34 million figure represents the total cost of enhanced infrastructure, the bulk of which will be met by service companies. The development corporation will contribute, but its contribution will be refundable as the demand for services builds up.

The hon. Member for Neath also asked whether the cost figure assumed constant price inflation. The £152 million figure represents the cost at current prices. The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) asked how the leverage ratio had been calculated. That is set out on page 19 of the appraisal. The calculation was made on the same basis as that in the January 1990 economic appraisal.

The hon. Gentleman claimed that Tarmac had said that the barrage was not important to it. Tarmac actually said that, while its South crescent development was not dependent on the barrage, it firmly believed that the development of the whole of south Cardiff, including the waterfront, could not be successfully undertaken without the barrage. Tarmac also welcomes the Government's decision to introduce the barrage Bill as a catalyst for quality investment.

Opposition Members have not dwelt on the figures in the economic appraisal, and it may be helpful if I mention them. The same answer keeps coming back. According to the appraisal, there will be 23,200 permanent jobs with the barrage and 13,000 without it. There will be 8,800 construction man year without the barrage; with the barrage, there will be 7,700 more. The net present value without the barrage is minus £153 million, while constructing the barrage will provide an advantage of £272 million.

As for leverage, £3·9 per £1 of taxpayers' money would be achieved without the barrage. With the barrage, that is virtually doubled, to £7·50 of private sector investment for every £1 from the taxpayer. However we look at the question, on the best analysis—and the appraisal certainly provides the best analysis—we repeatedly see the gain to be achieved by building the barrage.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: The Minister said earlier that the 7·5 multiplier came from a document produced in January 1990. We had then been in recession for only one quarter. Now that we have had three years of recession, and many believe that we are moving rapidly towards a slump, should not the cost-benefit multiplier be recalculated?

Mr. Jones: I can reassure the hon. Gentleman. Exactly that happened with the KPMG report, which was published this month and to which the other three consultants also contributed. Page 3 states:

> "The leverage ratio of the barrage scenario is estimated to be 7·5. Whilst the leverage ratio of the without barrage scenario is 3·9. Therefore, the barrage scenario has an advantage of 3·6 over the without barrage scenario in terms of its leverage ratio."

I invite the hon. Gentleman to study the latest economic appraisal, which confirms the repeated claim in the earlier appraisals that we commissioned—that the barrage scenario is robust, and that not building the barrage would be the worst possible way to proceed.

The barrage is not just for Cardiff, as the hon. Member for Neath suggested. He was answered very solidly by the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Owen Jones), who pointed out that in attempting to gain new inward investment Cardiff is repeatedly shown to have the edge over other cities because of the redevelopment and the barrage proposal, which are generating enthusiasm.

What the appraisal does not include is any attempt to calculate the level of job creation outside Cardiff bay, let alone in the rest of Cardiff and south Wales as a whole. With such a massive investment in the south Wales economy, further benefits will clearly result—beyond what has been estimated so well in the economic appraisal. I hope that the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs.

[Mr. Jones]

Clwyd) will agree with me. I recall that she said at the outset that she wanted growth and expansion in south Wales, and this is the way to achieve it.

What emerges most clearly from the debate is that Opposition Members revel in gloom and doom. If they want to bring that about, they should indeed oppose the building of the barrage.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): The Minister has again failed to address some fundamental questions on the subject of cost. The Government's argument in support of the Bill is that the development would involve a huge injection of capital and public-sector investment, which ought to be greeted with uncritical enthusiasm. The Minister made that point again tonight. He has still to persuade us that concentrating investment on a particular area will not be at the expense of investment elsewhere.

The Government are on record as reaffirming that sufficient funding will be made available to enable the Cardifff Bay development corporation to complete its task —whatever the final price, I assume. That causes us several difficulties. We all know that the Government are now making crucial decisions on public expenditure priorities. The Minister must tell us whether he can justify the public expenditure costs involved in the barrage itself, and in other barrage-related projects, against the needs of Wales as a whole.

I find it difficult to take seriously what the Minister says about jobs. The Secretary of State seemed to experience some difficulty in listing the jobs that he claims to have created in Wales. Last week, he told us that 10,000 jobs had been created following the establishment of the Deeside industrial park. The true figure is nearer 5,000. There is a considerable difference between the two. On the same day, the Minister also asserted that there had been 8,000 job losses at Shotton steelworks. In fact, 10,000 jobs have been lost. Far from creating 20 per cent. more jobs than were lost, the Government have created 50 per cent. fewer. Whenever the Minister makes job promises, he falls well below the standards of statistical accuracy that we expect from the Welsh Office.

The Minister also seeks to persuade us that there will be new jobs for the valleys. Past promises of new jobs for the valleys have not materialised. The main economic aim of the valleys initiative, created in 1988, was to bring between 25,000 and 30,000 new jobs to the valleys. When the programme was created in 1988, male unemployment in the valleys was 18·9 per cent. In April of this year—we are waiting for the new figures—it was 18·7 per cent. The new figures for which we are waiting will undoubtedly show a further rise in unemployment. Therefore, the valleys initiative failed in its major aim.

8 pm

My hon. Friends know that the jobless figures are increasing all the time. With the closure of the pits, more job losses are on the way. The question addressed by the amendments, which is a major concern for us, arises from the blank cheque that seems to be available for the Cardiff bay development and from the no cheque at all for the urgent needs of other parts of Wales, particularly the valleys.

The rest of Wales cannot fail to feel anxious. In particular, the valleys cannot fail to feel anxious. They so desperately need investment to compensate for the acute deprivation in those areas. There can be few regions in Europe that have had to accept as much economic restructuring since the war as the valleys of south Wales. Social and economic deprivation of the kind found in the valleys is not easily eradicated. It is dishonest of the Government to suggest otherwise.

Bearing in mind the Government's stranglehold on local authorities in Wales in both revenue and capital spending, I am certain that none of them would be allowed to spend anything like the amount that is to be spent by the Cardiff Bay development corporation. The Government's intention to scrap the Barnett formula for public expenditure makes the amendments even more critical.

Mr. Rowlands: By the nature of the guillotine and the fact that the Government intend to push the Bill through at speed, it appears that capital expenditure on this scheme is immune from any public expenditure cuts. Has my hon. Friend heard whether equal immunity applies to vital capital expenditure programmes of the kind that we need in our communities?

Mrs. Clwyd: My hon. Friend makes a pertinent point. We require that assurance tonight from the Minister. I have not heard that important capital projects that are needed in Wales will be immune from the public expenditure cuts. We should welcome such an assurance from the Minister. Can he tell us whether these capital expenditure projects will be immune?

As the Government have curtailed consideration of the Bill, we do not intend to press the amendment to a Division. Nevertheless, we should like the Minister to tell us how he intends to balance spending on this one project within spending on other important projects. We recognise that the project is important to south Cardiff. It is important for the regeneration of the Cardiff docks area. We want to know, however, how the Government intend to balance spending on the barrage project against other urgent and pressing projects in Wales.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): I have heard the hon. Lady twice refer to the Barnett formula. As a Member for a Welsh constituency, I was concerned to hear her declare for the second time that the Barnett formula is to be scrapped. Perhaps she will refer me to the announcement that has been made concerning the scrapping of the formula.

Mrs. Clwyd: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman should ask his hon. Friends to assure him that the Barnett formula is not to be scrapped. The Secretary of State for Wales was unable to give me that assurance. Until he gives it to me, we shall presume that the Barnett formula is to be scrapped. I see that the Under-Secretary of State does not wish to give us that assurance tonight. On that basis, I say again that the Opposition's arguments on costs and the questions that we have asked the Secretary of State for Wales have not been answered, which we consider to be extremely unsatisfactory.

Amendment negatived.

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): I beg to move amendment No. 83, in page 1, line 7, at beginning insert

'Subject to subsection (9) below'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this, it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 84, in page 1, line 7, at beginning insert

'Subject to subsection (10) below'.

No. 85, in page 1, line 14, leave out 'associated' and insert

'consequential environmental and coastal protection.'.

No. 12, in page 2, line 24, at end insert

'(7) The Development Corporation shall not commence the works referred to in subsection (1) above, until it has made and published in full an agreement with Associated British Ports in relation to the control of water abstraction rights at the Blackweir Dock Feeder.'.

No. 13, in page 2, line 35, at end add—

'(8) At least 8 weeks prior to the commencement of any works, the Development Corporation shall consult South Glamorgan County Council on the proposed pattern of traffic movements during the construction period, including the hours of operation. At least 6 weeks prior to the commencement of works the Development Corporation shall publish proposals, amended in the light of those consultations, for a 2 week period of public consultation.'

No. 89, in page 2, line 35, at end add—

'(9) No structure or structures shall be constructed until after the completion of an environmental impact assessment statement as laid down in Annexe I of the Environmental Impact Assessments Directive of the European Community.'.

No. 90, in page 2, line 35, at end add—

'(10) The Corporation shall not commence the works specified in Schedule I to this Act until sewer diversion works ensuring full compliance with the European Community Municipal Wastewater Treatment Directive for Water, entering the impoundment shall have been completed.'.

No. 92, in page 2, line 35, at end add—

'(15) The Development Corporation shall consult the angling interests on the rivers Twey, Taff and Ely in respect of the design and execution of the works relating to fish passes in Work No. 1 of Schedule 1 to this Act.'.

No. 24, in page 3, line 12, clause 2, at end add—

'(7) before executing any of the works authorised by section 1 above, the Development Corporation shall publish proposals in cooperation with the National Rivers Authority showing how it will comply with the European Community Municipal Wastewater Directive'.

(8) Before executing any of the works authorised by Section 1 above, the Development Corporation shall publish proposals for a low flow water budget specifying the sources of water to meet the demands of the fish passes, sluices, lock gates and Dock Feeder and the water sources of water to match those requirements under such low flow conditions.'.

No. 95, in page 3, line 21, clause 4, at beginning insert 'subject to subsection (6) below'.

No. 97, in page 3, line 42, clause 4, at end add—

'(6) In executing any of the powers authorised by subsections (1) to (3) above, the Development Corporation shall not discriminate between different classes of landowner or occupier.'.

No. 29, in page 4, line 16, clause 7, at end insert

'and the residential areas affected by its creation'.

No. 99, in page 4, line 16, clause 7, at end insert

'and shall be exercised so as to give priority to the flow of water in the fish passes at periods of low flow'.

No. 101, in page 4, line 25, clause 8, at beginning insert 'Subject to subsection (7) below'.

No. 32, in page 4, line 26, clause 8, leave out 'reasonable'.

No. 33, in page 4, line 28, clause 8, after 'protect' add 'or improve'.

No. 35, in page 4, line 38, clause 8, leave out 'reasonably'

No. 36, in page 4, line 40, clause 8, after 'current', insert 'and prospective'.

No. 37, in page 5, line 6, clause 8, leave out 'reasonable'.

No. 38, in page 5, line 10, clause 8, after 'Corporation', insert

'in co-operation with, and on the advice of the Environmental Health Officers of the Cardiff City councils and the Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council.'

No. 39, in page 5, line 24, clause 8, leave out subsection (6).

No. 40, in page 5, line 28, clause 8, leave out 'the Secretary of State' and insert

'a committee of arbitration of three persons to be nominated by the Secretary of State, the Cardiff City Council and the Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council and the Institute of Environmental Health Officers.'.

No. 41, in page 5, line 29, clause 8, at end add

'(7) The Development Corporation shall publish an annual report on all such disputes.'.

No. 104, in page 5, line 46, clause 9, at end insert—

'(d) the maintenance and enjoyment of residential amenities on land adjacent to the inland bay.'.

No. 53, in page 6, line 4, clause 9, at end insert—

'(4) The Development Corporation shall have regard when operating the barrage, to the need to minimise damage to property, both residential and industrial and increases in industrial costs for businesses on or near the inland bay.'.

No. 57, in page 7, line 1, clause 12, leave out 'reasonable'.

No. 58, in page 7, line 18, clause 12, at end insert—

'(5) Nothing in this section shall interfere with the right of the Development Corporation to challenge in the courts the reasonableness of any direction given under subsection (1)(b) above.'.

No. 59, in page 7, line 19, clause 12, leave out subsection (5).

No. 60, in page 7, line 21, clause 12, leave out from 'to' to end and add

'an arbitration panel comprising three persons nominated by respectively the Secretary of State, the Cardiff City Council and Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council and the Institute of Environmental Health Officers'.

Mr. Murphy: Although we may now be in a slightly calmer mood than we were when we discussed the guillotine motion, there is one matter of principle, as this group of amendments is far-reaching, to which the Minister ought to refer. Why is it that, during all the months of consideration of the Bill—we were told by the Leader of the House this afternoon how many hours we had spent upon it—we found that amendments tabled not just by my hon. Friends who oppose the Cardiff Bay barrage scheme, but also those tabled on behalf of its supporters—including my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), Cardiff city council, of which the Minister used to be a member, and other responsible bodies—have not been accepted, apart from a few anodyne ones.

When the Government had a huge majority, they thought that they could do anything they liked and steamroller whatever legislation they wished through the House. If the Secretary of State for Wales and the Minister are serious about there being consensus in local government and about how Wales is run, some of the amendments that have been tabled in the past few months, and certainly those tabled today and last week, were worthy of something more than summary dismissal. This group of amendments is far reaching and varied.

Amendments Nos. 83, 84 and 85 relate to environmental and coastal protection. They were tabled because of the need to tighten up the responsibility of both the Cardiff

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Bay development corporation and the Welsh Office. The drafting of the Bill is both sloppy and poor. The amendments would improve its drafting.

Amendment No. 12 refers to Associated British Ports and to co-operation between that body and the development corporation. Amendment No. 13 is of considerable interest to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, as this is his constituency. The amendment refers to traffic movements while the bay is being constructed and to the need to consult local authorities, particularly South Glamorgan county council and local residents, about the nature of the construction work and to ensure that any disruption is minimised.

Amendments Nos. 89, 90 and 24 concern European Community regulations regarding the environmental impact assessment and the diversion of sewer works. The Minister did not provide a satisfactory answer when we discussed the matter in Committee, so we are keen to ask him why it is that the Government have decided to choose a different annex of the environmental impact assessment directive of the European Community. For some reason, the Government have decided to choose the weaker of the two. That means that they do not have to take account of, or to publish the views of, regulatory agencies; they are required to publish only the views of consultants.

Amendments Nos. 92 and 99 relate to consultation with anglers over fish passes and other associated matters. There is bound to be an increase in angling for salmon in the rivers Taff and Ely. There should be more substantial consultation with and representation for the angling community in Wales.

Amendments Nos. 35 to 41 and 57 to 60 deal with the National Rivers Authority and the so-called reasonable nature of the directive that it gives the Cardiff Bay development corporation.

The last matter covered by the amendments is of much importance, and the Minister should pay close attention to it. The National Rivers Authority has identified a number of important matters such as surface water flooding, ground water flooding, sea defence, polluted rivers and fishing. Given its statutory duty to protect the environment and the residents of Cardiff, the NRA is in a different position from the development corporation, which was set up to develop Cardiff.

The Bill's provisions on arbitration are unsatisfactory. The Secretary of State should not be the person to resolve any differences between the National Rivers Authority and the Cardiff Bay development corporation, for the simple reason that members of Cardiff Bay development corporation are appointed by the Secretary of State and are responsible only to him. How can he be a fair and proper judge of conflicts between the statutory National Rivers Authority and the Cardiff Bay development corporation? We argued and debated that in Committee, but we believe that it is so important that it should be debated on the Floor of the House.

There are many different amendments and the Minister will have to spend some time on them. We believe them to be of great significance and we are disappointed that we have not had longer to discuss them.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I am grateful for the helpful way in which my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) moved the amendments. As he rightly said, a number of them are constructive and helpful. They seek clarity on the involvement of local authorities.

It is clear that the decisions of the development corporation have been assisted by the involvement of local authorities. The Government's mechanisms have often gone wrong when they have not sought to consult local authorities, which have the benefit of years of experience. That is particularly apposite to the advice of environmental health officers, which one of the amendments seeks to include in the Bill. That need not be written into the Bill, but the requirements of the Bill help to ensure that there is confidence on all sides and that relevant factors are taken into consideration.

The situation of anglers is important. From being worried at an early stage, I have been impressed by the amount of consultation to ensure that the design of the barrage will allow the passage of fish and therefore will offer improvements to anglers in the bay area and further up the river. The amendments seek to underline and underwrite the guarantees that have been given on those issues.

8.15 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen rightly foresaw that I would want to speak specifically to amendment No. 13, to which I referred briefly in the debate on the guillotine motion. The Minister responded in a way that I can only describe as not wholly negative. May I press him a little further, however? I think that he was suggesting that, because much of the material for the construction of the barrage can come from the seaward side or through the docks area, there will not necessarily have to be many movements through the streets of my constituency. I am certain that he is right, and I accept his comments in the constructive sense in which he made them, but things change over time, as we have found all too often.

There have been major changes, for example, in the way in which work on the primary distributor road has been undertaken through Butetown, and whereas the end result will be greatly to the benefit of my constituents, as "cut and cover" means that the community will not be split in two, it is certain that the extent of the engineering works has been greatly increased. Thus, in the short term, it has had a quite devastating effect on Mount Stuart primary school and on the people who live in the area. Some of the damage to the immediate environment in the construction period was not sufficiently appreciated in advance of the work starting. Most of those involved would now agree with that in the light of experience.

I am seeking a requirement for consultation in advance so that traffic movements can be taken fully into account and so that those who are making the arrangements will listen to two voices—that of the county council, with its elected representatives and technical expertise to assess the likely impact of traffic movements and, secondly, that of the local community. The amendment does not seek to cause delay or problems because the Bill provides for consultation rather than requirements that would be difficult for any organisation to meet.

To the extent that traffic movements can be confined to the seaward end or through Alexandra docks, as the Minister suggested, amendment No.13 places no burden on the development corporation or on those involved in the construction. It becomes relevant, therefore, only if there is a problem involving traffic movements through domestic streets.

In that event, the safeguard of the amendment would enable local people to know that the county council would have a chance of commenting constructively, as I am sure it would, on proposed traffic movements and would offer those local people the opportunity of commenting before work began. Had that been so in relation to the primary distributor road, bearing in mind the changes that had to be made at late stages, I am certain that some of the problems could have been avoided and overcome. Instead, amendments to the arrangements had to be made on the hoof, and things that should have been anticipated were dealt with almost in retrospect.

I ask the Minister to recognise the constructive nature of many of the amendments and the fact that, if taken with the helpful way in which he has sought to respond to how traffic movements will be managed, amendment No.13 would be constructive, would be seen as a form of reassurance to my constituents and would not place any difficulties in the way of the development corporation or the construction industry in getting on with the job of building the barrage.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: I should like to make a few comments in support of amendments Nos. 89, 90 and 24.

Amendment No. 89 seeks an environmental impact assessment according to the European directive. The other two amendments refer to the sewer diversion works and the European Community's directive municipal waste water treatment.

There are real and serious environmental problems in setting up a barrage on the Taff and the Ely. That is the case for any estuary barrage. In view of the condition of the water in the Taff and the Ely, I have no doubt that the wisest thing to do is to let it flow out to sea as quickly as possible. About 500,000 people live upstream from the Taff and the Ely, so the water has a high nutrient load. Either sewage or digested sewage gives nitrates and phosphates, so the water is nutrient-rich.

The map in the National Rivers Authority's survey of rivers, canals and estuaries in England and Wales in 1990 shows that the Taff and the Ely are the most polluted rivers in Wales. Fortunately, Wales is mainly rural and most of our rivers are good in terms of sewage and nutrients. However, the Ely is poor along most of its length and is in the bottom tenth in terms of quality of water. The Taff, with its tributaries the Cynon and Rhondda, especially around Cardiff, is of only fair quality. It is in the bottom quarter of rivers in terms of quality.

The Severn estuary, around the Taff and the Ely, around Cardiff and around Bristol, is the most heavily polluted and the poorest in quality around the Welsh coast. Simply on environmental and pollution grounds, the Taff and the Ely are the last rivers that we should think of damming or blocking with a barrage purely in terms of the environment. The impounded water will be polluted.

During the winter when there is heavy rain, there will be quite a good outflow of the impounded water and the retention time in the barrage will be only three, four or five days. In the summer, especially in dry summers, the square mile of water held back will have an average retention time of up to 50 days. I have been told that the water will be concentrated in terms of nitrates and phosphates. In hot summers, there will be problems of eutrophication. That is clearly admitted by the proponents of the scheme and in all comments on the scheme.

How does one deal with the environmental problems as they arise? There will be eutrophication and algal blooms. There are two solutions to the problem of algal blooms. One is to skim off the algae that have proliferated and the second is to pump oxygen into the water. Both will have to be applied.

I am glad that there is a requirement in the Bill that there should be not less than 5 mg dissolved oxygen per litre at all times. The water should at all times be at least 50 per cent. saturated in terms of oxygen content. The question then is what one does when the water is low in oxygen. The answer in the Bill is to pump in oxygen.

Unfortunately, pumping in oxygen is an unproven technology. The River Towy in my constituency has problems downstream from Carmarthen because of the sewage load entering the river there. In hot summers it has a low oxygen content. We have oxygen injection equipment in Carmarthen to resuscitate the river, but it does not work.

In the Select Committee, I was anxious to find out whether there had been detailed research into the problem. I refer to the proceedings of the Select Committee and I will quote a brief extract from the evidence given by the NRA on 13 February 1992. The hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) asked Dr. Charles Pattinson, the NRA's expert on the condition of water, various questions about oxygenation equipment. The hon. Member for Wyre Forest said:

> "Perhaps I could explore some aspects of the technology with you. First of all, the vitox machines. How old are they? How long have they been in use in various parts of the world?"

The answer was:

> "I am afraid I do not know."

That is the expert on oxygen injection. Dr. Pattinson then said:

> "A number of years; but I am afraid that I am not aware of the exact length of time; but bearing in mind we were discussing these things with the Corporation in 1988 or 1987 they were proven pieces of equipment available on the market at that time; so they have been around for a number of years."

The next question was:

> "Have you had any personal experience with them?"

The answer was, "Not myself." The next question was, "Have you seen one?" The reply was:

> "I have seen videos of them. I did not actually participate personally in the original programme, but I have seen videos of them."

It strikes me that, in building the barrage, we know that there will frequently be problems of low oxygen in hot summers. We seem to be depending on oxygenating water. However, the expert from the NRA said that he had no experience of the machines involved, but that he had only seen videos of them.

The Library has prepared neutrally for us an excellent research note on the barrage. The note says of oxygen and the resuscitation equipment:

> "field trials have not been able to demonstrate unequivocally that injected oxygen is effectively dissolved, dispersed and retained."

It is an unproven technology.

I have serious doubts which have not been allayed in Committee or by what I have read of the NRA's evidence to us. We could create a major environmental problem. We will be damming the two most polluted rivers in Wales. Some 500,000 people live along their length. The water is

[Mr. Alan W. Williams]

nutrient-rich, especially at times of low water flow. In hot summers, there will be algal blooms and problems of low oxygen. My serious concern is that we shall not be able to solve those problems.

If amendments Nos. 89, 90 and 24 were accepted, we should require a 1992 environmental impact assessment to European standards. The sewer diversions which will need to be carried out around Cardiff must conform to the highest standard in accordance with the EC municipal waste water treatment objective. I ask the Minister and the Government seriously to consider accepting the amendment.

Mr. Morgan: I will reinforce some of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) on the low flow budget with which amendments Nos. 12 and 99 deal. Will the Government allow the day to pass without telling us a little more about whether they have managed to strike an agreement with Associated British Ports about the amount of water for which it has an abstraction licence? Will it take water out of the Taff during summer droughts which could mean that little new water comes down the river to top up the water behind the barrage?

8.30 pm

That is a serious problem, because Associated British Ports is a major player in this game and the company's view will be important in deciding how or whether the barrage will work. ABP has abstraction rights at Blackweir that are greater than the total flow of the Taff during drought periods such as that which occurred during August 1991. ABP does not exercise those rights fully now because of the decline of the steel industry, for which the feeder was originally intended, and the decline of the docks, but nevertheless it has the right to abstract 4 cu m per second. We need to know whether ABP has agreed to give up some of its abstraction rights, which date back to the building of Cardiff docks in the 1840s and the construction of the feeder to top up the level of the docks, without which the export of coal from south Wales could not have taken place. That historic right gives ABP complete control over the jugular vein as regards the water quality of the lake.

The amendments are about water quality in general and amendments Nos. 12 and 99 are particularly related to the question whether the Government as yet have a written undertaking from ABP that it will give up its right to abstract 4 cu m per second at Blackweir. If they do not, it is irresponsible of them to attempt to persuade the House to pass the Bill.

At first I thought that, among the copious documents with which the Government were good enough to provide us last week, was a set of legal undertakings between the National Rivers Authority, the development corporation and the City of Cardiff in relation to the problem of ABP's abstraction rights. Not being a lawyer, I am never completely sure what I have just read, but as far as I am aware, the documents do not cover that problem. We still do not know, therefore, whether the Government have an operable low flow budget. It will not be operable unless ABP gives up its rights at Blackweir. We raised this problem in Committee in July. We were not given an answer then, and we should not allow tonight's proceedings to end without getting an understanding on that from the Government.

Many people believed that the pretty favourable terms on which the Government agreed to rent the new office block built by ABP's property subsidiary, Grosvenor Waterside, had something to do with this matter. That property was pre-let to the Government quango, the Welsh Health Common Services Authority, just before the last election and we thought that the handsome rent may have been agreed upon in return for an undertaking by ABP not to torpedo the Bill by saying, "If you want to make a lake you must buy our abstraction rights at Blackweir. If you do not, the lake will be an algae-infested swamp"—as it will be in periods of low flow such as those that occurred in 1986 and 1991, when the problems of nutrient-rich water referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen will arise.

If the Minister does not come clean with us tonight, the water will not come clean into Cardiff bay. Without the salt water flushing effect provided by the tide water, we shall have to depend heavily on the quality of the water flowing into the lake. About a third of the flow of the Taff and half the flow of the Ely consists of treated sewage, so we need to know what controls there will be. If an ABP takes water off to top up the docks or provide cooling water for the Allied Steel and Wire finishing mills around the edge of the Bute east dock, the water quality system will not be operable.

The Minister has been good enough to say, albeit late in the day, that he will be accepting five amendments tabled by the Opposition, and the spirit of a sixth, amendment No. 13. It is good that he has suddenly been overtaken by the belief that some of the Opposition's ideas are better than the Government's—as they have been on so many things recently. However, as happened during the pit closures debate last week, the Government seem to have come only half way towards meeting our concerns and have stopped short of significant concessions.

The Minister has accepted that it would be a good idea if the two riparian local authorities were represented on the advisory committee. That is fair enough, but the same should also apply to our proposal that an arbitration panel should have the last word on matters relating to water quality in the event of a dispute developing between the development corporation and the NRA. That panel should include representatives of the local authorities, the Institute of Environmental Health Officers and the Secretary of State.

Why does not the Minister accept amendment No. 60 in the spirit in which he has accepted amendments Nos. 66 and 64 which deal with the advisory committee? That would remove much of the worry that the Secretary of State would fix any decisions in favour of the quango for which he is responsible and against the NRA, for which he is not responsible because it is a Department of the Environment quango. Having accepted the principle of local authority involvement, it would not be difficult for the Minister to come the other 50 per cent. of the way and so avoid the suggestion that matters can be fixed by the Secretary of State and his mates on the development corporation.

Let us get away from the idea of the Secretary of State and his mates. Let us bring in the local authorities and give them a voice. Why not have a proper, neutral, objective arbitration panel and give it the last word on water quality, so that those of us who represent areas around the lake and care about what it looks like in summer and whether or not it is an amenity, some guarantee that independent and objective advice will be available and that the panel will have the last word in the event of a dispute.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) referred to the spirit of reasonableness in which I had agreed to accept amendments. But that is exactly the spirit in which I started off last Tuesday, in introducing new clause 1 and moving related amendments. What did the hon. Gentleman do? Was he reasonable? No. He went into the Lobby seeking to vote down proposals made in response to requests from him made in Committee. I continue to try to be as reasonable as possible and to accept whatever amendments I can. I hope that my reply will be full reassurance to the hon. Gentleman.

I have been doubly struck by a feeling of déjà vu. After the speech by the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams), I found what he said echoed clearly at columns 119 and 120 of the Committee *Hansard* of 2 July. On that occasion, too, the hon. Member for Cardiff, West spoke directly after him and said that he was rising to reinforce some of the comments made by his hon. Friend.

The hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) was critical of what he called sloppiness. I take it that he means to be helpful and to remove vagueness from the wording, but I would point out to him that clause 1 specifically confers authority to execute only those works specified in schedule 1. The barrage and the outer harbour are listed in clause 1(1)(a). It follows, therefore, that the associated structures of the Penarth head promenade and the breasting dolphins are included. The breasting dolphins are neither environmental nor for coastal protection but for the protection of shipping. There is nothing vague about that.

The hon. Gentleman went on to refer to annexe 2 to the Council directive on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private sector projects on the environment. That merely lists classes of project for which an environmental assessment must be required in accordance with measures adopted by member states. In contrast, annexe 2 lists classes of projects which are to be made subject to assessments where member states consider that their characteristics so require. However, there is no difference in the type of environmental statements produced under annexe 1 or annexe 2.

Mr. Morgan: Does the Minister accept that, under annexe 2, the design of the environmental impact assessment is entirely different from the EIA under annexe 1? Under annexe 1, it is compulsory to consult the regulatory bodies such as the NRA and the environmental health officer of Cardiff city council in this case. That was not done because the easy annexe 1 EIA was used, not the more difficult type under annexe 2.

Mr. Jones: That is not a new point. I have carried out research, and I am assured that there is no difference. I remind the hon. Gentleman that Standing Order 27(A) for private business introduces a requirement for EIAs to be submitted in relation to certain classes of project for authorisation by means of private legislation of this kind. An EIA statement has been submitted in accordance with the Standing Order in respect of the Bill. The assessment of the environmental impact project, to which the directive applies, is carried out as part of the consent procedure. In relation to projects proposed to be authorised by Act of Parliament, the assessment is carried out by Parliament in its consideration of the Bill.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) again referred to amendment No. 13. The barrage is a major construction project, and clearly, people who live in the area have legitimate concerns about how the impact of construction traffic can be kept to a minimum. I appreciate that, and it was very telling when the hon. Gentleman referred to the impact of the present construction on Mount Stuart primary school.

The issue has been fully considered in the EIA. Page 100 of the statement outlines the main impact of construction traffic for the barrage. It makes the point that the majority of the materials are likely to be brought to the site by water or by rail thus reducing significantly the project's traffic impact.

The proposed traffic measures are set out in page 137 of the environmental statement. The main site access will be through Queen Alexandra dock. The road access through the Penarth marina at the southern end of the barrage will be severely restricted and limited to personnel access and special abnormal loads on a very limited basis. Personnel access will be by bus from adjoining parking areas, possibly on the Ferry road site as the most likely and convenient location.

I understand why the amendments have been tabled. However, I contend that their spirit has already been complied with by the publication of the environmental assessment which covers those points, but I look forward to what is in the environmental assessment working to satisfy the local community through the offices of the highway authority.

Mr. Michael: I appreciate the constructive way in which the Minister is approaching the discussion. As he clearly will not accept the amendment, does he expect the development corporation to undertake the kind of consultations, in general terms, that are outlined in the amendment without that being a legal requirement? If he could confirm that, I am sure that that would give us some confidence in accepting the way forward that he has suggested.

Mr. Jones: I hope that I can satisfy the hon. Gentleman. Yes, that would be my expectation. I would regard it as normal and proper that there would be appropriate consultations and that there would be the greatest regard for the local community.

Amendment No. 24 deals with the urban waste water directive and the water budget. I oppose the first part of the amendment. The NRA has not asked for the development corporation's proposals for complying with the urban waste water directive to be published. As for publishing details of the water budget, I agree the principle involved. Paragraph 4(c) of schedule 3 requires that,

"before the commencement of construction of the barrage",

the corporation must submit to the NRA for approval proposals of how the minimum flow of water through the fish pass should be maintained.

I explained in Standing Committee that work was in progress on such an agreement. In particular, it will be necessary to agree with Associated British Ports a limitation of the flow down the Taff feeder. Negotiations between ABP and the corporation on that issue have

[Mr. Jones]

progressed well since Standing Committee. The discussions between the corporation and ABP have been carried out in a very constructive manner, and I understand that the parties consider that agreement on the quantity of the water that ABP requires is very close. I am happy to give an undertaking that the information submitted to the NRA in compliance with paragraph 4(c) of schedule 3 will be published before construction begins.

8.45 pm

Amendment No. 12 deals with a related point. I cannot accept the wording of the amendment as drafted, but I am happy to publish details of the water budget—subject, of course, to the agreement of Associated British Ports. Amendments Nos. 32, 35, 37 to 40 and 57 to 60 are similar in principle to amendments tabled in Standing Committee. I have to resist them now, for the same reasons that I had to resist their predecessors: they would weaken the NRA's powers of control over the barrage and inland bay.

The Government do not envisage many, if any, references to the Secretary of State on the basis that directions by the NRA are unreasonable. However, without the test of reasonableness, there would be no basis on which a potential dispute between the NRA and the development corporation could be considered by my right hon. Friend or by the arbitration committee proposed by the amendments. The test of reasonableness is therefore familiar in law. We do not wish to see the Secretary of State take over the NRA's functions, as it has statutory responsibility for those matters. Still less do we wish to see an arbitration committee of the type proposed usurp functions in which the NRA has a national role.

The appropriate and well precedented way of determining such disputes between two statutory bodies is reference to the Secretary of State. The ultimate guarantee of his objectivity is the fact that his decision would be potentially subject to judicial review. We do not wish to see two statutory bodies resorting to the courts in the way envisaged in the amendments.

Mr. Murphy: Will the Minister quote the precedents to which he has just referred?

Mr. Jones: I do not think that I can quote the precedents off the top of my head. However, I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

The environmental health functions of the district council are already covered appropriately in the regulations that will be made to protect the interests of the city council and in clause 15(4)(c) and (d), which require consultation with the council on byelaws in the area including those regulating water sports. The additional reference proposed in the amendments is therefore superfluous.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) moved an identical amendment in Committee to amendment No. 92. He appeared to accept that there was no need for further consultation with angling interests and he withdrew the amendment. I know that he had hoped to secure a place on the Cardiff bay advisory committee for the angling interests on the Taff and Ely in return for withdrawing his amendment. However, I was unable to respond positively, for reasons that I explained at the time.

There is fully adequate control over the design of the fish pass. That has been the subject of extensive consultations with the NRA which has now agreed a design which is much more complex than the design that was first proposed. The NRA is the appropriate statutory body with responsibility for the protection of fisheries. In addition, clause 7(1)(c) requires the corporation to operate the barrage in accordance with any reasonable direction of the NRA to protect fish in the inland bay or allow the passage of migratory fish to or from the bay.

The design of the fish pass also requires the approval of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. That relates to schedule 3, paragraph 4(1)(d). I am not aware of any remaining problems on the issue which would justify reopening the design of the fish pass. Indeed, none of the angling interests petitioned against the Bill.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 2

WORKS: SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Murphy: I beg to move amendment No. 14, in page 2, line 37, after 'use', insert 'and that sluices are operational'.

I understand that the Government accept this amendment.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Government have no difficulty in accepting this amendment, but the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) may wish to reflect on whether it is necessary. Clearly, the sluices must be operational before the Rivers Taff and Ely are totally obstructed. The proposed method of construction requires that locks and sluices be completed and operational before work commences on in-filling the last 250 m gap between the embankment and the structures at the Penarth end of the barrage. Schedule 3, paragraph 2(1)(ii) requires that works or operations shall not be commenced until details have been approved by the National Rivers Authority. I can assure hon. Members that the NRA would insist that the sluices were operational before the rivers were finally obstructed. Nonetheless, I am happy to accept the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Murphy: I beg to move amendment. No. 15, in page 2, line 39, after 'agree', insert

', for reasons of better flood protection and for no other reason,'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 98, in clause 7, page 4, line 16, at end insert

'and the residential, commercial and recreational land and property affected by the impoundment and the associated rise in groundwater.'.

No. 100, in clause 7, page 4, line 19, leave out 'or alleviate'.

No. 30, in clause 7, page 4, line 19, after 'flooding', insert

'including flooding by impregnation of the soil'.

No. 34, in clause 8, page 4, line 30, after 'flooding', insert

', including flooding by impregnation of the soil'.

No. 102, in clause 8, page 4, line 30, after 'flooding', insert

', including by saturation of the ground through rising ground water'.

No. 103, in clause 8, page 5, line 29, at end add—

'(7) The Development Corporation shall operate the barrage in accordance with directions from the Cardiff City Council in order

(a) to alleviate flooding arising from rising ground water levels; and'.

No. 42, in clause 9, page 5, line 34, leave out 'between' and insert 'of'.

No. 43, in clause 9, page 5, line 34, leave out 'and four and a half'.

No. 44, in clause 9, page [illegible] line 34, leave out 'or thereabouts'.

No. 75, in clause 20, page 12, line 13, after 'repairing', insert 'and compensating financially for.'

No. 115, in clause 20, page 12, line 13, after 'property', insert

'including the making of financial compensation for such damage'.

No. 136, in clause 20, page 12, line 13 after 'property', insert ', health and amenity'.

No. 76, in clause 20, page 12, line 17, at end insert

', provided that no such regulation shall affect the entitlement of any persons to groundwater damage protection'.

No. 77, in clause 20, page 12, line 17, at end insert

'; but no regulations shall be made which will reduce the rights, powers and duties under Schedule 7.'.

No. 78, in clause 20, page 12, line 17 at end insert—

'(2A) Before making any regulation under subsection (2) above the Secretary of State shall consult any persons or bodies whose entitlement to groundwater damage protection may be affected by the regulation.'.

No. 79, in clause 20, page 12, line 17 at end insert—

'(3) No amendment shall be made under (2) above which shall in any way abridge reduce or limit the rights to protection by way of works, financial compensation or access to information of those occupying or owning property so affected.'.

No. 116, in clause 20, page 12, line 20 at end add—

'(4) The Secretary of State shall report to Parliament every three years from the date of impoundement on the operation of the groundwater damage protection provisions enacted under subsection (1) above.'.

No. 117, in clause 20, page 12, line 20 at end add—

'(5) The Secretary of State shall review the extent of the protected property area specified in Schedule 6 to this Act and may extend its coverage after each triannual review.'.

No. 137, in schedule 7, page 31, line 14 at end insert, 'in relation to persons, means a survey based on epdemiological or individual health measurement principles acceptable to the Medical Research Council and the General Medical Council, and in relation to amenity means a survey of domestic heating, comfort, micro-climate and other relevant indices of social well-being'.

No. 138, in schedule 7, page 33, line 27, at end insert—

(8) The Development Corporation shall carry out and publish a survey before impoundment shall commence of the health and well-being of the residential areas within the Protected Property Line, paying particular regard to the infant mortality rate, general morbidity and mortality rate domestic heating costs, micro-climate, incidence of fog and mist, hours of sunshine and levels of traffic accidents.

(9) The Development Corporation shall carry out repeat surveys at its own expense at the written request of and with reasonable notice from the advisory committee at intervals of not less than three years.'.

No. 126, in schedule 7, page 33, line 33, leave out '£40' and insert '£25'.

No. 139, in schedule 7, page 34, line 41, at end insert—

'(e) Carry out any investigation into cost of ambient temperature and microclimate within the residential areas falling within the Protected Property line and of allied changes in health, domestic heating costs, and traffic management requirements as is appropriate'.

No. 127, in schedule 7, page 35, line 24, leave out 'six' and insert 'three'.

No. 128, in schedule 7, page 35, line 26, at end add—

'(1A) Within the protected property area, the Development Corporation may not contest such a requirement except where it can prove that such property damage is attributable to other causes than groundwater damage arising from the impoundment.'.

No. 129, in schedule 7, page 35, line 37, leave out 'six' and insert 'three'.

No. 130, in schedule 7, page 37, line 23, at end insert 'or the property blight arising in the area in general where groundwater damage has occurred.'.

No. 131, in schedule 7, page 38, line 32, leave out

'a garden belonging to a relevant building'

and insert

'land except to the extent it is or forms part of a building'.

No. 132, in schedule 7, page 38, line 39, leave out sub-paragraph (2).

No. 133, in schedule 7, page 38, line 44, at end insert—

'(3) A person has a relevant interest in land if—

(a) he is entitled to dispose of the fee simple of the land or any part of it (whether in possession or reversion);

(b) he holds, or is entitled to the rents and profits of, the land or any part of it under a lease or agreement granted or extended for a term of years certain of which not less than three years remain unexpired; or

(c) he is a person entitled under Part I of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 to acquire the freehold or an extended lease of the land or any part of it and has, on or before the relevant day, given notice under that Act to the landlord of his desire to have the freehold or an extended base; unless he is mortgagee not in possession.'.

No. 134, in schedule 7, page 38, line 45, leave out sub-paragraph (3).

No. 135, in schedule 7, page 39, line 39, leave out 'a garden' and insert 'land'.

No. 140, in schedule 7, page 39, line 47, at end insert—

'18A. If any person or group of persons resident within the Protected Property Line have or their legal guardians suffers damage to health or amenity, or incurs increased domestic heating costs, as a consequence of a rise in groundwater levels, compensation shall be payable by the Development Corporation.'.

Mr. Murphy: The House will know that one of the most significant problems that people have identified with the construction of the Cardiff bay barrage refers to groundwater levels and the possibility of flooding in other parts of our capital city. Because of the lack of time and because of the importance of this matter to the local press, I move the amendment and allow my hon. Friends to speak in whatever time is left.

Mr. Morgan: We are having to go at a speed, for obvious reasons, after the timetable motion. There is a large number of amendments to which we must refer briefly before the 9 o'clock deadline. Some of the amendments relate to the matter of dispute in Select Committee as it finished its consideration in February. The Cardiff Bay development corporation still took the view that it did not require any additional powers to be conferred on the Cardiff city council to deal with the problem of impregnation flooding as distinct from overground flooding by spillage of water from the rivers Taff and Ely into adjoining residential areas—classic flooding. It took the view that, if the Select Committee accepted the evidence that had been given by Dr. Miles and Professor Rushton that there could be another form of

[Mr. Morgan]

flooding—flooding by impregnation—one could handle that in the same way that one would deal with over-the-bank flooding.

At the very minute that the Select Committee finished, the Queen's counsel representing the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation was still maintaining that there were precedents for dealing with impregnation flooding as well. He subsequently had to accept that he was wrong and that the Cardiff city council's view that it would require additional powers was right. As a result, the Government had to climb down, as on so many other matters recently, and accept that the Bill would now have to be changed, but in another place. We would much rather do that job in this place, which is why we have included amendments to grant powers to Cardiff city council to deal with impregnation flooding.

Obviously, the fears that exist in some residential areas, particularly those west of the River Taff relate to what is known as the urban swamp thesis. That matter was substantially discussed in Committee. Nobody wants to live in an urban swamp. If we are to have one, we will have to drain the swamp to enable people to enjoy the residential amenities that they deserve. That is why we had a very strong reaction by the Select Committee, and why we want to incorporate it in the amendments. At page 62.3 of his evidence, Professor Rushton said:

> "Thirdly, there is a serious risk that the construction of a barrage would lead to dangerously high water levels in several locations in Cardiff."

People would not say that for nothing if they have reputations such as the Professor's as world experts on how to drain areas. He is a civil engineer, and he made the point very forcibly that, in his professional view, that was going to be one of the problems. We want to see tonight, rather than by way of a promise from the Government, some sign of what the Government will do when the matter goes to another place, which in turn means that it will come back to this place next year in order to reconcile the two versions. That is why we have mentioned impregnation flooding.

We have also mentioned the question raised by the Wallis and Munro studies which have been independently validated as statistically worth looking at—namely, whether the health and amenity of people in areas with high water tables will be adversely affected. The Minister earlier tried to rubbish that and say that his independent experts—we do not know who they are, where they have studied, what they have done, or how they have studied the proposals—say that it is a load of rubbish and that there is no possibility of any adverse effect on health and amenity from the consequences of a high water table and waterlogging creating cooler conditions, mists and fogs and adverse effects on health.

Perhaps the Minister is right, perhaps he is wrong—we do not know. If he is right, it will not cost a penny to accept the amendments. If there is no effect on health and amenity, one does not have a right to compensation, because one will not be able to get a penny out of the Cardiff Bay development corporation. If the Minister accepts the amendment, we can all go home happy. The right exists, but it will not cost the Minister anything. Why is he unwilling to accept the amendment in the circumstances?

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Amendment No. 15 deals with the barrage design. The corporation has agreed with the NRA that the barrage will be constructed so that it can be drained between tides to a level of 1·25 m below ordnance datum. That provision is included in clause 2 (2). The purpose of that provision is to enable the pollution from any accidental discharge either into the bay or into the rivers upstream of the bay to be cleared rapidly once it has reached the barrage. The requirements have been included in the Bill at the NRA's request. Although the clause permits a change of design with the NRA's agreement, it is extremely unlikely that that body would seek to reduce a level of protection that it has negotiated with the development corporation.

The amendment seeks to permit the change in ability to drain the bay only for the reason of better flood protection. Logic dictates that any change in design that reduces the ability to drain the bay cannot have a beneficial effect on flood protection. Although the impact on flood protection of draining the bay between tides is very marginal, I cannot envisage a situation in which the NRA would agree to such a reduction for the purpose of improving flood protection. Equally, the NRA accepts that greater ability to drain the bay than already included in the Bill is not required. The amendment therefore is unnecessary, since the corporation has already designed the barrage so that it can be drained to the specified level between one high tide and the next.

Amendments No. 100, 30, 101, 34, 102 and 103 would add the alleviation of flooding by the raising of groundwater to the purposes for which the development corporation may operate the barrage under clauses 7 and 8. They would also require the corporation to operate the barrage under directions from the Cardiff city council and the NRA to prevent or alleviate flooding from groundwater.

The amendments are inappropriate for two reasons. First, they confuse surface flooding with raised groundwater levels. Surface flooding is the overflowing of rivers at times of high river flow by overtopping of the river banks.

Impregnation of the ground is the result of raised groundwater levels. The only way in which the powers in clauses 7 and 8, which deal with the operation of the barrage, could be exercised to alleviate groundwater rise is by alteration of the impoundment level below the level of 4 to 4·5 m above ordnance datum specified in clause 9. Neither the National Rivers Authority nor Cardiff city council has requested the powers that the amendments propose for them. Indeed, to give the National Rivers Authority responsibility for groundwater would provide it with responsibility for a subject on which it has no legal powers. The point was made clear in the NRA statement of December 1991.

The city council argued before the Select Committee that its powers to deal with flooding under the Land Drainage Act 1991 did not extend to groundwater. As I already explained this evening, the Government will table an amendment in another place to include the saturation of ground within the definition of flooding under the Land Drainage Act 1991.

We have no doubt about the importance of the matters covered by the amendments, but their purpose has already been achieved by other means. The hon. Member for Cardiff, West withdrew the amendments in Committee, and I hope that he will feel able to do so now.

Amendment negatived.

It being Nine o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER, *pursuant to Order this day, proceeded to put forthwith the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on amendments.*

Clause 7

POWER TO OPERATE BARRAGE

Amendment made: No. 31, in page 4, line 20, after first 'the', insert 'safest and'.—*[Mrs. Clwyd.]*

Clause 9

OPERATION: SUPPLEMENTARY

Amendment made, No 55, in page 6, line 10, at end insert—

'(c) sailing and motor boat clubs operating in the inland bay and outer harbour.'.—*[Mrs. Clwyd.]*

Clause 19

THE CARDIFF BAY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Amendments made: No. 66, in page 11, line 27, at end insert—

'(2A) The following bodies shall be represented on the Committee: Cardiff City Council, South Glamorgan County Council and Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council.'.

No. 64, in page 11, line 28, after 'may', insert

', after consultation with the Cardiff City Council and the Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council,'.—*[Mrs. Clwyd.]*

Schedule 4

COMPULSORY LAND ACQUISITION: SUPPLEMENTARY

Amendments made: No. 6, in page 27, line 38, after 'deposited' insert

'as soon as is reasonably practicable'.

No. 7, in page 27, line 39, after 'it' insert 'shall be so deposited'.

No. 8, in page 27, line 45, leave out first 'the' and insert

'a copy shall also be given as soon as is reasonably practicable to each person who is an owner or occupier of the land in question.

(3A) Where a copy of the certificate is deposited under sub-paragraph (3) above, it shall be kept with the documents to which it relates.

(3B) The'.

No. 9, in page 28, line 1, leave out sub-paragraph (4). —*[Mr. Gwilym Jones.]*

Order for Third Reading read.—[Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.]

9 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I hope to respond to any particular points made in the debate if I catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and if time permits.

This thoroughly debated and well examined Bill is important not only for Cardiff but for the wider south Wales economy. I cannot emphasise too strongly the tremendous importance that the barrage scheme set out in the Bill has for our capital city of Cardiff.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House are in full agreement about the need to regenerate the former docklands area of Cardiff. The Government supported the objectives of the private Bill which preceded the one that we are debating tonight. Several Opposition Members who were closely involved in that Bill have given valuable support to the Government Bill. That cross-party support, together with the active participation of local government and the public and private sectors, is also a measure of the Bill's importance.

The Government firmly believe that the type of high-quality, high-density development that our capital city needs will happen only with a barrage. It is the barrage which will create the right conditions for attracting the scale and quality of developments to Cardiff. Other options—including the industrially based strategy favoured by other hon. Members—are quite simply not credible.

I know that some hon. Members will say that development is already taking place in Cardiff without the barrage. Of course I very much welcome those developments. We have never claimed that no development would take place without the barrage, although there is widespread support for that view among developers already in the bay. It is certainly true that there is already considerable confidence in the future of Cardiff bay, but that is largely because of confidence that the barrage will be built. Without the barrage, developments could not be of the same value, they would not create so many jobs or houses, and less private sector investment would be attracted.

Already, reference has been made to the latest economic appraisal, copies of which are available in the Vote Office. It confirms the robust case in favour of the barrage project. On previous occasions, I have made it clear that the economic appraisal of January 1990 was sufficiently robust not to require an updated version to be prepared, even in the changed economic circumstances. Nevertheless, we have acceded to requests for a new one to be commissioned.

I am glad to tell the House that the findings of the new appraisal confirm our view that the case for the barrage remains very strong indeed, and continues to be superior in all respects to redevelopment without the barrage. The updated appraisal suggests that the barrage project will bring about 23,200 permanent jobs—that is 10,000 more jobs than an alternative development without a barrage. Construction employment is nearly twice what it would be without a barrage. Nearly 4,400 new houses will be built —1,700 more than without a barrage. The total private sector investment which will be attracted by the barrage is well over £1,000 million.

Mr. Morgan: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Hunt: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman once in my speech, but I will leave that pleasure for a little later.

Finally, we come to the net present value, which even in the current property market remains strongly positive. The net present value of the barrage scenario is £119 million at mid-1992 prices. The equivalent figure for a development without a barrage is minus £153 million. The Government have consistently stated that the barrage project represents by far the best option for redeveloping Cardiff bay in terms of jobs, new houses, private sector investment and value for money. All the economic appraisals have shown that to be the case. This latest appraisal confirms that the Government have been fully justified in their continued support for the barrage scheme.

Hon. Members should not think that the benefits arising from the barrage scheme will be confined to

[Mr. Hunt]

Cardiff. We believe that the wider south Wales economy will gain from the redevelopment of Cardiff bay. Surveys of major employers in Cardiff carried out by South Glamorgan county council show that nearly 40 per cent. of their employees come from outside the county. Very many of these come from valley communities represented by Labour Members, some of whom have opposed the barrage proposal. I believe that their opposition is mistaken. I accept that they do not oppose the redevelopment of south Cardiff, but they must realise too that, as the opportunities offered by the Cardiff bay barrage scheme come to fruition, the employment prospects for many of their constituents will be greatly enhanced.

We have already achieved a great deal in the valleys. More than 2·5 million sq ft of new industrial floorspace has been created since Lord Walker launched the programme for the valleys in 1988. Private sector investment promises to safeguard or create about 24,000 jobs. More than 300 new factory units have been built under the urban programme up to 1991-92, with a further 40 units planned for the current year. These are just a few examples of what has already been achieved. The regeneration of Cardiff bay will complement and add to the opportunities opening up in the valleys.

Mr. Morgan: I thank the Secretary of State for his exceptional generosity in giving way to me once during his speech, although he may lose his place in the brief that he has in front of him. I understand the difficulty that he has in being precise when he promises new jobs. Last Wednesday, he spoke about 10,000 when he should have said 5,000. Today he has spoken of how the scheme will "bring about" 23,000 jobs. The KPMG Peat, Marwick, McLintock study to which he has referred does not say "bring about" in the sense of creating 23,000 jobs. It says that the project will support 23,000 jobs. I interpret that to mean "accommodate". That is, if all the offices are built and takers are found for all of them, the result would be 23,000 jobs. The report does not say that takers will be found for all the offices. That is why the right hon. Gentleman should rethink the words "bring about".

Mr. Hunt: I have no reason to change any of the words that I used. I did not want to have a sequence of giving way to the hon. Gentleman in my opening speech because he will no doubt have the opportunity to speak later if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If I am able to do the same thing at the conclusion of the debate, I shall reply to his points.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): The whole tenor of the Secretary of State's speech implies that this scheme is immune to any form of public expenditure cut in years to come. Is that true? If so, will he give us the assurance that vital capital expenditure schemes for the valleys will also be immune?

Mr. Hunt: There is no such thing as immunity. As the hon. Gentleman will recall from his time as a Minister, discussions take place at this time of the year about resources for next year. Those discussions have not yet been concluded. Provided that the House agrees to the Bill reaching the statute book, the Government are determined to ensure that the barrage becomes a reality.

A further point about the valleys is that there is already a growing awareness of the need to improve the existing public transport links between the valley communities, the city and the bay. Hon. Members may be aware that the local authorities are to examine the possibilities for improving and expanding rail links. We must await the outcome of those studies, but I am sure that hon. Members will welcome them as a further indication that the valleys stand to gain from the regeneration of Cardiff bay.

An aspect of the barrage scheme which has been of particular interest to several hon. Members is the possible effects on wading birds which use the mudflats as feeding grounds. The Government carefully considered the expert studies into the implications for those birds in coming to a view on the original private Bill. Our conclusion was that the arguments weighed heavily in favour of proceeding with the barrage.

Nevertheless, we are committed to providing some form of mitigation for the loss of the feeding grounds, which is why the proposal to build a tidal lagoon was carried over from the private Bill into this Bill. The Select Committee, after hearing detailed evidence, removed those provisions because of doubts about the lagoon's effectiveness as a mitigation measure and because of the effect on the landowners at Wentloog.

The Government remain committed to the provision of some form of mitigation. The Welsh Office, together with Cardiff Bay Development Corporation, the Countryside Council for Wales and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, considered possible alternatives, and we announced during the Standing Committee that a feasibility study had been commissioned to assess the suitability of sites on the Gwent levels as a bird reserve.

The Countryside Council for Wales and the RSPB are closely involved in the proposal to create an area of wetland, which should be a more effective mitigation measure than the original lagoon proposal. The feasibility study, which is being carried out by consultants with a well established reputation—including Mason Pittendrigh and David Bellamy Associates—is expected to be completed by the end of the year. If the results of the study are favourable and a decision is taken to proceed with the creation of a bird reserve, we shall not be seeking power under this Bill because the necessary authority is available to the development corporation and the land authority under existing legislation.

The House should be told of the Government's intentions. I can also repeat the assurance that we gave to the Standing Committee—that it is the Government's intention to keep the costs of the proposed bird reserve within the £5·7 million originally earmarked for the Wentloog lagoon.

The possible effects on property of changes to groundwater levels is another issue in which hon. Members have taken an interest. As the House is aware, schedule 7 contains a detailed, comprehensive and generous scheme of protection for householders. The Select Committee heard a great deal of technical evidence and made several changes to the schedule. The main changes were the extension of protection to the gardens of residential buildings within the protected property area, the right of householders to nominate a contractor of their own choice to undertake remedial works if the development corporation has not arranged to start work within six months and the appointment of an independent complaints administrator. All those measures have now been written into the Bill.

The House will recall that, when it last had the opportunity to debate the Bill, I had not taken any decision on public funding for the barrage in the light of the further groundwater studies undertaken by Hydrotechnica. I announced my decision to the House on 20 January. Hon. Members may recall that I also announced that the development corporation had been asked to carry out a feasibility study into the possibility of controlling rises in groundwater levels by means of dewatering wells. The results of that study were published on 20 August. I have arranged for copies of the report to be available in the Vote Office.

That report concluded that dewatering wells could make a significant difference to groundwater rise should the "extreme case" of groundwater rise occur. It recommended that there should be a well-pumping pilot study. The results should be available early in the new year. If that confirms the report's findings, the need to carry out remedial works will be significantly reduced or removed altogether. That would, of course, mean little or no disruption for householders.

Clearly, we cannot decide whether to proceed with dewatering wells until we have the results of the pumping tests. If a decision to proceed is taken, the Government will not seek powers under the Bill to do so, because that can be done under existing legislation.

I want to assure the House, however, that the Government have no intention of removing any of the protection that the Bill now offers to householders. If we do not proceed with dewatering, the protection of schedule 7 will still be available. If we implement the dewatering solution, I see no reason to remove the safety net of protection from the Bill. Even if dewatering does not prove effective in practice, householders will still have the security afforded by the scheme of protection. If damage occurs as a result of groundwater changes attributable to the barrage, the development corporation must remedy it.

We have now dealt with all the main issues raised. I want to give the Government's full support for the biggest ever capital project in Cardiff—a £153 million barrage scheme which will bring more than 23,000 jobs to the capital city of Wales, lead to the construction of 4,400 homes of which a quarter will be for social housing, and trigger more than £1,000 million-worth of private sector investment.

The barrage project represents by far the best option for redeveloping Cardiff bay and the appraisal to which I referred demonstrates that the Government have been fully justified in their continued support for the barrage scheme. I hope that both sides of the House will support the Bill.

9.15 pm

Mrs. Clwyd: I stress from the beginning that our criticisms of the Bill have not been about the need for economic regeneration, which is essential for Cardiff docklands. I have lived in Cardiff most of my adult life and I want to see that regeneration. However, we feel that questions remain unanswered and that there is much unfinished business. It is proper that those who care about the environment should voice their concerns about the conservation implications of the barraging of the Taff and Ely estuary in Cardiff bay, the entire destruction of a site of special scientific interest, and the removal of an integral part of the Severn estuary special protection area.

People are also worried about the cost of the barrage —£153 million, as the Secretary of State confirmed. They are asking whether the extra value that the barrage will add to the whole scheme justifies its cost. Does the economic appraisal make unrealistic, rosy assumptions about the effect, for example, on local land values? If land around the bay is likely to increase in value at the rate assumed by the corporation's study, the corporation may make a fortune by hanging on to that land rather than selling it now. The fall in property prices in Cardiff, although less than in the south-east of England, has significantly reduced the potential value of the barrage —so does the cost outweigh the benefits?

The Secretary of State made great play about the value of the Cardiff bay development for other parts of Wales, particularly the valley areas. Those of us who represent those areas would like to believe what he said about the creation of more jobs for the valleys and the potential of enjoying what he believes will be new-found prosperity in the Cardiff area. People in the valleys have already seen the effects of the Government's policies since 1979, a point that was well made by Kevin Morgan in his study on the Government's regional policy.

It is clear that the Government's philosophy of market forces regenerating British industry by themselves has not been borne out in the valleys of south Wales or in Wales generally. Government policies have meant that regional economic activity has become even more concentrated in the south-east of England. That at any rate was the story of the early 1980s, partly because the Government did not care much for regional planning and partly because their commitment to regional policy was so seriously devalued. Expenditure on regional policy declined by a staggering 62·7 per cent. between 1981 and 1991. In Wales it declined by 58·3 per cent. in that time.

The valleys programme was started in 1988 by Lord Walker, when unemployment among males in the valleys was running at 18·9 per cent. In April this year, it was 18·7 per cent., since when there have been many more job losses. Unfortunately, the Government do not publish figures for the valleys as a matter of course; we are still awaiting a reply to a question to learn what October's figure was. I suspect that it was very much higher.

Since the Secretary of State has been responsible for Welsh policy, unemployment has risen by 46,500 in Wales and the valley areas. The valleys programme, designed to stem the rising tide of employment, has not done so very effectively. It has done nothing to temper the decline in regional policy expenditure, which fell by 50 per cent. in the valleys programme area between 1989 and 1991. The programme has done nothing to prevent the reduction in Government support for training and enterprise councils, as shown by the fact that Mid-Glamorgan TEC had its budget cut by 20 per cent. last year and by a further 15 per cent. this year.

The programme has done nothing to alleviate the chronic financial weakness of local government in the valleys. Most local authorities there are in a weaker position now than when the programme began.

Many of these shortcomings stem from a national economic policy which sets a low premium on regional regeneration and industrial renewal. New priorities are needed at a United Kingdom level. It is equally imperative

[Mrs. Clwyd]

that we establish new development priorities in south Wales. We are not convinced by the Secretary of State's promises of jobs, because he has failed to deliver jobs in the valleys areas and because, when speaking of the establishment of Deeside industrial park, he said last week that 10,000 jobs had been created, whereupon it was pointed out that the true figure was nearer [illegible],000.

I only hope that, if the right hon. Gentleman promises a certain number of jobs as a spin-off from the Cardiff bay development, he will be prepared to stand by his words when the development is complete.

The barrage is the responsibility of the Cardiff Bay development corporation, a quango with no proper accountability to Parliament. It is extraordinary that such a quango should be financed by public funds to the tune of £33 million a year—it is the only large quango in this category. Many quangos are privately audited, but at least the National Audit Office has reserve powers to look at their books. In the case of the Cardiff Bay development corporation, the NAO does not even have that reserve power. The people of Wales are fed up with all these quangos and believe that they should be replaced with a democratically elected Welsh assembly. That would enable us to bring the quangos under proper democratic control. It would subject the functions and actions of the Welsh Office to proper public scrutiny and co-ordinate and promote economic development and regeneration. We say that the Secretary of State's proposals for reforming government in Wales should start from the point of a Welsh assembly, which would facilitate the reorganisation of local government based on unitary authorities by taking overall responsibility for a limited number of strategic and specialised functions.

The people of Wales want and need a decentralised system of government. At the general election 70 per cent. of them voted for parties which supported the creation of a democratically elected Welsh tier of government. It is undeniable that the creation of an assembly would give Wales a strategic direction, which the Secretary of State's current plans are sadly lacking. We shall continue to call for the establishment of a Welsh assembly which will bring the quango-like development corporation——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not know whether the hon. Lady is nearing the end of her speech, but she is straying from the terms of the debate on Third Reading.

Mrs. Clwyd: I am drawing my speech to a close, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by saying that it is essential, however we feel about the development of Cardiff bay and our support for regeneration, that the scheme is not administered by a quango which is non-accountable, non-elected and not responsible to the people of Wales.

9.26 pm

Mr. Michael: I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on Third Reading. I am grateful also that we have reached Third Reading. It is clear from the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) that she recognises the massive need for economic regeneration in the south of Cardiff. It was that recognition of urgent need which led local councillors to support the building of the barrage. They appreciated how the scourge of unemployment has devastated south Cardiff communities.

I welcome the progress which will now take place in Cardiff. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Owen Jones) will recognise, unemployment in his constituency and mine, and in Cardiff, West, is a devastating burden for communities to bear. We need major development to lift the entire city out of that situation, especially after the way in which unemployment has borne down over the past 13 years.

Anyone who has seen Bute East dock—it has water of the same quality as that which will be in the impounded lake—can have no doubt about the sort of environment that will result from the building of the barrage. The results will be positive and they will be bound to attract employers as well as those who wish to live in such an environment.

We have been through a long process before arriving at Third Reading. I have found it depressing, as I said when we experienced difficulties with earlier Bills, that our debates have not been more constructive. Many of them have concentrated on the problems of groundwater, but there has not been a great division between my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and myself in terms of our starting point on that issue. Our conclusions, however, have been quite different. At the beginning, my hon. Friend said that he could not support the Bill unless he was satisfied about groundwater while I said that I could not oppose the Bill unless I felt that the threat of groundwater was considerable.

It is right that doubts should be aired during debate, and it is important that people can be confident that all the relevant research has been undertaken and that safeguards have been built into the Bill. If the dynamic system of de-watering is introduced, it must not take away one iota from the local community.

We must now look to the future. There have been times when we were wondering whether there was life after the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill, but that day is about to dawn. I am sure that the Bill will rapidly complete its remaining stages in another place.

The south Cardiff area, which will immediately be affected by redevelopment, comprises both old established communities and one or two new communities. It is important that they should be treated with respect. They have a life and vigour of their own, but many have also experienced difficulty. For many years, Butetown has been an island in a sea of industry, and Splott suffered the devastating impact of the closure of East Moors steel works. Unemployment is high throughout those communities; yet they retain a positive attitude and have much to offer those who live in them. I hope that the development corporation, in partnership with local authorities, will at every stage respect the nature of those communities—and I shall feel obliged to remind them of that if it becomes necessary.

The Secretary of State spoke of the housing to be included in south Cardiff's redevelopment. We have been given an assurance that at least 25 per cent. of new housing in the development corporation area will be social housing for rent at affordable levels. That minimum should be achieved at every stage. A contribution is already being made by housing associations. Rent levels should make it possible for local people to remain in their communities, and for those who once moved to the city outskirts now to return from Llanrumney, Llanedeyrn or St. Mellons and live close to their families. I say that because difficulties have arisen.

To be fair, the development corporation, in allocating land, met that request by local councillors, but problems have arisen in the financial calculations which result in rent decisions. It is most important that the new social housing is a positive element, enabling people to return to their old communities. That is one way of ensuring that the scheme will be viewed positively by local communities.

I am satisfied about the standard of the impounded water, but I hope that consideration will be given at every stage to developing the environment to the benefit of those who live there. It is important to attract tourism and business, but it is vital that local people are considered when streets, traffic schemes, commercial and other arrangements are being finalised.

That is also true of jobs. Without employment and the dignity that comes with having a place in society, the communities in question will continue to be devastated. Everything possible must be done to exploit the barrage to the full in creating the maximum number of high quality jobs.

I ask, above all, for an emphasis on partnership. Local government has contributed active participation and support—critical at times, questioning at times, but positive. Such partnership is most important for the future. I played a small part in the redevelopment of the centre of Cardiff, as indeed did the Minister, the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones). That was a cross-party partnership, and a partnership with the private sector, although I should add that no development corporation was involved. If the development of south Cardiff is to be as successful as that of the city centre, and if it is to achieve the same national recognition, we must recreate a partnership that has been damaged to some extent by the processes that have delayed the Bill's passage.

The discrediting of the private Bill procedure has affected confidence, and we must now rebuild that confidence. Those who, for whatever reason, have opposed or questioned the Bill in the past should be part of the new partnership. There is no doubt that all of us want Cardiff to be developed and to move into the first division. That will now be possible.

Many of us, in our different ways, have tried to improve the Bill during its passage. Some of our debates have been unhelpful; others have been helpful and positive. It is sad that many of the discussions involving supporters of the Bill, and many of the improvements that have been made in the past couple of years, have not received the same publicity as the crude conflict that has developed at times.

I ask for respect to be shown to local authorities and elected representatives, and to the local community. There are signs that that is now happening in the development corporation. I hope that, over the next year or so, my optimism about the corporation's sensitivity will not prove mistaken, for I expect it to be the cornerstone on which success can be built.

We now need to show some confidence. We need to take a positive line in regard to our communities. Unemployment can be tackled; the dereliction of the past can be ended; deprivation need not continue in years to come. I entirely share the aspirations of my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley, who said that the problems of the valleys should also be tackled. Indeed, every part of Wales is now experiencing immense problems.

We must express confidence in Cardiff as a city. It is a great city—a warm and human city. It is Europe's youngest capital. People who visit it ask, "Why do you keep it secret?" The supporters of the barrage must form a partnership with those who have questioned the development, to safeguard the interests of citizens at every stage and to make the best of every aspect. Cardiff—along with the rest of south Wales and, indeed, the whole country—needs, as a backdrop, a Government economic policy for reconstruction. We need policies to create jobs and to revive the economy. Only with such a positive development in the economy—a proper national strategy for recovery—can Cardiff and, indeed, Wales take their deserved place in the sun. Only in that way can jobs be created—only in that way can people feel confident in their future, and the future of their city.

9.38 pm

Mr. Morgan: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) for allowing me some time between his speech and those of the Front-Bench spokesmen. I want to explain, as clearly as I can, why I—along with the vast bulk of my constituents—have resolutely opposed the construction of the barrage, to the bewilderment of some people.

There are two simple reasons. First, my constituents are concerned about the effect of rising groundwater on their homes and, in some cases, their businesses. Secondly, they do not believe the job forecasts. Their fears have not gone away. On job forecasts, there was another example only last Wednesday. When this Secretary of State for Wales makes a job forecast we should count the silverware. Last week he referred to the Deeside industrial park having 10,000 jobs, but his Department had to correct him and state that the figure was 5,000. My constituents' worries, therefore, do not go away when 23,000 jobs associated with the barrage are forecast.

Even tonight the Minister failed to use the word that his consultants had used. KPMG does not say that 23,000 jobs will be "created" by the construction of the barrage. It uses the word "supported"—a classic weasel word. We still do not know what it means. I take it to mean that that number of jobs would be accommodated, but that does not mean that 23,000 jobs would be created. If KPMG had meant that 23,000 jobs would be created, I am pretty sure that it would have said so.

The Secretary of State used weasel words when he said "bring about". That is not what the consultants say. I wish that the Secretary of State would be as careful as we all should be when job promises connected with such a development are made. If we are not careful, people outside become extremely cynical. We do not want them to be cynical about politicians' promises. The situation is bad enough already. The Secretary of State should provide a genuine opinion as to the possible damage from groundwater and the number of jobs to be created.

My constituents, who are extremely worried about damage from groundwater, are looking carefully at job forecasts. If they do not believe the job forecasts, they will say that the damage to their homes as a result of the rise in the groundwater is not worth the candle. They say that if they could be sure of the jobs the risk might be worth taking, but if job forecasts are a pig in a poke the risk is not worth taking. They believe that the Secretary of State is trying to pull the wool over their eyes. As they say in New

[Mr. Morgan]

Zealand, even the wool that the Secretary of State is trying to pull over the eyes of the people of Wales is 50 per cent. terylene.

In his Third Reading speech, the Secretary of State said that the barrage would cost £153 million. My constituents believe that the correct figure is £167 million. Where is the missing £9 million? The Secretary of State referred earlier this year to the missing £9 million. He said that he intended to approve public expenditure, arising from the Stoner report, for the additional groundwater protection that was needed to cover the predictions made by his consultant. But he has not got that money from the Treasury. The additional £9 million for groundwater protection is not to be found in the £153 million to which the Secretary of State referred.

The figure ought to be £162 million, at 1992 prices. That is not the outturn cost. If we were realistic, the outturn cost would be about £180 million. For those purposes, one has to accept that £162 million is the proper figure for building the barrage, plus the associated works. That is another reason why my constituents are still worried about the barrage proposal.

The Secretary of State referred to the prospect of dewatering wells, thus solving the problem of rising groundwater. We do not have time to go in detail into exactly how the dewatering wells strategy is to be applied between now and the Committee stage of the Bill when it reaches another place. I understand that field tests will be carried out between now and next February. That is fair enough; after the desk study one should carry out the field study.

The problem, however, is that the dewatering wells are another example of the Government's incompetence when trying to put the fears of my constituents at rest. The dewatering wells study that the Government refer to carrying out between now and February 1993 was ordered by the Select Committee that considered the private Bill and reported to the House in May 1991. It was in the terms of reference given to Hydrotechnica—the development corporation's consultants—to be carried out, on the instruction of the House in May 1991, between August 1991 and July 1992, but it was not done.

The study is late, yet my constituents are being asked to accept that this wonderful dewatering well scheme will solve the problems of rising groundwater and prevent the associated property damage that could result. It should have been done 12 months ago, and if it had been we could have considered it tonight. Some way or another, the ball slipped from the grasp of Cardiff Bay development corporation, in the classic manner of unaccountable, irresponsible quangos of mates of the Secretary of State. The corporation does not care, because it is unaccountable to Parliament. We are always asked to accept what it does, even though it has a record of incompetence, which always makes us want to redouble our efforts to scrutinise what it is doing.

In 1988, I decided to oppose the barrage. I did not like the idea but knew why people such as Lord Crickhowell, whose idea it was, adopted it. They thought, "Given what it will do for London docklands, perhaps it is a good idea for south Wales." Nobody would advance that argument now. The docklands scheme has proved to be misconceived. If Canary Wharf is not doing much for the economy or image of London, we do not want a budgie wharf in Cardiff to try to do the same job on a smaller scale.

The philosophy of office and property-led development has passed its sell-by date. I did not like it in 1988—I preferred manufacturing-led redevelopment and regeneration—but now 10 times as many people can see the point that I was making, and following the Government's recent economic difficulty it is even more true now than it was four years ago. Many people can now see that the warnings given by opponents of the barrage four years ago have become true for London. Therefore, the idea of copying the way in which regeneration was pursued in London docklands holds no attraction for my constituents.

The Secretary of State referred to the Bill being changed in the other place. He said that I have not been willing to accept the Government's publicity of that change. However, the Government will not only change the Bill but will create a new class of petitioners. Those who petitioned against the Bill in the past have a different reason for doing so now—the unprecedented right that the Government have conferred on Cardiff city council to dig public soakaways on private property. It has never been tried before in a densely populated area of terrace housing. In order to get rid of surface water, the city council will be able to enter people's back gardens and dig under their back walls, goldfish ponds, bike sheds and tool sheds and across their herbaceous borders. That will create an entirely new class of petitioners. When the Bill returns from the other place, will the same petitioners have the right to petition in this House against the additional power to enter private property for public purposes, which Cardiff city council has now agreed with the Secretary of State?

We have also dealt with the fact that we do not like quango-style government. We believe that it results in fixes, and we are not happy about the fixes being made between insiders and the Welsh Office. They are undemocratic and unaccountable, and they lead to too many little private, cosy arrangements being made.

We have also referred to the appalling incident when the Secretary of State decided to choose Councillor Jeff Sainsbury over Councillor Geoff Munton, the nominee of Cardiff city council after Labour had won the election democratically in May 1991. The Government took no notice of that and chose one of the masonic lodge mates of the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) because Councillor Sainsbury wanted to be on the Cardiff Bay development corporation. That is appalling.

If there is one thing that one can say about the barrage, it is that it is a large piece of masonry, but it will certainly not be free. The taxpayers and the city of Cardiff will pay for it for decades to come.

9.50 pm

Mr. Murphy: We have limited time. It was appropriate that the previous two speakers were my hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) and for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), who represent the city of Cardiff together with the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones), who is present, because the Bill is a matter of great concern to the capital city of Wales. I congratulate my hon. Friends on the way in which, in their different ways, they hold sincere views and beliefs about the way in which Cardiff should be developed.

Everyone in the House joins in the hope that Cardiff will be redeveloped and rejuvenated by whatever happens in the south of Cardiff. My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and I represent valley constituencies, and we are very much aware of the problems of unemployment, recession and housing deprivation which hit not only the valleys, but places such as Splott, Adamstown, Grangetown and other parts of Cardiff which will be affected by the barrage.

I still believe that points have been left unanswered. As a result of the problems of the guillotine, we did not get to the difficulties of the Cardiff bay advisory committee and its composition. We firmly believe that, by law, there should be representatives on it of the new unitary authority in Cardiff. The Secretary of State will announce fairly soon the local government structure in Wales, and the House will have to decide on that. Assuming that there is a unitary authority for Cardiff, it is the obvious body which must have representation on such an advisory committee.

My hon. Friends have referred to the problems of quangos or appointed bodies in Wales. There is great unease in the Principality about those bodies and about their membership. I hope that, in years to come, while the Government are still in power, they will look at that matter differently from the way in which they have looked at it in the past.

There is genuine unease in Cardiff about the problems of groundwater levels, about flooding, about the quality of the water and about the site of special scientific interest. All those are matters of great concern. The matter that still dominates all those is the problem of cost.

We know that the hundreds of millions of pounds that the project will cost were thought of originally when the economy was in a very different position. That economy was based very much on property development, on supermarkets, and on retail parks and the rest. Those days have gone. I hope that, when the autumn statement is delivered, and when the Secretary of State talks about the revenue support grant for local authorities in Wales, he will take a careful look at the priorities in public expenditure, and that he will ensure that the money is shared among all the communities in Wales which vitally need it.

The other place will consider the Bill in the months to come. It has plenty of work to do. However, we assure the Secretary of State that, when the Lords amendments come to the House, we will give them proper scrutiny, which is our job as the Opposition.

9.54 pm

Mr. Hunt: I thank the hon. Members for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) and for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) for their speeches. It is a good reflection of the spirit of partnership that we have in Wales that people representing valley communities are still prepared to contemplate a development in Cardiff and are prepared to give that development not only their Front-Bench support but their own personal support, in the belief that it will benefit the people of the valleys and south Wales, as well as being enormously important to Cardiff and its people.

Towards the end of what must be more than 60 days of discussion on the Bill in its various forms, I detect that we may be nearer to agreeing than we have been in previous debates. I recognise that the project is enormously important to the people of Cardiff. The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) referred to the spirit of partnership. I hope that we may rekindle that spirit as we say goodbye to the Bill—albeit temporarily, I am afraid, as the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) explained—as it moves to the other place.

I see that virtually all the political parties are represented in the Chamber at the moment. I strongly believe that the project is of vital importance to Wales, but that it will secure the benefits that we all seek only if it has the wholehearted support of everyone. Perhaps some hon. Members intend to vote against Third Reading. We shall not know until the vote is called.

I appeal to all hon. Members to believe that the best way to get the project up and running on the best possible basis would be for the Bill's Third Reading to receive the unanimous support of the House. That will enable us to build for the future. I echo the words of the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth who said, "Now let us look to the future."

We have had some good speeches on Third Reading and in previous debates. I must correct the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), who said that the barrage was not mentioned in the manifesto. It was certainly mentioned in the Conservative manifesto, although, strangely, it was omitted from the Labour manifesto.

I have now secured for myself a copy of the Conservative manifesto for Wales, which is entitled "The Best Future for Wales" and which includes a special section entitled "Cardiff Bay". It says:

> "We shall remain fully committed, as an early priority, to securing Parliamentary approval for the project to build a Barrage in Cardiff in order to transform its seafront. The whole revitalisation of South Cardiff depends upon that Barrage. This project will bring £2,000 million of investment to South Wales, and thousands of new homes and jobs. It will rejuvenate and transform our Capital city."

I am delighted to have the opportunity to implement that manifesto pledge. I want the project to succeed.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West raised a number of detailed points, and, if I may, I shall write to him on those to which I do not respond tonight. On jobs, I do not believe that there is any difference or distinction between the wording used in the economic appraisal and the words that I used. The important thing is that the barrage will bring much-needed jobs and homes to Cardiff. It will make Cardiff one of the great capital cities of the world. The potential for redeveloping the sea front and river front at Cardiff fills one with excitement for the future.

I do not accept for one moment the criticisms that hon. Members have made of the Cardiff Bay development corporation. Its chairman is one of our outstanding public citizens in Wales, and its new chief executive, Michael Boyce, formerly chief executive of South Glamorgan county council, is one of our most important and prestigious public servants. Under their leadership, I am certain that the barrage will transform Cardiff's future prospects.

I welcome the fact that we have had the support of hon. Members of all parties tonight. As we watch the evolution of the project, I hope that we shall see a capital city rising to the challenge of our times.

[Mr. Hunt]

The capital city of Cardiff, of which we are justly proud, has a very exciting future. Of course it would have an exciting future without the barrage, and I recognise that those who have opposed the barrage do not do so to denigrate the potential of Cardiff: they oppose it because their view differs from the view of the majority. However, I believe that the majority are right. The barrage will transform the prospects of Cardiff.

I have visited other cities in the world which have discovered that, by lifting the nature of the waterfront, they can stimulate the most remarkable development. We will see that in Cardiff. It is truly one of the greatest projects of our time. I pay tribute to my predecessors, Lord Crickhowell, who thought up and implemented the project at an early stage, and Lord Walker, who brought it to fruition. I strongly urge the House to give the Bill a Third Reading.

It being Ten o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *put the Question already proposed from the Chair, pursuant to Order this day.*

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Environmental Action Programme

10 pm

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Maclean): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the European Community Document No. 6132/92, relating to the Fifth Environmental Action Programme; endorses the Government's welcome of the general shape of the Programme; supports the Programme's emphasis on the integration of environmental concerns into other areas of policy, subsidiarity and the need to set priorities and assess costs; and endorses the Government's intention to ensure that these elements and the outcome of the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development are adequately reflected in the Resolution of the Programme which the Council is to adopt.

Following the Rio conference, it is timely that we should now be looking at the shape of the European Community's environmental policy until the end of the century. The Commission has previously produced four action programmes on the environment. The latest programme, entitled "Towards Sustainability", sets out the framework for the Community's policies and strategies on the environment until the year 2000.

The strategic approach looks to give a long-term orientation of all the Community's policies. We have made, and will continue to make, every effort to ensure that during our Presidency the programme is given the consideration that it deserves.

Discussion of the programme has made good progress in the environment working group in Brussels. At the Environment Council on 20 October, Ministers noted this progress and looked forward to their meeting in December when they plan to adopt the resolution which will give the Council's blessing to the programme. By that time, we should also have the benefit of the European Parliament's opinion. The programme will begin to be implemented at the start of 1993 when its predecessor expires.

I should point out that the programme is not itself a legislative document. We would not expect the objectives and guidelines that it proposes to be agreed line by line: attempts to seek agreement on each sentence of the programme could take us until the end of the century. Nor do we expect the programme itself to be rewritten. The programme's aim is to set the background against which the Commission will bring forward specific proposals for Community action over the next eight years. As it does so, we shall have to consider the details in specific areas.

As the House will appreciate, the programme covers a wide range of topics. But we can draw out key themes: the programme's objective of the promotion of sustainable growth respecting the environment; the principle of shared responsibility as the bedrock of the programme, meaning action by a wide variety of people and organisations in various sectors and at various levels; and the integration of environmental concerns into all areas of policy. The Government welcome the broad shape of the programme. There are many elements of the programme which fit in with our own priorities.

The first is UNCED or the Rio follow-up. The Earth Summit was an important step in our attempts to tackle the enormous environmental problems which face us all. In Rio, we signed up to many commitments which we are now putting into practice. As we seek to do so, it is right that the Community should play its part. At the Lisbon European Council, the Community agreed to an eight-point plan of action, sponsored by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, which aims to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development world wide. Much of the necessary action will be for member states individually or acting in concert. But where there is a clear Community role, proposals flowing from the fifth action programme must take account of Rio follow-up as a major priority and contribute to the early fulfilment of the objectives to which we have committed ourselves.

The second is integration. We welcome the programme's emphasis on the need to ensure the integration of environmental concerns into other policy areas. There are no fewer than 11 policy areas outside the environment where work with an environmental aspect is being taken forward during our presidency. But while the programme describes the aim of greater integration, it does not set out the mechanisms as to how this is to be achieved. That is why we took the issue of integration as a major issue for discussion at the informal Environment Council in September.

Ministers recognised the need to devise practical proposals for giving effect to the principle of integration, and identified a number of measures which should be considered by the Commission, the Council and the member states. We hope that from the highest levels the Commission will demonstrate its commitment to ensuring that proper weight is given to the environment in the formulation of all the Community's policies.

Thirdly, one of the themes of the programme is that environmental policies and objectives should be pursued at a variety of levels according to where it is most appropriate to act. I wish to make it clear, however, that—come what may—we shall not lower our environmental objectives. We shall simply be considering the extent to which those objectives are best achieved at Community level or at member state level, or perhaps through co-operation between member states rather than through Community legislation. Of course there are areas where it is right for the Community to act: pollution, as we know, is no respecter of national boundaries.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The Minister will be aware that the question of subsidiarity and environmental policy is controversial. Will he explain a matter to which he has alluded but not expanded on? The motion states that it welcomes

"the general shape of the Programme",

but there is a change between the document signed by Lord Strathclyde, which is the explanatory memorandum, and what is in the Government's "This Common Inheritance" second year report. The latter refers to the Lisbon European Council and states that the programme's emphasis on the principle of subsidiarity led to work being commissioned at Lisbon

"on the means of giving subsidiarity practical effect."

Will the Minister make it clear that there will be no devolution of matters currently within the environmental competence of the Commission to national states as a result of the change in emphasis at Lisbon?

Mr. Maclean: The hon. Gentleman misunderstands some of the processes that the Commission is currently taking forward on subsidiarity. The environment is not exempt from the studies that the Commission is doing on subsidiarity, nor would one expect it to be. However, as I have made clear, I do not regard the environment as the sole candidate for some aspects of subsidiarity to apply. The fifth environmental action programme recognises that there are some things that the Community should do and must do because pollution is no respecter of national boundaries. There might be other things which should be left to nation states to do, but there is no inconsistency.

The fourth matter that I want to discuss is where the Commission could learn from British experience, and that is our process of regular review and monitoring of environmental policy and our efforts to record publicly through the annual White Paper the progress that we have made in meeting our targets. The programme suggests a formal review in 1995. We have argued that there should be a more regular process of monitoring and review. The Community should also consider what mechanisms might be introduced to ensure reviews of the functioning of existing legislation to establish where it is not working either because it is impracticable to implement it, according to the text, or because practice has revealed ambiguities.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): There is one aspect in which the Community might not benefit from our experience. That is a worrying section in chapter 6.2 of the White Paper, which states:

"It is particularly important to the nuclear energy sector that public confidence in it be maintained and even enhanced."

Knowing the experience of the past 20 years' publicity from British Nuclear Fuels plc, in which it constantly understated the risk from nuclear power and the costs of nuclear power, is it not worrying that what might be in this document is a continuation not of objective information but of propaganda?

Mr. Maclean: With respect, the hon. Gentleman should not try to use the fifth environmental action programme—the general thrust of which all parties subscribe to—to try to support any arguments that he may have about aspects of nuclear policy. He will have difficulty pointing to any country which publishes as much information about its nuclear policy or allows its nuclear reactors and industry to be subject to as much scrutiny as this country does. We are proud of the amount of the information that we publish. We accept that, when such information is published, it is often used against us in attempts to discredit us, but we shall continue to publish information in the future with the same alacrity as in the past.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Is the Minister not aware that, before the Government decided to privatise the electricity industry, no one in Britain was officially informed of the enormous losses that had accrued to Britain's nuclear activity for a period of 30 years? Throughout the 1970s and until 1988, Members of Parliament were continually told that nuclear power was cheaper and was the way forward. It was not until the City of London refused to have anything to do with nuclear power that the Government decided to privatise electricity that the nation was formally told of the enormous cost that nuclear power incurred. All electricity consumers in Britain pay 11 per cent. on their electricity bills to bail the nuclear industry out.

Mr. Maclean: Far be it from me to wander down an avenue that is irrelevant to the fifth environmental action programme and become embroiled in other discussions. When I replied to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) I referred specifically to nuclear safety. I did

[Mr. Maclean]

not refer to the costs and financing of the industry. However, I entirely subscribe to the hon. Gentleman's view that only privatisation reveals the true cost of an industry. The House has much to be grateful to the Government for in that regard. Privatisation has revealed the cost of the nuclear industry, in the same way as it reveals the true cost of any industry. However, let us not go too far down that route tonight. Others will undoubtedly wish to explore it in the next few months.

My fifth point is that there is a need properly to assess the costs and benefits of environmental policies. The fifth environmental action programme suggests that all Community environmental policies and other policies which have an environmental dimension should be costed comprehensively. That should be vigorously pursued to ensure that our environmental policies are as cost-effective as possible.

As the debate about the Community's future has developed, greater emphasis has been given to openness in the Community's activities. The programme proposes the establishment of a new consultative forum with wide-ranging membership. That could well be a step in the right direction, although it will be essential to decide on its membership and draw up its terms of reference and procedures in order to prevent it from becoming merely a talking shop. It should play a positive and effective role in the formulation of Community environmental policy. The Commission should also develop further its use of "green papers" to canvass opinions on new ideas, and ensure the widest possible consultation when it draws up new proposals.

There are several other areas to which the United Kingdom, as President, will attach importance as we consider the fifth environmental action programme. It is most regrettable that, more than two years after its establishment was agreed, the European Environment Agency has not yet been set up because of disagreements over the siting of other EC institutions. Despite our best efforts, we were unable to force the issue to a conclusion at the Environment Council on 20 October, but we shall continue to use our presidency to attempt to find a solution that will make possible the early establishment of the agency.

We also attach great importance to implementation and enforcement. At our request, the Commission has agreed to report on those issues formally at the next environment council and then on a regular basis in future. The improvement of enforcement will also be covered at the first ever meeting of representatives from the pollution inspectorates of the 12 member states, which Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will host next week and which we hope will lead to the establishment of a permanent network of enforcement agencies.

The fifth action programme covers an enormous range of ideas and objectives. The resolution to be adopted by the Environment Council must give guidance to the Commission about our priorities and the way in which we wish to see work flow from the programme pursued. That will be the Government's aim as we take forward discussions on the programme and resolution in Brussels. I commend the Government's approach to the House.

10.13 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): The Opposition give a broad welcome to the fifth action programme. We have our quarrels with the Government's motion which, as usual, tends to self-congratulation. The programme sets out aims and principles rather than specifics. As the rapporteur for the European Parliament has said of it:

> "It is essentially a declaration of intent rather than a precise proposal for practical alternatives."

That is fair enough, because it is a programme that, over the coming years, can be used to shape national environmental programmes.

One of the key themes of the programme, which the Minister rightly highlighted, is shared responsibility. That means a number of different things because responsibility can be shared between different levels of public authority within a member state, between public organisations, the private sectors and non-governmental organisations and between different Departments of State. The Labour party warmly supports all such sharings. It would be good if the Government practised some of this sharing of responsibility within the United Kingdom.

Let us take one simple example—the sharing of responsibility between central Government and local authorities. The Government have told local authorities that, within the next few years, they must ensure that they recycle 25 per cent. of their wastes. We fully support that admirable and laudable objective. However, the Government have given local authorities no extra resources or assistance to carry out that objective. Local authorities are telling the Government that it will be difficult for them to meet those targets unless the Government take some share of that responsibility. Therefore, while we welcome the doctrine of shared responsibility, we question whether the Government will put it into practice here in Britain.

A number of specific points arise out of the fifth action programme. The first is the importance of getting right the mechanisms by which we can achieve the targets set out in the programme. Back in July, the Government commissioned a rather interesting report from the Institute for European Environmental Policy. That report made a number of suggestions, one of which was that each directorate within the European Commission should have an environmental unit examining how, within that directorate—even if it were not entirely concerned with the environment—green policies and the objectives of the action programme were being carried out.

The institute also proposed that each directorate should be required to produce an annual report of its activities in relation to the environment. As the Minister chairs the European Council of Ministers on the Environment, I can ask him what progress, if any, has been made in achieving those wise proposals on the environmental purposes of each European directorate. It would be good to hear an answer on that.

My second query involves ozone depletion and climate change. On page 42 of the programme, there is a commitment to limit the use of hydrochlorofluorocarbons to a maximum of 5 per cent. of the 1990 level of chlorofluorocarbons by the year 2000. This is not as arcane as it may seem, because, while CFCs are a major contributing factor to the damage to the ozone layer, HCFCs are less immediately damaging, although they are not entirely innocent. The widespread use of HCFCs is likely to cause damage.

Why, if there was such a tough target in the fifth action programme, was there a recent decision at a preparatory meeting of Ministers for the Montreal protocol, to allow the use of HCFCs to continue for at least a 27-year period? That does not strike me as an attempt to meet the target date of 2000 for such a tough restriction as is rightly included in the fifth action programme for the use of HCFCs.

It would also be good to be told by the Government whether, as widely expected, HCFCs will be the principal component of the air conditioning systems installed in the Channel tunnel and, if so, what quantity of HCFCs will be used and what will be the anticipated damage to the ozone layer from that use? The Minister could usefully explain how that squares with the provisions of the fifth action programme.

There is a brief mention in the fifth action programme of the need for energy efficiency. The Government must realise that better performance on energy efficiency, energy conservation and energy insulation work is the key to reducing carbon dioxide emissions in this country. Why, then, is there no sign of any national programme from the British Government to improve energy efficiency?

Indeed, why have the Government themselves not performed particularly well in relation to their own expenditure? The Association for the Conservation of Energy has kindly provided me with some interesting figures about the performance of Government Departments in relation to energy efficiency. The most interesting relate to the Department of Trade and Industry. The President of the Board of Trade has in the last couple of weeks referred to the importance of environmental considerations in relation to energy policy. He might start by looking at his own Department. Expenditure in the Department of Trade and Industry between 1990-91 and 1991-92 on energy efficiency work went down by 74 per cent.

Other Departments appear to have performed even worse. For example, Department of Health expenditure on energy efficiency went down by 96 per cent. Although the Department of Education and Science spent a little more on energy efficiency, its energy expenditure—even though it was moving to a new building which, in theory, should have been more energy efficient than the old building it was leaving—went up by 48 per cent. If the Government are serious about the environmental impact of energy policy, they might start by looking at the performance of their own Departments.

The fifth action programme refers to the habitats directive. The Government must recognise the crucial importance of that directive in achieving nature conservation goals. During the period of the fourth action programme, over 1,200 sites of special scientific interest were destroyed or damaged, a record of which no Government should be proud. It is clear that the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 is urgently in need of strengthening. The MacSharry reforms to the common agricultural policy still do not provide enough for the enfolding of conservation values into our agriculture policy. Will the Government make a commitment to introduce legislation to implement the habitats directive soon, to strengthen the existing protection which is inadequate for wildlife habitats in this country?

Fifthly, the fifth environmental action programme says that we must begin to use new economic indicators, set alongside indicators such as gross domestic product. On page 67 and in the table on page 72 the programme is specific on that point. It sets target dates and says that we must achieve some progress on that by 1995 and on other elements by 1999. How much progress have the Government made in redefining how we measure economic progress? Have they done anything to set new indicators beside our current projections of GDP, which take no account of resource depletion, the creation of waste, pollution, or some of the long-term environmental consequences of economic activity? If they have done nothing to move the debate along on that issue, why not? It is in the fifth environmental action programme. They say that they welcome the programme, so it would be useful to know what they are doing to implement it.

Sixthly, the Government have already mentioned, in the course of the debate and in the motion before the House, the principle of subsidiarity. The Minister was remarkably frank on the subject: he told us that the environment would not be exempt from the search for items for subsidiarity. He said that the environment knows no national boundaries and he knows that the sea that washes the shores of Britain also washes the shores of the rest of Europe, and that sulphur dioxide produced in Britain falls in Norway, Sweden and Germany. He must know that that immediately imposes international environmental obligations on any country in relation to what it does to the atmosphere or the waters around its coast. He must also know that there is an urgent need to ensure that we keep Europe-wide standards of environmental protection in Britain, and that we keep those standards high and consistent.

This week, the bulldozers are likely to move in to start digging up Twyford down. It is only because the European Commissioner has stood up to protect Oxleas wood that the same fate has not befallen that precious ecological site yet. The Government must not yield up the environment and proper environmental protection as a hostage to appease those who believe that bringing power back to Whitehall somehow solves a political problem about Europe in the Tory party. The environment must not be used as a tool in an internal argument within the Conservative party. Environmental protection on a Europe wide basis is too important and precious for that to happen.

Finally, one of the important issues that comes out of the action programme is what is called "the use of economic instruments". The Secretary of State is becoming rather fond of the use of economic instruments. He gave a lecture at the Royal Society of Arts about three months ago on the subject and included copious references to economic instruments in his speech to the Conservative party conference. In the second anniversary report on our common inheritance, he talks about economic instruments. I am not sure whether he has in mind the same economic instruments as the fifth environmental action programme mentions, because those are rather interesting.

There are four kinds of economic instruments in this programme. There are charges and levies; there are fiscal incentives. There is state aid. That would be a novel idea for this Government. There is also environmental auditing. Those are all extremely useful tools for protecting the environment. They all have their place. Indeed, for several years, the Opposition have been

[Mr. Chris Smith]

arguing for green taxation proposals—ignored by the Chancellor in every Budget over the past three or four years. We have argued for a levy on landfill sites. We have argued for a switch in the use of the nuclear levy to energy conservation, to cleaning up emissions from fossil fuel power stations and to research into renewable sources of energy. That would represent a better use of the levy than the one to which it is currently put. We have also argued for a proper system of environmental auditing. These are all worthy ideas about which the Government ought to be doing far more.

What I suspect the Secretary of State means by economic instruments is simply the use of market forces. He will ensure that market forces, not the proper role of regulation, will be the tool on which he will rely to protect our environment. That is just not good enough. Regulation must remain the linchpin of environmental protection policy.

By all means let us look at taxation incentives, auditing, levies and the various proposals in the fifth directive action programme, but let us not at the same time downgrade the place of regulation as the core of a proper environmental protection policy.

The last but one Secretary of State for the Environment understood all this extremely well. When he published "This Common Inheritance" the first time around, he included an extremely apposite quotation from John Stuart Mill. It is printed at the very beginning of that White Paper:

> "What rights, and under what conditions, a person shall be allowed to exercise over any portion of this common inheritance"—

the earth—

> "cannot be left undecided. No function of Government is less optional than the regulation of these things."

The Opposition strongly endorse that clear principle. Regulation must be used to ensure that the earth we live in is not damaged. We recognise that market forces can help, but that they will never resolve the issues that face our shared environment. I only hope that the Government and the present Secretary of State will learn that lesson too.

10.33 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), rather unusually, quoted John Stuart Mill. I should like to quote one of the lovely songs that my daughter plays to me frequently in the car. It is by Bob Marley, and it goes:

> "Don't you worry about anything
> Because everything's going to be all right."

This document is a load of rubbish. It places no obligations on anyone. It may cheer up the Community and all the people who go to those expensive conferences, but it will achieve nothing. It may even cheer up the Opposition spokesman, who revels in this sort of nonsense. But I hope that the Minister will have the guts to admit that this is costly nonsense which commits no one to anything, which will not stand up in a court of law and which in any event is a load of old rubbish.

I draw the Minister's attention to the seventh paragraph, which sets out these wonderful environmental designs for the future. We are told that the

> "farmer is the guardian of the soil and of the countryside",

and I am sure that that is true. It is said:

> "Improvements in farming efficiency, increased mechanisation levels, improved transport and marketing arrangements and increased international trade in . . . feedstuffs have all contributed to the fulfilment of the original Treaty objectives of assuring the availability of food supplies at reasonable prices, the stabilization of markets and a fair standard of living for the agricultural community."

Does the Minister believe that we have achieved, and will continue to achieve, the stabilisation of markets? My understanding is that markets have never been less stable and never more distorted. Have we ensured the availability of foodstuffs at reasonable prices? In fact, we have grotesquely high prices. In addition, £500 million is spent each week on dumping and destroying food. Colleagues who talk of the need for expenditure in various areas should realise that, every week, £500 million is wasted. How can the Government put their name, and that of their country, on this load of absolute rubbish, which is distorting the truth and common sense in every possible way?

Secondly, the document sets out some of the needs that have to be examined. It refers to the desperate need for additional skills and training in a number of areas, one of which is integrated pest control. I ask the Government sharply and clearly to explain why there is such a desperate need, and why we all have to jump to attention to attend to it. The Minister will know that I am referring to section 7.6, which is headed "Professional Education and Training".

Thirdly, the Government will be well aware that there is not a cohesion fund, and probably never will be. Even if such a fund is established in law, there will be no money to operate it. On page 71, however, the principles of such fund are set out. It is hoped that they will be established under a Maastricht agreement. There are two particular principles which seem to be illogical, unnecessary and contrary to all the principles that involve common sense in economics.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister briefly and in conclusion whether it would make any difference to anyone, whether in the House, outside it or in any other European country, if the documents that are before us had never been produced, if there had never been any silly seminars and discussions to frame them and if we have not spent a fortune producing a load of rubbish that will mean no legal commitment by anyone. My hon. Friend the Minister is well aware that, if it had some form of moral commitment, it could be blatantly disregarded—openly, clearly and daily—by members of the European Community.

If the Minister cannot answer my questions about pest control and agriculture, will he tell me what difference it would make to anyone if this costly and expensive documentation had never been produced and all the costly meetings and journeys of civil servants to Brussels and other places in Europe to discuss the documents had never taken place? Does he agree that it is a costly load of rubbish and that we are wasting our time discussing it?

10.38 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I do not know whether the Minister will answer the questions of the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir Teddy Taylor), but I shall. In a short speech, he repeated himself three times. It is clear that he ignores the recent history of Europe in relation to environmental policy. If he is to be so blind to the facts, it is no wonder that he and those who think like him—those who oppose closer European integration—have to make up for their lack of sustainable argument with a lot of noise with no substance.

I respect the views of the hon. Member for Southend, East on animal welfare, but he should understand that some of the progress that we have made in that significant area as in others has been in no small measure due to pressure on us from elsewhere in Europe and not from within the United Kingdom.

Sir Teddy Taylor: The hon. Gentleman cannot say that.

Mr. Hughes: I have not given way yet. I shall continue with what I have to say.

Sir Teddy Taylor: It is shocking.

Mr. Hughes: It is certainly not shocking. I shall respond to the hon. Gentleman—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. However strongly the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) feels, he must contain himself.

Mr. Hughes: I will answer the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Animal welfare.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I did not expect to have to call the hon. Member for Southend, East to order again. He has been in this House long enough to know that sedentary interventions of that kind are wholly unacceptable.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman accused the Government, in endorsing and commending the fifth action programme, of supporting a load of rubbish. I will put him right and explain why the programme is not just a load of rubbish but an important measure.

The European Community—thank goodness, some of us say—has always had some level of commitment to environmental issues. It sets out its environmental programmes in documents that are not legally binding but which provide the policy platform from which legislation is drawn. From the time of the Single European Act, to which the House agreed when Baroness Thatcher was Prime Minister, environmental objectives have also been incorporated in Community treaties. The Maastricht treaty proposes their further extension.

There have so far been over 300 pieces of European legislation on environmental protection, and more than 50 more have been published as draft proposals. Some of them have been enormously welcomed in this country—such as the legislation to improve drinking and bathing water quality, to hasten the reduction of lead in petrol, and to provide environmental impact assessments. Those initiatives all originated in the Community, not the United Kingdom.

We have a corpus of European environmental legislation because the Commission had the foresight to think through issues coming down the track and to compile the four programmes we have already endorsed and the fifth one which we are debating tonight. It is impossible intelligently to legislate without a strategy. Indeed, Opposition Members often criticise the Government for legislating in substantial policy areas such as energy in the absence of a strategy. The Government's supporters know the kind of trouble that causes. Only someone who imagines that legislation can successfully be passed in the absence of a policy context would argue that a programme that sets out the general policy is a load of rubbish.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Does not the hon. Gentleman, as someone who fights for animal welfare, agree that many of the improvements that he and I would like are prevented by European directives from being legislated for in this Chamber? What can the House do about the vile treatment to which transported animals are subjected, or about battery hens? What can be done about any aspect of animal welfare, which matters hugely?

Mr. Hughes: I told the House that, on animal welfare, the hon. Gentleman and I are in accord, and I do not doubt his sincerity. It is sometimes entirely possible, and compatible with European law, for individual member states to impose regulations tougher than the European regulations. The problem arises in the context of the law requiring free movement, and so on. The hon. Gentleman is right: in these issues we must take the lead. Sometimes Britain must seek to ensure that the standards of other member states are as high as ours. Farm animals welfare is one example. But there is nothing to stop this country surpassing the European standard in many areas, although this is an issue best debated separately elsewhere.

Tonight's motion may be fine as far as it goes, but it begs a few questions. The Government welcome the general shape of the programme, but we are told that they will make drafting amendments, although we do not know what form they will take. As I said when I intervened on the Minister, severe risks are involved in the Government's plans for delivering subsidiarity in environmental policy—a point that was also raised earlier by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith).

I welcome the work done by the Commission on documents such as this during the leadership of Carlo Ripa di Meana. We in Britain should pay tribute to what was achieved by Commissioner di Meana before his return to Italy, and should also welcome his successor, Karel van Miert.

This document gives us an opportunity to see a way ahead. Of course it is not perfect; unfortunately, it is more imperfect than it might have been, because our Government have watered it down. One of the problems affecting both this document and the Maastricht treaty is the fact that, in regard to environmental issues, the British Government have sought to make them weaker rather than stronger.

The Maastricht treaty, for instance, would have contained an energy chapter committing the European Community to tougher energy conservation policy, along with a commitment to the use of less polluting forms of energy. Why are those provisions not included? Because the British Government objected, and accordingly they went out of the window. There would also have been far fewer exceptions to the majority voting proposals in the

[Mr. Hughes]

treaty. Why are there so many? Why will so many issues still have to be decided unanimously in Europe? Because the British Government, among others, objected.

It is no good for the Minister to pretend to the House that the Government are greatly committed to the highest standards of enforcement of environmental policy. That is not the truth, and there is clear evidence of what happened during the negotiations leading to the Maastricht treaty and earlier this year.

I welcome the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury to his new Front-Bench responsibilities—along with his hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), who will no doubt perform in a strongly supportive role—and he was right to raise subsidiarity as a key issue. The Government may well persuade the Commission—it looks as though they have tried—to suggest that one of the matters "downgraded" to national decision should be a series of environmental subjects that are far better regulated at a Europewide level. The bathing water directive is an example.

If the Government wish to sustain support for Maastricht from other parties—particularly over the next few weeks—they had better stop thinking of selling out on such matters as environmental policy by handing more of them down for decision-making at national level. If that is the price that they want the European Community to pay for their ability to hold their party together, they risk losing the support of the Opposition parties. I hope that they will heed that warning. We will not sell out on the environment to get the Government out of a hole; if they take such action, it will be just another U-turn to add to their list.

I share the Government's frustration over the fact that a European environmental agency has not been set up. I heard what the Minister said, and I hope that during the remaining few weeks of the British presidency the Government will exert even more pressure to sort out this nonsense once and for all. I know that it is not our fault, and I am aware that we are pushing; but we are in the President's chair, and we must put on the pressure even more.

I am also aware that the Government are keen to ensure that there is a decent audit and inspection procedure. Earlier this year, in its report "Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Legislation", the Select Committee on the European Communities in the other place made it clear that we must have tough auditing and a tough inspectorate. As the hon. Member for Southend, East would surely agree, it is no use having laws if they are enforced partially rather than properly. However—as the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury and others will also agree—it is also no use agreeing to laws, and criticising others for not applying them, when our own application of those laws is selective.

The habitats directive is a clear example. The hon. Gentleman chose one figure; I understand that, in a single calendar year—last year—we lost 500 sites of special scientific interest in this country. It is no good delaying legislation—*[Interruption.]* It is no use the Minister muttering, "Rubbish." I should be grateful if he would tell us how many sites have been lost. Those appear to be the statistics. *[Interruption.]* The sites were damaged, certainly, if not lost. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] The reality is that there is a directive but that the Government have not introduced legislation. They are doing nothing to do so. They are standing idly by.

I also predict that the money required for the environmentally sensitive areas policy that was announced by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will not be made available. The Government's supposedly great commitment to environmentally sensitive farming will therefore be thrown out of the window as well.

Thank God for the European Community's environmental policy. Thank God the European Community has taken so many initiatives. May it keep up the pressure. May nothing that this Government do water it down any more.

10.50 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): When we listen to Conservative Members, particularly to those who sit on the Treasury Bench, we are accustomed to trite comment. They put their hands on their hearts and pledge the Government's support for a decent environment, but when we look in detail at their achievements we find that in almost every sphere there are grounds for serious concern. I noticed that, when the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) referred to the number of sites of special scientific interest, the Minister did not agree with his figure, and that, when it was pointed out that the sites had been damaged rather than destroyed, Conservative Members regarded it as a matter of hilarity. The fact that hundreds of important sites, recognised as vital for nature conservation, are damaged year after year while the Government deny that it is a matter of concern shows that they are unfit to be responsible for our natural heritage.

When the Government rightly banned straw burning, some of the farmers in my constituency said to me, "You know what the response of farmers will be? Because they are banned from straw burning, they will buy and use far more pesticides." When I wrote to Lady Trumpington, she said in her reply that the Government knew that but hoped that farmers would not use more pesticides. During agriculture questions a few weeks later, I asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he intended to take to ensure that, following the ban on straw burning, farmers were discouraged or prevented from liberally applying pesticides and other poisons to Britain's arable land. To the great delight of all his hon. Friends, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said that I did not know what I was talking about because all hon. Members knew that pesticides were not poisonous. I accept that they may not be as poisonous as the present Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, but the fact remains that pesticides are poisonous and that the Government could not care less.

The Minister said today that pollution does not respect national boundaries and that we must not lower our environmental objectives. Earlier this week, I telephoned the Department of the Environment to remind it that next month 2,700 drums of toxic waste will still be in my constituency. When it first arrived—since its arrival I have complained about it, in one way or another, 174 times in the House—I was told that it would be gone by Christmas. That was December 1989. I do not know whether it will still be there in December 1992.

I telephoned the Department and said that, although I knew that it wanted to forget about that toxic waste, there is shortly to be a court action in the United States which I hope will resolve the matter. There is just one problem: the Americans will not allow that toxic waste back into the United States. Although it was legal to export it, it is not legal to bring it back into the United States. We want to know what is to happen to that toxic waste.

The site for that toxic waste is probably the largest single area of dereliction in western Europe. The Minister used to be chairman of the Dearne valley venture, but the chairmanship has now passed to Lord Henley. My only complaint about that is that the noble Lord is Under-Secretary of State for Social Security. I find that rather odd. I wrote to the Minister a number of times. I asked to see him in July, and I wrote to him in August. I have now been told to see the noble Lord who is Under-Secretary of State for Social Security. How seriously can we take the Government's concern about the environment when they pass off responsibility in that way?

I know that the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) does not like the jargon and bureaucracy which sometimes emanate from Brussels, but, like the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, I thank God that Brussels is worried about environmental impact assessments. I have been heavily involved in nature conservation and the cause of the environment in Europe for a long time. I vividly recall that a big conference was held when eastern European countries began to embrace democracy. The British Conservative delegation attended to advice those countries on how to approach the economy and the environment. The eastern European countries are beset by foul pollution, but the delegation advised them: "Sweep away all your regulations; dismantle all your laws; free the entrepreneur to stimulate and ensure economic recovery." That was the advice of people who are not fit to be responsible for our natural heritage and for our environment.

The Government have blocked Bills to protect hedgerows, have reduced the capacity of local authorities to protect their own environments and have allowed Britain to be poisoned by the entrepreneur, who has inflicted enormous damage on my area. A few weeks ago, the Department of the Environment produced a lovely little brochure and I wrote to the Minister to congratulate him on the photographs on pages 1 and 2 depicting the Manvers site in my constituency. The local community is still waiting for responses to expressions of enormous anxiety. Unless the Government change their regulations and course, land that they proudly boast to have reclaimed will remain in a sterilised condition as long ahead as one can see. We are entitled to expect the Government to be a little more sincere, a little more energetic and a little more convincing than they have been in recent weeks.

10.58 pm

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): Chapter 13 of the document deals with the United Nations conference on the environment and development. The document was written before the conference.

I remind the House of the twin themes of UNCED—environmental sustainability and social and global equity. UNCED was intended to be a turning point, and I shall quote from the document to show what a turning point it was supposed to be. Page 92 says that UNCED

> "should therefore mark the transition from a model of development almost exclusively aimed at promoting economic growth towards a model wherein environmental protection and rational management of natural resources will be taken on board as integral components of development patterns."

That was the environmental sustainability theme at UNCED.

On page 92, there is a reference to the Dublin declaration of June 1990, which emphasises the need to meet

> "the specific needs . . . of its partners"—

the European Community's partners—

> "in the developing world and in Central and Eastern Europe."

Chapter 12 on bilateral co-operation and the section on developing countries is quite specific. It states:

> "The Community and Member States will continue to intensify their efforts . . . it is necessary to increase official development aid and to mobilise new financial resources . . . to finance sustainable and environmentally sound development programmes and projects."

We all recall that the commitment of new moneys by industrial countries to fund agenda 21 was grossly inadequate—about £2·5 billion per annum compared to the United Nations estimated requirement of £70 billion pounds. That is a remarkable disparity. That is the equity theme of UNCED.

Reports since suggest that even that pitiful requirement may not be honoured. First, the earth increment, part of the replenishment of the World bank International Development Association, is said to be in danger of collapse with Britain noticeably cool. It is said that we shall be lucky to maintain existing levels of that International Development Association budget, apart from any increase.

Secondly, Britain offered at Rio to triple its contribution to the global environmental facility to £100 million. That is now said to be threatened by budget cuts. Thirdly, we are told that Treasury Ministers are threatening to cut £250 million from bilateral overseas aid.

To renege on even the undertakings made at what was to be the most important meeting in the history of the world would make a mockery of the Rio agenda, a mockery of agenda 21 and a mockery of the new sustainable development commission which is to be set up in coming months. One can only imagine what the response among poorer countries could be and how disastrously damaging that response would be to the whole concept of environmental sustainability.

If we accept the rhetoric of UNCED—that the future of our planet is at stake—the consequences do not bear thinking about. Already the catastrophic poverty in some of the poorer countries does not bear thinking about.

I ask the Government to come clean and to make a clear statement about where they are at. The Government—this is true of all of us—must decide whether we wish to take UNCED and agenda 21 seriously or not.

11.3 pm

Mr. Maclean: With permission, I will reply to a few of the points raised in an interesting debate. I should explain to the House, as I tried to explain in my opening speech, the nature of the fifth environmental action programme, especially for the benefit of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor). He asked one fundamental question. If we did not have these documents, what difference would it make?

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[Mr. Maclean]

The difference would be that the Commission, which has the sole right to propose initiatives and legislation in the Community, could produce any directives and regulations that it saw fit without any guidance from the member states. The fifth environmental action programme gives some guidance. This may not be a good analogy, but it is like a giant à la carte menu. In some ways, it is like agenda 21. One does not expect to have to work one's way through every item on the list, but at least if everything is displayed in the window, one knows the sort of restaurant one is about to go into and the sort of meals that one might get there. My hon. Friend may have views as to the cooking ability of those concerned, but that is a different matter.

I warmly welcome the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). It is a great pleasure to see him on the Opposition Front Bench. It is perhaps unfair to be slightly carping towards him on his first appearance as an environment spokesman, but he should consider what we have been doing in the past few months. Where has he been during that time? He slammed into us on recycling, failing to realise that we gave £12 million in supplementary credit approvals last year, and £15 million this year to 126 local authorities.

The hon. Gentleman made a fuss about eco-auditing —environmental auditing. That is one of the initiatives that we are taking forward and one of the matters discussed at the Luxembourg Council last week and at the informal Ministers' Council. We consider it terribly important. We have even included it in the published programme. It is one of the things that we hope to achieve during our presidency.

The hon. Gentleman may be fortunate enough not to see television very often and has perhaps not seen the advertising campaign, "Helping the Earth Begins at Home", which tells householders and individuals what they can do about global warming. That is one of our energy efficiency measures. It is easy to pick on certain Government Departments for not being energy-efficient in the first year of a five-year programme. I emphasise, however, that those Departments have signed up to energy efficiency improvements over five years, and I do not think that it is fair to judge them in the first year of their efforts to meet a five-year target.

The hon. Gentleman went on about HCFCs. Of course we recognise that HCFCs have some ozone-depleting potential—about one twentieth that of CFCs, which are the real villain of the piece. If we are to make any real progress in combating ozone depletion, we must get the use of CFCs reduced and if we are to do that, we must allow HCFCs to be used in the interim, until all the other all-singing, all-dancing alternatives are available. Every other country in the world takes the view that HCFCs have a role to play in the interim period.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned environmental units in the Commission. We are keen on that idea; we repeatedly raised the subject at the Council meeting last week. I particularly made the point, drawing attention to that excellent report. This is a matter for the Commission, however. We do not have the power unilaterally to tell the Commission what to do or to impose a regime in Europe whereby all the directorates-general have their own environmental units and reorganise and reform themselves. I repeat that we pursued the matter last week, and we shall raise it again and again because we see merit in it. Environmental policy has now been integrated into all other aspects of our policy in this country—we have interdepartmental discussions on it—and Europe could easily follow that example.

The hon. Members for Islington, South and Finsbury and for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) referred to habitats, and sought to extract a promise from me that we will introduce legislation to implement the habitats directive. That is not news, however—we have been working on it, and we shall introduce the legislation at the earliest possible opportunity. We have some years to do that, so time is on our side.

This country has 5,600 sites of special scientific interest, and 8 per cent. of the land mass of Great Britain is contained within SSSIs. It is easy to pick on a site where damage has been caused, and I should perhaps have listened to hon. Members with more respect if they had pointed out that SSSIs in other countries have also sustained damage. I was fascinated by an article in *The Daily Telegraph* two weeks ago, showing the substantial damage that had happened not to an SSSI but to a special protection area. Although we are the third or fourth country in Europe in announcing SPAs, we have been criticised. According to the article, in one country thousands of acres have been devastated, but we heard not a word from the Opposition about that.

In our White Paper, we publicly acknowledge those matters on which we have done well, and those on which we have not done so well and on which we must make progress. When considering the fifth environmental action programme, it does us no service to denigrate this country for some of the progress that we are making in respect of the environment and to paint a picture showing that our environment is the only environment which is going down hill or that we are destroying the environment. The reverse is the case. We are protecting our environment exceptionally well, although of course there is more that we can do. And we shall do more: we shall take further measures to protect our environment whether or not the Commission proposes those measures. We recognise that protecting all aspects of our environment is good for the people of this country and for our industry.

Mr. Chris Smith: It does the House no service if the Government dismiss, as the Minister has just dismissed, the real problem of the 1,200 sites of special scientific interest which were damaged during the course of the fourth action programme. The Minister must not simply dismiss that as not particularly relevant. It is very relevant. The Minister said that we have plenty of time to institute the habitats directive and to implement it in legislation, but we do not have that time, because, while the Government are waiting, more SSSIs will be destroyed or damaged.

Mr. Maclean: I reject the hon. Gentleman's pessimism. We are not complacent about some of the SSSIs that have suffered damage, but we must also recognise the extensive network of protection in this country exercised through English Nature, the large number of SSSIs, the substantial measure of protection, and the fact that we have the most designated Ramsar sites in Europe. We must also recognise the large number of special protection areas that we have designated. Of course, English Nature now wants to concentrate on ensuring that its protection of SSSIs is as effective as it can be. When I said that we have plenty of time to implement the habitats directive, I meant that we have sufficient time within the time scale in the directive to do that. We intend that it shall be implemented.

Mr. Hardy: The Minister suggested that we were not critical of our neighbours. I have been chairman of the natural environment sub-committee of the Council of Europe for a long time and I have berated our neighbours on many occasions. After the war, and for a considerable part of the post-war period, Britain was far and away the lead country in conservation and environmental concerns. That is no longer the position and the Minister gave examples which proved that a few moments ago. The Minister should not suggest that we are critical only of Britain.

The Minister referred to Ramsar sites. On occasions, private Bills have been introduced in the House whereby important areas of the environment were due for serious damage or destruction and Conservative Members trooped through the Lobbies to support that destruction. They did so in respect of the very important Ramsar site affected by the Felixtowe Dock and Railway Bill which——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not make another speech. Interventions should be brief.

Mr. Maclean: I was trying to suggest that it would not be the British way simply to criticise our neighbours or to exempt ourselves. However, it is not good for us to give the impression that we criticise and denigrate only ourselves as though we were still the dirty man of Europe. I reject the claim that we are no longer in the lead in respect of nature conservation. We are the most respected country in the world in that regard. No other country has such a scientific lead in nature conservation as we have. In negotiations on the convention on trade in endangered species or other issues, it is the British scientists who are listened to because we have the expertise.

The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) referred to pesticides and gave the impression that our use of pesticides was increasing and that farmers were ignoring the strictures, but that is not so. Pesticide use in this country has decreased by 20 per cent. in the past 10 years. The hon. Gentleman should not give the impression that it is doing the opposite.

On toxic waste, I do not want to comment on the specific case as it is sub judice—subject to legal procedures—at the moment. However, I make the general point that last week at the Council of Ministers meeting in Luxembourg we obtained agreement. It was thanks to the brilliant chairing of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State that we got agreement on the waste shipments directive. The Community is now in a position to sign the Basle convention, and we shall be able for the first time to bring in measures through the national self-sufficiency plans to put proper controls on the transfer or shipment of waste between developed countries. I look forward to the day when those shipments will be drastically reduced if not stopped.

The final point that I make to the hon. Member for Wentworth is about derelict land. Again he lambasted me on this matter. The hon. Gentleman will know that we have gone out to consultation on a scheme which will deal with section 143 registers. That consultation period has not yet ended; it will end at the end of this month. I am quite happy for the hon. Gentleman to write to me expressing his concerns about how that might impact——

Mr. Hardy: I am still waiting for a reply.

Mr. Maclean: We are near the end of a consultation exercise. I should very quickly end up in court if I prejudged the outcome of the consultation exercise. I shall bear carefully in mind the points that the hon. Gentleman and others have made about the impact that those registers might have in his constituency and in other parts of the country.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maclean: I shall not give way, because I want to conclude my speech.

As we endeavour to build on the commitments that we signed up to at Rio, and as we shape our policies on the environment into the next century, the European Community has a role to play alongside and together with the individual member states. The fifth environmental action programme will be a vital part of that process. I have indicated tonight the approach that we are taking in discussing the programme in Brussels and the main themes that we would wish to see the Community pursue as the programme begins to be implemented. As those discussions move forward, we shall take account of the views expressed in this debate.

There is much work to be done in the Community in assessing how its policies match the aspirations of its member states—for example, the renewed commitment to the principle of subsidiarity and the requirement to integrate the environment in all policy aspects. As President of the Environment Council, we shall continue our efforts to ensure that the fifth action programme is adopted in terms which meet those concerns and enable the Community to continue to pursue effective environmental policies. I commend the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the European Community Document No. 6132/92, relating to the Fifth Environmental Action Programme; endorses the Government's welcome of the general shape of the Programme; supports the Programme's emphasis on the integration of environmental concerns into other areas of policy, subsidiarity and the need to set priorities and assess costs; and endorses the Government's intention to ensure that these elements and the outcome of the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development are adequately reflected in the Resolution on the Programme which the Council is to adopt.

PETITIONS

Pornography

11.17 pm

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): I present a petition from more than 350,000 people. We see laid in front of us evidence of the massive public concern about the growth of pornography. The terms of the petition are that

> urgent Government action is required to outlaw pornography. Because obscene and pornographic material, produced in Britain and abroad, is freely available on a scale as never before. The present Obscene Publications Act 1959 can control only the most extreme material. Because sex crime escalates children are increasingly at risk of being sexually abused and even murdered.
>
> We the undersigned believe that the circulation of obscene and pornographic material is harmful to all members of society, especially to women and children.
>
> Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House call upon Her Majesty's Government to strengthen British Law against pornography and press for similar reform in the European Community without delay.
>
> And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray. I beg leave to present the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Link Road, Kirklees

11.19 pm

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): I have the honour this evening to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in Batley and Spen. My constituents oppose the proposal to construct a link road between the M1 and M62 motorways in Kirklees in West Yorkshire. The proposed road would cut through Hartshead, Roberttown and Norristhorpe in my constituency. It would take away green fields and houses and cut a village and a community in half. It would be of no benefit whatever to my constituents if the proposal went ahead.

The petition has 3,000 signatures on it. It says:

> Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will note our strong objections to these proposals and respect the wishes of the petitioners and prevent construction of any link road through Kirklees. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc. I beg leave to present the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Search and Rescue (Kent Coast)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

11.20 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I am grateful for the chance to raise during this short debate a matter which causes considerable anxiety to me and to my constituents —the provision of civilian search and rescue services covering the North Foreland and Dover strait.

I should make it plain that the airfield at Manston, known jointly as RAF Manston and Kent international airport, to which I shall refer, lies mainly in the constituency of my hon. Friend and parliamentary neighbour the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken). My hon. Friend the Minister will understand that my hon. Friend's position as a Minister of State bars him by parliamentary convention from raising the issue on the Adjournment. But he is in his place on the Bench tonight and I hope that I shall speak for us both and for his constituents too.

The anxieties that I shall voice are echoed by my hon. Friends the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier)—who represents the coastal town of Whitstable with its fishing fleet—and for Faversham (Mr. Moate)—who has the major port of Sheerness in his care. I am also aware of the anxieties expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait), who is with us tonight.

The Dover strait, the North Foreland and the Goodwin sands, together with the north Kent approaches to the Medway and the Thames estuary, constitute the busiest and one of the most hazardous sea lanes in the world. A mariner friend of mine has described the almost continuous cross-channel, small craft traffic as

> "like children running backwards and forwards across a motorway."

That mix of pleasure traffic, ferry traffic—about 200 crossings a day—and commercial shipping travelling to and from the great seaports of northern Europe is a series of accidents waiting to happen.

Added to the cocktail of potential disaster are the many holidaymakers who, throughout the season, find themselves in trouble on sailboards, airbeds, rubber dinghies and the like. Much of the rescue has been met, and will continue to be met, by the extraordinarily courageous volunteer work of the crews of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and the now modern lifeboats which it mans for both inshore and deep-sea purposes.

There is another need which can be met only by the search and rescue helicopter service. For example, the Royal Air Force search and rescue team from Manston airfield was first on the scene when the Herald of Free Enterprise capsized. Civilians are alive today who owe their lives to the speed of that response. The search and rescue service from Manston has flown Kent county's firefighters to ships burning in the channel to remove casualties and fly them direct to Thanet district hospital and to put in fire-fighting teams in time to prevent small fires from turning into disasters.

Kent county fire service has about 100 officers who are trained specifically to fight fires at sea. In recent years, those men have attended many incidents on board ships in the waters off the North Foreland and the Dover strait.

According to the Kent fire brigade offshore operations team manual, those incidents began back in May 1965 when

> "The Pakistani Freighter Yousef Baksh was on fire and in danger of sinking. She was beached in Sandwich Bay. Reconnaissance was carried out by Kent Fire Brigade Officers using a helicopter from Manston who also provided transport for firefighters."

In the years that followed, major fire incidents attended with helicopter support include the Birkland, the Skyron, the Seafreight Freeway, the European Trader, the Herald of Free Enterprise, the Sally Star ferry and in June this year, the Bow Cedar. The fire service has also worked with the helicopter service to provide cliff rescues—an average of four a month during the summer—and now has equipment stores at Manston that include breathing apparatus, water and foam fire fighting equipment, rescue kit, and lighting and damage control supplies. There is also a fire service Manston liaison officer.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): My hon. Friend will appreciate that the fishermen off Hastings and Rye and the sailors in those waters are looking forward to enjoying the same sort of service, with a speedy response at the same amount of search time and the back up service that they are used to. I hope that my hon. Friend will make those points.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover) *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. We cannot have one intervention on another. The hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) must respond to the first intervention before allowing another.

Mr. Gale: I appreciate the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye. I could not agree more with every point that she made, and I shall elaborate on some of those in a moment.

Mr. Shaw: I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this important debate. Many of our constituents obtain work on, and enjoy the use of ferries between Dover and Calais. Is it not vital that the Minister assures us that there will be no compromising of safety standards, and that the efficiency of the rescue service will be maintained?

Mr. Gale: Both my hon. Friends are entirely correct, and have reinforced the points that I shall make tonight.

It has been the combination of airborne and water-borne rescue services that has, in the past, proved so successful and is so much appreciated by our constituents. Let me briefly review the history of helicopter search and rescue in east Kent. In the early days—in 1961—the RAF flew a single Whirlwind helicopter from Manston. In 1969, the RAF service was replaced by the civilian firm, Bristow, acting under contract for the coastguard service. The civilian service operated by Bristow, using mainly ex-RAF personnel, won the company the coastguard rescue shield in 1972.

Shortly afterwards, the RAF reinstated Wessex helicopters to meet a perceived military aviation need at Manston and it may not surprise hon. Members to hear that there was a public outcry at the loss of the award-winning civilian service. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South—then Thanet, East—has been good enough to remind me that he instigated an Adjournment debate, of which this one is almost the mirror image, to protest at the withdrawal of the Bristow contract.

During that debate, my hon. Friend drew attention to the fact that the then Under-Secretary of State for Defence for the Royal Air Force had said in a letter that there was

> "no direct service requirement to locate a helicopter at Manston".

Concluding his speech, my hon. Friend said prophetically:

> "there is above all the fear that these RAF helicopters will again be withdrawn . . . as they were in 1969 . . . Therefore, in the interests of all the yachtsmen, swimmers, and shipping traffic of the Channel I urge the Minister to reconsider his decision and to leave the excellent helicopter service in the situation where it now is".

Replying, the then Under-Secretary of State for Trade was unable to give an undertaking that there would not come a time when the RAF service would be withdrawn but said that in that unlikely event

> "it would provide us with sufficient notice to enable a satisfactory alternative service to be put into operation".—[*Official Report*, 23 July 1974; Vol. 877, c. 1523-29.]

The decision was taken, the RAF replaced Bristow and in 1988 the Wessex helicopters were replaced with Sea Kings.

Over that period of 30 years, the helicopter search and rescue service has responded to over 3,000 calls, and since the advent of serious rescue flying over the sea, the Dover strait and the North Foreland have not been without swift helicopter cover. On this basis, and remembering the comments of the Under-Secretary in 1974 concerning the need for sufficient notice to be given to provide adequate alternative cover, my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South and I first made representations to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces who has, with the Secretary of State for Defence, listened courteously to our opinions and carried out a thorough review of the military need in the area. It has, sadly, become clear that the military need is greater to the north, serving the air stations of East Anglia, and to the west, where there is a concentration of military and, particularly, naval, flying, than in the Dover strait area.

In the past year, there have been three military callouts from RAF Manston. Two of those were airlifts—which means the evacuation of personnel on compassionate grounds—and one was recalled. None involved searches. In the previous four years, the pattern was not dissimilar. In 1991, military callouts involved one medical rescue, one medical evacuation, one airlift, two searches and two not required or false alarms. In 1990, there were fewer military callouts and only one search, one search in 1989, two searches in 1988 and no military searches in 1987.

Given the enhanced range of the Sea King helicopter, its night flying capacity and load-carrying ability, coupled with the sophisticated survival equipment carried by military personnel, it is clear that the decision to relocate the military search and rescue flights to cover faster the areas of greatest military need was inevitable.

My hon. Friends will join me in paying tribute to the courage and determination shown by the RAF search and rescue service. Many of the pilots and crews are our personal friends. We have grown accustomed to them—perhaps even taken them for granted—and we are relieved to know that the sight of the familiar yellow and green helicopters will not be lost to the north Kent coast, either on patrol from Wattisham or for the many ceremonial purposes at which their company has been enormously

[Mr. Gale]

appreciated and enjoyed. It is comforting to know that, from their new base, they will be only 40 minutes flying time away.

While 40 minutes is not great duration for a military flier equipped to survive in a winter sea for some hours, and while it is well within the one-hour response time laid down in civilian regulatory requirements it is, as we know, far too long for the child swept out to sea on a Li-Lo or the winter sailboarder who, albeit experienced and well-equipped, has suffered injury. Forty minutes is also time for a fire to take hold, to burn fiercely and to take lives. In an extra 20 minutes flying time, some of those rescued from the Herald of Free Enterprise would not today be alive. The extra delay may, I fear, cost lives.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South and I visited my noble Friend Lord Caithness, who has responsibility for the coastguard service, some weeks ago to raise this issue and to express our firm belief that the RAF service must be replaced by a civilian helicopter service designed and equipped to meet a civilian need.

Consider the figures again. In 1987, there were 117 civilian callouts from Manston involving 45 searches, 25 medical rescues, three medical evacuations and seven flights providing top cover for other rescue services. In 1988, the civilian callout number rose to 144 with 38 searches, 20 rescues and 24 medical evacuations. In 1989 there was another increase, with 157 civilian calls, 35 searches and 23 medical rescues. In 1990, there were 175 callouts for civilian purposes, involving 52 searches, 16 medical evacuations and 26 rescues. In 1991, there were 141 callouts involving 42 searches, 28 medical rescues and 13 ordinary rescues. So far this year, there have been 127 callouts, 40 searches and 18 medical rescues.

The figures speak for themselves. While the military need has fallen and can be well met from the new deployment of resources, the civilian need shows no sign of decreasing. I believe—I have to say it—that the combination of lifeboat and RAF search and rescue services from Wattisham will, on occasion, be insufficient to meet our needs. I cannot believe that the Minister is prepared to risk the life of one child or one sailor for the sake of providing, once again, civilian helicopter cover from Manston. The facilities are there and have recently been modernised. The precedent is there: civilian helicopters have flown from Manston for the coastguard service in the past and are currently flying from Lee-on-Solent. Above all, the need is there.

Earlier this evening, on TV South, my noble Friend Lord Caithness said that of some 900 incidents attended this year, 127 had involved the use of a helicopter. I am sure that, on reflection, Lord Caithness would not wish to suggest that in some way those 127 incidents did not matter—of course they mattered—or that for those 127 incidents the helicopters, and not other services, was needed to save lives.

I do not want to have to rise in this House to ask any Minister to answer a private notice question following an avoidable death off the North Foreland or in the channel arising from the failure to provide civilian search and rescue services from Manston. However, I know with an awesome certainty that, unless my hon. Friend the Minister and his noble Friend offer a positive response, the likelihood of my having to do so will be very great. I urge my hon. Friend to take this case away and analyse it carefully. No decisions concerning civilian provision have yet been made. No political colours have been nailed to the mast and no reputations are on the line. My hon. Friend and my noble Friend will earn many people's gratitude if they provide at Manston the civilian services available from Lee-on-Solent. In all conscience, they can do no less.

11.34 pm

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) on having secured this debate on such an important subject. I am delighted to see my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement in his place, as well as my hon. Friends the Members for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait), for Dover (Mr. Shaw) and for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier). I appreciate the importance which they all attach to the debate, and I know that my hon. Friends the Members for Faversham (Mr. Moate) and for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) are also concerned.

The United Kingdom is very fortunate indeed to have a large and highly capable military helicopter fleet dedicated to search and rescue and which will, I am confident, continue to give good coverage around the whole of our coastline. Those helicopters are, however, provided by the Ministry of Defence to meet a military requirement and, although they are an invaluable asset, they are just one of a range of search and rescue resources available within the United Kingdom. My hon. Friends will doubtless know of the announcement made last week by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. Copies of the open government document entitled "The Future Provision of Royal Air Force Search and Rescue Helicopters" are in the Library.

The Department of Transport is responsible for civil maritime and aeronautical search and rescue and, through Her Majesty's Coastguard, it meets the United Kingdom's obligations to provide an adequate level of SAR services for persons in distress within the United Kingdom's search and rescue region. We have at our disposal an armoury of SAR assets, which includes RAF, naval and coastguard helicopters, all-weather and fast inshore lifeboats of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, and Coastguard response teams. SAR capability must be assessed taking all those available assets into account, not just helicopters. It is the job of the coastguard, as co-ordinator of search and rescue, to call on the best assets available to deal with any particular incident.

There is no international obligation to provide a civil helicopter rescue service. This country is the only one in Europe to have dedicated SAR helicopters positioned to meet national coverage criteria. These criteria were established in 1986 by the helicopter coverage group of the United Kingdom SAR committee, which recommended that helicopters should be deployed so that points 40 nautical miles from the coast can be reached within one hour by day, and those at 100 nautical miles from the coast can be reached within two hours by night or in bad weather. Those response times include an allowance for scrambling times of 15 minutes by day and 45 minutes at night. I am advised that, in practice, helicopters are regularly scrambled within three minutes, so there is a large allowance within that formal limit of one hour.

The recent review to which I referred and the announcement that flowed from it are a matter for the

Ministry of Defence. My hon. Friend, as PPS to the Minister responsible, is in an interesting position. With his customary assiduity, he will be well aware of the contents. As he said, the number of RAF helicopters was determined by the military requirement. The effects on the provision of civil SAR were taken into account by the Ministry of Defence in the new dispositions of those helicopters to satisfy the civil requirement. The Department of Transport was consulted and my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Aviation and Shipping was satisfied that the rationalisation of helicopter deployment met the helicopter coverage group criteria for civil SAR —except for those very small additional areas marked on annex C of the open government document. It also maintained adequate response times around the whole coast. Changes to the basing structure meant that on some parts of the coast the response times would be reduced. At other places they would be increased, but they will still be within the agreed criteria. I know that my hon. Friends are seeking that assurance.

It was decided that the criteria in south-east England could be met by a helicopter flight at Wattisham in Suffolk. That means that for certain areas around the Kent coast and in the English channel which are currently covered from RAF Manston there will be increased helicopter transit times. But we are satisfied that the Sea Kings at Wattisham will be available to respond to incidents in these areas within the response times recommended by the coverage group.

I can also appreciate the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye. The response time in her constituency by the Manston helicopter now would be about 30 minutes. In future, helicopters from either Lee on Solent or Wattisham will take 15 to 25 minutes longer, depending on the precise location of the casualty. But I stress that this is still within the one-hour daytime criterion. I have to acknowledge that there is a small area in mid-channel, south of the Dover strait, which is outside the one-hour daytime criterion. But because, as I have said, helicopters are almost always airborne well within the 15-minute standby time, in this area too the rescue helicopter would be on station well within the hour.

The North Foreland and Dover strait—of interest to my hon. Friend the Member for Dover—are extremely well served by lifeboats, with fast inshore boats stationed at Whitstable, Margate, Ramsgate and Walmer, and large all-weather boats at Margate, Ramsgate and Dover. Further to the west, in or adjacent to the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye, there are lifeboats at Dungeness, Rye, Hastings and Eastbourne. As most incidents occur within two to three miles of the coast—my hon. Friend referred to people who drift out to sea on small craft—they will continue to be effectively resolved, as always, using a mix of national SAR assets, including these lifeboats and the helicopters from Wattisham and Lee on Solent. In the Dover coastguard district there are also 10 auxiliary coastguard response teams which are trained and equipped to locate and rescue casualties on the shore or on cliffs. There are similar teams around the whole coastline.

It should be noted that, during 1991, the Manston aircraft was tasked by HM Coastguard on 127 occasions. My hon. Friend said that Lord Caithness used that very statistic. Only about 10 per cent. of those were actual rescues—13 in all. The balance included search operations, the lifting of injured people from ships, medical transfers between hospitals and so on. So although helicopters are an important asset, they are not the only SAR resource available. The total number of incidents in the Dover region over the same period was 876, of which the vast majority—more than 700—were dealt with without recourse to helicopters.

In the rare event of an incident occurring in the middle of the Dover strait or near the median line, or of a major incident elsewhere in the Dover region, the most suitable assets will be used, whether national or requested from adjacent foreign search and rescue regions. This is in line with accepted SAR practice with other European authorities. The recent incident when a fire disabled the French ferry Quiberon served to demonstrate the effectiveness of cross-border liaison arrangements. Even though the vessel was in French waters, the Ministry of Defence brought a great number of aircraft to readiness. But occasions on which we would need to call upon the French authorities or the Belgians to provide a helicopter to deal with a casualty in our waters would be very rare. I am advised that none of the incidents dealt with by the Manston helicopter last year would have needed the Belgian helicopter had the Manston one not been available. On the basis of past records, it is not expected that the removal of the Manston helicopter will increase the load on any other resources, including Belgian or French resources, for example.

For the future, I am pleased to see the progress made by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution in developing its next generation of fast-afloat lifeboats and welcome its stated intention to give priority to the early allocation of these new fast boats in the areas affected by the change in helicopter deployment. The first of three of these boats for Kent should be on station within a few months of the departure of the Manston helicopter.

It has been suggested that an extra helicopter—effectively, a coastguard helicopter—should be put at Manston, like the one at Lee-on-Solent. Our judgment is that it would be difficult to justify that allocation with the limited search and rescue benefits that it would bring. We have considered but rejected alternative arrangements to enhance cover by diverting helicopters from existing bases and having them travel to and from Manston each day. The relocation of the coastguard helicopter from its present base at Solent to a point further east would denude the night cover from the west of the Solent, as the Royal Navy helicopter at Portland does not have full night or all weather capability. The present base is best to maintain coverage of the south coast and mid channel under the 1986 criteria, even after the removal of the Manston helicopter.

Although there will undoubtedly be a change in the make-up of search and rescue resources available to respond to incidents off the Kent coast and in the Dover strait, we have and will maintain a versatile and highly professional search and rescue capability both in those areas and around the entire coast of the United Kingdom. I well understand the concern that has been expressed extremely forcefully this evening. My hon. Friends the Members for Canterbury and for Hastings and Rye have emphasised that concern. I could never predict what might happen on individual occasions or in individual incidents, but I know that my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State, Lord Caithness, when considering the

[Mr. Steve Norris]

adequacy of the alternatives, was clear that, as far as was reasonably possible, the criteria that we are required to refer to would be adhered to.

Mr. David Shaw: Is my hon. Friend able to give us an assurance that he will keep the decision carefully monitored and under review, and therefore ensure that we can feel confident about the future security of the rescue service?

Mr. Norris: I shall ensure that the position is kept under close review. I shall draw the attention of my noble Friend the Minister of State to this debate tomorrow morning. I know that he will be extremely interested in the outcome of it.

I make two final points. The first one is obvious, but it is worth making. It is that the first line of defence against disaster at sea must always be mariners themselves. The sensible user of the sea will always attend first and foremost to his own safety. He will know his own limitations and those of his craft. He will ensure that the vessel is seaworthy and well equipped and that its engine is in good order. He will listen to the weather forecast and have appropriate safety equipment on board, including life jackets and life rafts. Every time a helicopter or a lifeboat is launched on a rescue mission, the crews are risking their lives. The number of rescue missions could certainly be reduced if seagoers acted sensibly and prudently.

Finally, I know that the House would not wish to conclude a debate on search and rescue without paying tribute to the tireless efforts of the RNLI to provide for these islands a first-class lifeboat service, using both fast inshore and rugged all-weather boats offshore. As we all know, the institution is financed entirely by donations. We know also that the lifeboat crews are all volunteers. The organisation's sheer professionalism and its crews' high standards of seamanship are legendary, and I salute them. With these lifeboats, with the various helicopters and with the coastguard service, we have a potent and highly successful rescue service.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eleven minutes to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 28 October 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Visitors (Information)

1. **Mr. Etherington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to ensure that visitors to the United Kingdom are properly informed by British consulates of possible apprehension when arriving in the United Kingdom.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): A guidance leaflet is available in British missions overseas explaining the requirements of the immigration rules, which all visitors must satisfy.

Mr. Etherington: Does not the Minister agree that when a citizen of Papua New Guinea is reassured about entry on no fewer than three occasions—twice in the company of one of my constituents who probably speaks English better than I do—it is deplorable that she should be treated as if she were an illegal immigrant on her arrival in this country? Rather than talk about leaflets, pamphlets and guidance, should not the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs ensure that consular staff are fully aware of the conditions for entering Britain, so that such a deplorable incident does not happen again?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The hon. Gentleman asked about the steps that we take to make known Britain's immigration policy, and we do that which I described. The hon. Gentleman refers to the case of Mrs. Mea, and I shall be happy to tell the hon. Gentleman in private all that I know about it. However, that case is subject to appeal and is therefore sub judice, so I cannot comment on it here.

Western European Union

2. **Mr. Wilkinson:** To ask the Secretary of S[illegible]e for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on progress he has made in enhancing the role of Western European Union.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): The WEU is likely shortly to be enlarged to include Greece as a full member; Turkey, Norway and Iceland as associates with rights of full participation; and Ireland as an observer. The WEU is rapidly developing a military operational role, complementing that of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, and drawing on a wide range of national and NATO forces.

Mr. Wilkinson: I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's remarks about enlargement, which can only strengthen the European dimension of western alliance security. It is regrettable, however, that the Government appear to be so preoccupied with putting Britain at the heart of Europe that they acquiesced in the WEU council's move from London to Brussels, when county hall provided an ideal site for not only the council but the assembly. Locating the council in London ensured that the Government had a direct input into European security matters.

Mr. Hogg: I understand my hon. Friend's point, but the core of our defence relations and arrangements is NATO, and it is sensible that the WEU should be sited close to that organisation.

Mr. Hardy: Does not the Minister agree that if the council's move from Grosvenor place to Brussels and all the other changes that we are hearing about are not accompanied by consistency and sensible awareness throughout Europe, that transfer and those changes may prove highly disadvantageous?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Member is right to say that there should be continuity and consistency. I welcome that part of the WEU declaration made at Maastricht and article J of the Maastricht treaty, which makes it plain that the WEU and its functions must be compatible with NATO and NATO obligations.

Mr. Jessel: As defence is an end in itself, in keeping our people free and safe—and that is surely the first duty of any Government—and as my right hon. and learned Friend said that NATO must be the main bastion of our defences, how will they be strengthened by making the WEU in any way answerable to the European Community or obliged to consult it?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend knows well the provisions of article J.4 in particular, and will have read carefully the WEU declaration made at Maastricht. He will appreciate that NATO is the core of our defence arrangements and that anything done within the WEU must be compatible with existing NATO arrangements.

Mr. George Robertson: Is the Minister aware that one of the demands in the list of Danish proposals presented today is for an opt-out on the WEU and defence sections of the Maastricht treaty? Will he confirm that a definitive answer could not possibly be given before the Edinburgh summit, as the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) said on BBC television's "One O'clock News"?

Mr. Hogg: As I have not been involved in the negotiations, I cannot give an answer to that effect.

Middle East Peace Talks

3. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of the middle east peace talks between Israel and her Arab neighbours.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): The seventh round of bilateral negotiations between Israel and her Arab neighbours started in Washington on 21 October. I understand that the atmosphere has improved considerably since the Israeli elections. Some progress was made in the last round, especially in the negotiations between Israel and both the Syrians and the Palestinians. We have urged all parties to show courage and flexibility in their efforts to reach a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the dispute.

Mr. Carrington: Will my right hon. Friend join me in regretting the slow progress of the talks? Does he accept that time is running out for them to reach a successful conclusion? Will he put renewed pressure on all the parties concerned, to ensure that they recognise the importance of securing a just solution to the Palestinian problems before much longer?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend, although I feel that the progress that has been made should not be understated. Currently, the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators are discussing proposals for interim self-government in the occupied territories with an authority on interim self-government: that is what is happening on the Palestinian side. We believe that the proposals should be studied seriously, although without prejudice to the final status of the territories. Negotiations on that would start during the third year of the five-year interim period.

Sir David Steel: I am sure that the Foreign Secretary will acknowledge that I am normally very complimentary to Foreign Office Ministers, but where was the sense in the Minister of State's refusal to meet such a distinguished Palestinian representative as the mayor of Bethlehem, at a time when we should all be encouraging maximum dialogue?

Mr. Hurd: No difficulty is involved in my right hon. Friend the Minister's meeting the mayor of Bethlehem; the problem concerns the level at which we should hold discussions with the PLO. We have talked about that problem before.

We hold discussions with the PLO: our ambassador in Tunis often has discussions with its members. The question is at what level, and with what purpose, such discussions should be raised to a ministerial level. There is a considerable background history to his, and the right hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well why we take the stand that we are taking.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Does my right hon. Friend agree that heavy-handed bombing and shelling of Lebanese villages do nothing to help the cause of peace in the middle east? Does not the basic problem arise from the fact that Israel has continued to occupy a slice of Lebanese territory following her invasion, which has inevitably stirred up a hornets' nest of opposition among those who happen to live in the area?

Mr. Hurd: As my hon. Friend knows, we could start the argument at two different points. I think that the only sensible reaction for us is to deplore the renewed violence in both southern Lebanon and northern Israel, and to say that all concerned have a responsibility for restoring calm. Those with influence over Hezbollah should use that influence to prevent any further murderous attacks in northern Israel. Equally, we call on Israel not to retaliate further.

Mr. Grocott: Does the Foreign Secretary agree that the American presidential election and its aftermath should not be used as a reason for any delay in the middle east peace process? Surely, far from delay, what is needed is acceleration of the peace process so that parties to it can show their supporters that there are some tangible benefits —and can also show anyone who is doubtful about the process that the only way towards lasting peace in the middle east is a meeting around the negotiating table.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Member, like my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend), is quite right. This process is precious and must be kept going, regardless of the coming and going of Governments. That is crucial. There has been progress between the Syrians and Israel and between the Palestinians and Israel and it is essential that the impetus is retained. We shall do anything that we can to help to support the process and to keep that impetus going.

Iraq

4. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contacts he has had recently with Governments in the area concerning the problems faced by the Shia communities in Iraq: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are in close contact with the Governments in the area. Most recently, in New York, in September, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs discussed with Foreign Ministers of Saudi Arabia, Iran and most other Gulf states humanitarian problems in Iraq, among other issues. We have always made it clear that repression of the Shia and other members of Iraq's civilian population is deplorable and must cease, as called for in United Nations Security Council resolution 688.

Mr. Rathbone: Will my right hon. and learned Friend reassure the House about the efficacy of the exclusion zone over the territories in southern Iraq, where the Shia community are living and where they have suffered so horrendously? Will he comment on any contacts that the Government have had with the Iraq national congress, which is meeting all this week and which draws together for the first time all the parties that are in opposition to Saddam Hussein?

Mr. Hogg: There have been various contacts with the congress. I think that my hon. Friend is referring to the meeting that is taking place in north Iraq at the moment, to which we are willing to send a United Kingdom adviser. On the no-fly zone in south Iraq—there is a difference between a no-fly zone and an exclusion zone—there has been, as far as we can judge, a reduction in the Iraqi Government's repressive action against the people in south Iraq, but I am bound to say that the position is still disturbing.

Human Rights Abuses (Children)

4. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with other Governments about human rights abuses involving children.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have discussed human rights abuses involving children with our European Community partners. We are planning to introduce a resolution on street children at the current session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

Mr. Lloyd: I thank the Minister for that answer, which perhaps was positive in one respect. Where there is undeniable evidence, as there is, that Government agencies in countries such as Guatemala and Brazil are involved in the murder of children on the streets, the international community has a responsibility to make those nations understand their pariah status. On a more controversial note, is it acceptable to the Government that Britain should be importing coal from a country such as Colombia, which uses children to mine it?

Mr. Hogg: The substance of the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question is, of course, quite right. We have made representations to the Governments of Brazil and Guatemala on the matters to which he referred. As I said in my substantive answer, we shall introduce a resolution on street children in the current session of the General Assembly. On the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, my understanding is that no coal that has been produced by child labour has been imported into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nigel Evans: I am delighted with my right hon. and learned Friend's response on human rights, particularly as it affects children. Can he tell the House how successful Britain has been in leading our European Community colleagues on this matter? It is one of the areas where we can act better as 12 rather than acting alone.

Mr. Hogg: I think that that is correct, in the sense that we need to be active in every international forum that we can identify. Moreover, we can take action through our bilateral aid programmes to hold back developmental aid from countries where there are serious human rights abuses. Again, we must be realistic and must recognise that those countries where there are serious human rights abuses are often impervious to appeals to reason.

Mrs. Mahon: Surely the Minister has read that Dr. Arango, who is head of the coal industry in Colombia, has admitted that children mine coal there. What will the Minister do, therefore, to stop importing that coal, which is mined at the expense of children?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Lady was not listening to what I said. I did not say that coal in Colombia was not, on occasion, produced by child labour; I said clearly that my understanding was that we have not imported from Colombia any coal produced by child labour. The hon. Lady does herself no credit by failing to listen.

South Africa

6. **Mr Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the Government of the Republic of South Africa regarding progress to a post-apartheid system of government.

Mr. Hurd: Despite a tragic drought, most countries of the region are going through what we believe is a hopeful period of political and economic change. Stability in South Africa is crucial for the region as a whole. Last month I went there with the troika of EC Foreign Ministers. We discussed with President de Klerk and other political leaders practical ways to help reduce violence and encourage an early resumption of the constitutional negotiations.

Mr. Pike: We all wish to see the negotiations back in session and proceeding rapidly, but we all realise that the time for those negotiations is being eroded. Will the Foreign Secretary give the House an assurance that the only solution to the problem of ending apartheid that will be acceptable to a British Government is one that is acceptable to the majority of people living in South Africa —and that that means the majority of black people?

Mr. Hurd: Of course, any solution must be acceptable to those people, but it must be worked out in the constitutional discussions, which were interrupted because of the violence. That is why we in the Commonwealth and the European Community have taken steps by sending observers to underpin the peace accords. Fifteen EC observers will arrive this week—two of them are British. We already have a British police officer in South Africa, with the Goldstone commission. Those are practical steps which we in this country can take to help those on the spot to deal with the violence, and so bring forward the constitutional discussions which are the only possible way forward.

Mr. Riddick: Does my right hon. Friend not agree that the South African rugby tour of this country should proceed, despite the sudden and unfortunate opposition of the African National Congress—*[Interruption.]* Will he also ignore Opposition Members, Bishop Trevor Huddleston and Leeds city council, among others, all of whom seem happy to act as the ANC's toadies in the matter.

Mr. Hurd: I have good news for my hon. Friend. The ANC yesterday publicly confirmed that it had not withdrawn its support for the tour—*[Interruption.]* I hope that Opposition Members are listening. The ANC called on anti-apartheid groups not to disrupt the Springbok tour.

Dr. John Cunningham: First, I welcome what the Foreign Secretary said about sending more observers to South Africa. They have a crucial role to play in the progress towards free and fair elections in that country and, ultimately, towards the establishment of a truly democratic state. I urge the right hon. Gentleman to work, by means of his presidency of the EC Council of Ministers, to ensure that more observers are sent. The 15 are welcome, but that is certainly nowhere near enough to oversee the process throughout South Africa.

With regard to the imminent South Africa rugby football union tour of Britain, will the right hon.

Gentleman make it clear that, although he has accurately reflected the ANC's position, which I too welcome, the ANC stressed the need for us in Britain and for people everywhere not to reduce the pressure on South Africa, especially on the South African rugby football union, which has made no significant progress towards multiracialism in that sport?

Mr. Hurd: The 15 EC observers are only part of the total number, as the hon. Gentleman knows. There is also a UN team and there is likely to be a Commonwealth team, too. There may also be an Organisation of African Unity team. The total number of observers underpinning the peace accords may fall short of 100 initially, but it will be far more than 15.

As regards the rugby tour, I am glad that the hon. Gentleman confirmed what I said about the ANC's attitude, and I hope that, before long, he will be able to confirm that Leeds city council is withdrawing its opposition to the match that is to be played there.

Mr. Cryer: Why should it?

Mr. Hurd: The reason it should is that the ANC, whose lead it follows, has changed that lead and decided that the tour should go ahead.

Maastricht Treaty

7. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to renegotiate the Maastricht treaty.

9. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest position in respect of the Maastricht treaty.

11. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest position on the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Hurd: In Birmingham on 16 October, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and his colleagues, including the Danish Prime Minister, reaffirmed the importance of concluding the ratification of the treaty as soon as possible, without reopening the present text. We believe, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear again yesterday, that the treaty is good for Britain, and we intend to stand by it.

Mr. Byers: Does the Foreign Secretary accept that, whatever the merits of the Maastricht treaty may have been in December 1991, it is clearly not a treaty based on economic growth and job creation and will therefore not lift Europe out of recession? Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise the depth of public concern about the Maastricht treaty, and is he not aware that, unless the Government indicate a willingness to amend the treaty, they will face defeat in the House next week?

Mr. Hurd: That is something that will be judged by the House and not by the Government. I am well aware of public concern about the recession and unemployment, and that concern is shared in many countries of the Community which, in one way or another, have the same anxieties. What I do know is that, if the hon. Gentleman is seriously interested in foreign or, indeed, British investment in this country, he will not wish to support or vote for a concept of Europe that gives investors the idea that we are half way in and half way out.

Mr. Raynsford: If the Foreign Secretary believes that there is a common interest between Britain and Europe in action to get out of recession, why have the British Government, according to today's *Financial Times*, given a cool reception to the proposals made by the Commission's President yesterday for a concerted European growth programme to get Europe out of recession with measures to tackle the investment shortage and to boost growth and confidence?

Mr. Hurd: I listened to the President of the Commission sketch that idea yesterday. It was not put forward by him or anyone else at the Birmingham summit. What the Birmingham summit did was to reaffirm the policies that the Heads of State or Government gathered there decided offered the best chance of sustainable growth. Those policies are being followed in country after country in the Community. They are based on tackling problems of public borrowing and laying the foundations for an economic recovery that will last. That is the policy of Her Majesty's Government and it is the policy set out in the Birmingham declaration.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Foreign Secretary fully aware that, in the past few months, opposition to the treaty has grown substantially in the country at large? Why should Tory Members be coerced into voting for the Government's motion next week simply because the Prime Minister wishes to boast at the summit meeting in December that some progress has been made on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill? As the Prime Minister is no longer holding out the threat of an early election, which was always an empty threat—I only wish that there would be such an election—why should Tory Members be intimidated in any way into voting against their principles next Wednesday?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that my right hon. and hon. Friends have any intention of being intimidated. They know the basis of the treaty. They know the background. They know the discussions and debates that have taken place in the House over the past year and they know the results of those debates and discussions. They know that my right hon. Friend will go to the summit in Edinburgh holding the presidency of the Community; that 10 member states are clearly on the road to early ratification; and that the Government of the eleventh, Denmark, have today produced a plan that would enable them to put again to their people the possibility of the recommendation for ratification.

The House will have to decide whether it wants my right hon. Friend to preside over that summit preserving and extending this country's influence over what happens in Europe or whether it does not, and particular responsibility in this matter rests on—among others—the Labour party leadership.

Mr. Dykes: I thank my right hon. Friend for once again re-affirming the Government's determination on a treaty which does not need renegotiating but merely needs supporting. Is that not in contrast to the pathetic loss of courage at the eleventh hour by the Labour Opposition?

Mr. Hurd: I do not know about loss of courage. None of this has so far been confirmed. I read about it in newspapers. The Labour leadership have a choice. Either they stick to the position that the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) announced on television on 27 September and the assurances that they have given to like-minded parties on the continent, or they revert to the traditional Labour policy which the hon. Gentleman inherited—that is, negative, opportunistic, and changing their minds 180 degrees on Europe at regular intervals.

Sir Peter Tapsell: Would it be possible for the document on subsidiarity that the President of the Commission submitted to the Birmingham summit, to which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister referred in encouraging terms in reply to a question from me last Tuesday, be made available to use, as it seems to be available to a number of parliamentarians in other EEC countries? It would be very helpful if it could be placed in the Library so that we could see what the proposal was and what conclusion is finally reached on this important subject.

Mr. Hurd: I will certainly look into that matter. I think that my hon. Friend is referring to the proposals that Mr. Delors put to the Commission for reorganising the way in which the Commission transacts its business so that it complies with subsidiarity from now on without waiting for the treaty to be ratified. As I understand it, that paper has not yet been published or, indeed, formally confirmed by the Commission, but I will look into its status and what is to be done.

Mr. Milligan: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the request put forward by the Danish Government last night can be accommodated by the Community without renegotiating the Maastricht treaty? As Opposition Front-Bench Members have been using a Danish figleaf to disguise the naked nature of party politics, now that the Danish position is clear and eight out of nine parties in the Danish Parliament support it, there is no reason why the Opposition should not support the Government in Wednesday's vote unless they are more interested in party politics than in the future of this country in Europe.

Mr. Hurd: Like my hon. Friend, I believe that the Danish move is strongly positive. Their Folketing Committee has to ratify it and the Danish Minister has to present it to us as the presidency and to other member states. We then have to carry it forward with the aim of reaching agreement on it among the partners in Edinburgh. There is still work to be done. What is clear now but was not clear before, and I hope that the Labour leadership will welcome it, is that the Danish Government, with the support of the great majority of Danish political parties, now have the clear intention, without reopening the text of the treaty—my hon. Friend's point—to seek clarifications which will enable them to put the matter again to the Danish people. That is a step forward.

Sir Russell Johnston: On that point, one of the main criticisms which particularly emanated from the Labour Front Bench was that the Government were unwilling to bring the Bill back into Committee until the Danish question had been "resolved", whatever that meant. However, so far as I remember, at the Council of Ministers on 4 June in Oslo—I believe that the Foreign Secretary was there—immediately after the referendum the other Eleven agreed unanimously to proceed with ratification forthwith. How were the Government able to promise to delay and then promise not to delay?

Mr. Hurd: At the meeting in Oslo, instead of saying that they could not ratify the treaty, the Danish Government asked for time—and they have used that time. We have also used that time. Next week the House will have an opportunity to express its views on how the Government and the House should proceed. I return to the point that I made earlier. I hope that in its deliberations, perhaps even this afternoon, the Labour leadership will take comfort from the courage of the Danish Government in announcing their plans.

Sir Michael Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend accept that it is important that the suggestion in the original question asked by the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) should be firmly rejected? I am sure that there is economic linkage between ratification of the Maastricht treaty and the present state of the economy. My right hon. Friend referred to inward investment. Surely current intentions to invest in British industry depend on removing uncertainty.

Mr. Hurd: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The Maastricht treaty is a compromise treaty. The way in which it was negotiated at Maastricht by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister safeguarded this country from the two parts of it which might otherwise have caused us real difficulty; the social chapter, which the Labour party embraced, and a commitment to a single bank and a single currency. The Government were not willing to make that commitment and, clearly, the Danes are not willing to do so. So we protected ourselves from those two effects. The treaty which remains is the treaty to which we have put our hand and which we ask the House to enable us to ratify. It is the only possible agreed framework for the success of the Community in the next few years. That is the fact of the matter. If we are interested in enlarging the Community, making a success of the single market, and achieving other objectives of the Community, with Britain in it, in the next few years, it should be on the basis of a ratified Maastricht treaty. I do not see another foundation on which we can make that progress.

Dr. John Cunningham: Does the Foreign Secretary recall that in the Chamber on 24 September the Prime Minister said that two matters needed to be clarified and agreed before we could proceed to consider the Bill to ratify the Maastricht treaty? First, a Danish accommodation would have to be agreed not only by the Danish Parliament but by the other 11 states. Secondly, the Prime Minister offered the opinion that there would have to be clear and agreed definitions of subsidiarity before we could proceed to consider the Bill. As neither of those conditions has been met, and neither can be met until the Edinburgh summit at the earliest, why has the Prime Minister changed his mind? Why has he done a U-turn on this, as on other matters?

When the Foreign Secretary said that the House would have to decide next week whether the Prime Minister should lead Britain's representations in Edinburgh, was he not implying that the House would be asked to vote next week on a vote of confidence in the Prime Minister? If so, how does he expect us to support that?

Mr. Hurd: The House will have an opportunity for debate on 4 November, and it will be slightly surprising if that debate does not end in a vote of some kind. The hon. Gentleman, who has some experience in these matters, knows that the motion will be decided, discussed and communicated in exactly the usual way. We are seven days ahead of the debate. It would be unusual for matters of drafting and tactics to have been decided by this date. The debate is therefore being handled in exactly the same way as others.

As for the hon. Gentleman's first point, there is clarity now about the Danish plans. It is bad luck for the Opposition that the Danes happen to have come clear at this particular time, but it does not let the Opposition off the hook of their decision.

Sir Teddy Taylor: As the Prime Minister stated clearly and without ambiguity that we could not get on with the Committee stage until a detailed and settled system of subsidiarity had been worked out and put in place, will the Foreign Secretary advise us whether that may be worked out in Edinburgh so that those of us who want to get on with discussing the treaty will know? Is that likely to be resolved so that we can at least start discussing the treaty immediately after the Edinburgh summit?

Mr. Hurd: I have good news for my hon. Friend in the light of his concern that we should be able to proceed as soon as possible. On 16 October in Birmingham we made substantial progress. He will have looked at the Birmingham declaration, which shows how that work is being carried forward. First, there is the article on the Maastricht treaty; then there is the Lisbon decision, which is now being carried forward in Birmingham. The detailed work has been set in hand, so the situation is advancing quite fast in the direction that my hon. Friend favours.

Cyprus

10. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the talks on Cyprus recently held in New York under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Mr. Hurd: This is Rabbit's busy day!

Direct negotiations, under the United Nations Secretary-General's chairmanship, reconvened in New York on 26 October. Security Council resolution 774 makes it plain that the international community expects this round to lead to the agreement of an outline settlement on the basis of the United Nations Secretary-General's "set of ideas", as set out in his report of 21 August.

Mr. O'Hara: We must all be positive and optimistic that the round of talks will at last resolve the problems of Cyprus, but we must also be aware of the number of disappointments in the past 18 years and be concerned about the extremely negative statements made by Mr. Denktas before departing for New York. Will the Secretary of State assure us that the United Kingdom Government have contingency plans? Will he offer us a specific initiative—something pro-active—to demonstrate Britain's special position in relation to the problem? Not only is Cyprus a member of the Commonwealth, but Britain is a guarantor power with specific and clear moral and legal responsibilities for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the republic of Cyprus.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that we have a special position in that matter. That is why we have been doing our utmost to back up what the Secretary-General plans to do and encouraging him to persevere against the obstacles. The hon. Gentleman knows what the obstacles are, but it is important that both parties in the talks now taking place in New York should understand that the problem cannot be allowed just to drift on. A heavy responsibility falls on them and their friends. In the past few weeks I have talked to the Turkish Foreign Minister, the Greek Government and President Vassiliou to emphasise that point. I urged them strongly that the present round of talks should proceed.

Sir Dudley Smith: Is it not plain that, after all this time, partition is bound to continue in that troublesome island, particularly in view of the negative attitude taken by the Greek Cypriot Government?

Mr. Hurd: I do not agree that partition can be the basis for a settlement. My hon. Friend's underlying thought is perfectly right—there are two communities on the island and they must be given rights as two communities—but if there is to be a lasting settlement, it must be within the sovereignty of one Cypriot Government.

Mr. Cox: Is the Foreign Secretary aware that any attempt to continue the separation of the island of Cyprus would be absolutely disastrous for both communities there? Hon. Members on both sides of the House have worked together continuously for the past 18 years for a settlement for both communities. As the officials in the state department and those in the United Nations said, the problem is the lack of meaningful involvement from Mr. Denktas. When will the Government make it clear that we want a settlement? And does Mr. Denktas want one?

Mr. Hurd: That is something that Mr. Denktas has to answer in the talks. He says that he wants a settlement. I hope that he understands that a settlement is desperately needed by members of his community, and of the other community, and that it will not be reached on the basis of the status quo but must be reached on something like the set of ideas proposed by the Secretary-General at the last round. It was on the basis of those suggestions that the Security Council passed the last resolution.

Occupied Territories

12. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet the Israeli Prime Minister to discuss the future of the occupied territories.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs hopes to meet the Israeli Prime Minister during the latter's visit to the United Kingdom at the beginning of December. I am sure that the future of the occupied territories will be one of the issues that we discuss.

Mr. Page: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that reply and I am delighted that the subject of the occupied territories is to be discussed. On my visits to the occupied territories and Israel I have seen a growing willingness on both sides to reach a settlement. The recent action of the new Israeli Government in restricting settlements has gone a long way to help. Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that there is a chance of reaching an agreement under the new Israeli Prime Minister whereas there was not a cat in hell's chance of doing so under the previous one?

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I certainly agree that there is a greatly improved chance of negotiating a settlement under Mr. Rabin's Government. I also believe that the changed policy on Israeli settlements in the occupied territories is extremely welcome. I should like to see the Arabs reciprocate by removing the boycott regime.

Mr. Barnes: The occupation has been illegal since 1967. The settlements are illegal. Israel is in contravention of the Geneva convention and is failing to conform with United Nations resolutions 242 and 338. In those circumstances, what lessons are the Arabs likely to learn from contrasting present action with action taken by the United Nations and this nation in response to the illegal occupation of Kuwait by Iraq?

Mr. Hogg: If that is supposed to imply that we should use force against the Israelis, it is a very unattractive proposal.

Mr. David Atkinson: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that our interpretation of resolution 242 is that the occupied territories include all the land east of the green line? If so, should not the forthcoming elections for Palestinian self-government include the Palestinians living in east Jerusalem? Will my right hon. and learned Friend raise that subject with the Israeli Prime Minister?

Mr. Hogg: We all recognise that the solution of east Jerusalem—and Jerusalem generally—is probably the most vexing subject to be tackled in the negotiations. If it is to be successfully tackled, it should probably be left until last when all the other elements of the agreement have been put in place.

Anglo-Israeli Relations

13. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Anglo-Israeli relations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There have been positive developments recently since the election of the new Israeli Government in June. We have had numerous contacts with them at all levels to encourage Israel to make the best of new opportunities in the peace programme. The Israeli Foreign Minister called on the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary in London in September. The Israeli Prime Minister will meet the Prime Minister in London in December. The Prime Minister has expressed his hope to visit Israel next year.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to the Minister of State for that response. Is it not refreshing to be dealing with a Labour Government in Israel who seem to understand the peace process and are committed to it? Is it not a fact that a time of crisis is a time of opportunity? There is still a crisis in northern Israel and southern Lebanon and an opportunity exists—a precious opportunity, as the Foreign Secretary said—and the peace process must continue. Will the Minister of State and Her Majesty's Government use Mr. Rabin's visit in December to ensure a fruitful and positive outcome of the peace talks?

Mr. Hogg: We very much welcome the impetus that Prime Minister Rabin has given to the peace process. It is enormously valuable and it creates a good opportunity to make an agreement with all the parties. We will certainly do whatever we can to reinforce that process—recognising, as we do, the need to provide security for Israel and the need to comply with United Nations resolutions 242 and 338.

Mr. Batiste: My right hon. and learned Friend said a few moments ago that a proper response to the flexibility being shown by the new Israeli Government would be for the Arab Governments to end the boycott. What action is he taking to promote that process in discussions with Arab Governments?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is right. The movement on settlements has been dramatic and important. It removes a barrier to the peace process. It is important that the Arab Governments respond to what has been done. We are impressing on them, both bilaterally and with the Community, the need for them to tackle the question of the Arab trade boycott. We think that it is wrong and should be removed, and we are saying so.

Mr. Janner: What response has the Minister received to his representations to Arab Governments regarding the Arab boycott?

Mr. Hogg: The response is encouraging, but it has not yet gone far enough. We shall therefore go on pressing the Arab states on the need to get rid of the boycott, which we believe to be wrong and an obstacle to the creation of confidence which is essential if there is to be a total agreement.

Botswana

16. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's relations with Botswana.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Botswana's democratic traditions and record of sound economic management are widely admired. We enjoy excellent relations with Botswana and look forward to continuing our close co-operation in the future.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. I am sure that he will be pleased to know that I have just come back from an excellent lunch with the Botswana high commissioner, who is an admirable woman high commissioner. She discussed with me over lunch the plight of Botswana's farmers in respect of elephant stocks. She put it to me that CITES, the convention on trade in endangered species, has prevented Botswana from marketing the tusks and hides of the elephants and is leading to severe problems in her country. She has asked me to ask the Minister whether the Government will reconsider our attitude to the CITES provisions which stop countries such as Botswana farming their elephants and creating a market in the by-products.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My hon. Friend has found a most public way of thanking the Botswana high commissioner for a delightful lunch. Great though our respect for the

Botswana Government is, we still support the CITES trade ban on ivory, but we recognise that there is a growing elephant population in Botswana.

Subsidiarity

17. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what definition of the word subsidiarity he uses in the context of the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Hurd: The treaty states that the Community should take action

"only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by member states".

Nor should any action by the Community go beyond what is necessary to achieve the objectives of the treaty.

Mr. Gill: I am grateful for that answer. I first asked for a definition of subsidiarity in this House in April 1990 when it was just a mote in someone's eye. Why two and a half years later, has that question still not been satisfactorily answered? How can the Government come back to the House with the Maastricht treaty, which relies so much on the definition of subsidiarity, when the definition is still unclear? Is it not great arrogance on the part of the Government to bring back the treaty before that matter has been finally resolved?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend may well be a pioneer in asking that question—if so, I congratulate him—but he must have had a similar answer over and over again. The answer is the one in the treaty and I answered detailed questions about it the other day in the Scrutiny Committee. I am not sure whether I satisfied all hon. Members—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] but we had a good discussion on the matter. What is new since my hon. Friend started to ask the question—indeed, new in the past few months—is that the Commission, the Council of Ministers and, I hope, the European Parliament, to which I spoke yesterday, are all setting in hand measures to apply the principle from now on. If my hon. Friend looks at the way in which Community legislation is now being prepared by the Commission, at the sharp drop in the number of proposals, at the proposals made by the President of the Commission to change the way in which the Commission looks at these matters, and at the Government's decision to put an explanation of subsidiarity into every explanatory memorandum that we send to the Scrutiny Committee, he will see that the principle is beginning to work. it will be a long time before I can convince him—I readily understand that—but it is beginning to happen.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: The Foreign Secretary will be aware that to the Government subsidiarity means that decisions are taken at two levels—at European level and at the level of this Parliament—whereas to the Germans it means decision taking at three levels—European level, German level and Länder level. Whose definition is the right one?

Mr. Hurd: That point was discussed and cleared up at Birmingham. The Birmingham declaration clearly states that the arrangements within each member state are for each member state to decide.

Mr. Lester: Would it not be helpful to my right hon. Friend if the many colleagues who ask questions of great complexity about subsidiarity, the various regulations and so on would simply say what they genuinely are—anti-European—and that whatever answer they get they will remain so?

Mr. Hurd: There are different concepts of Europe. My worry about the people who are basically opposed to our membership of the Community is that they close their eyes to what is actually happening and to the way in which the Community is beginning, albeit slowly, to move in the direction that we have advocated. They close their eyes to that because of their conviction that everything coming out of the Community has to be treated in a sour and hostile way.

East Timor

19. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Indonesian Government on the sentencing practices following the massacre in Santa Cruz, East Timor.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Together with our European Community partners we made a démarche to the Indonesian Government in June. Representations were made following the meeting of aid donors in July and subsequently by Ministers, most recently during the visit of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State to Jakarta.

Mr. Battle: I welcome the Minister's response and the representations, but would it not be better for the Government to go further and stop their current practice of providing scholarships to train military personnel from Indonesia in British military colleges and also to close the defence sales organisation that has just opened in Indonesia?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I would have hoped that the hon. Gentleman would recognise that the best way to influence human rights policy in Indonesia is by staying in there and maintaining our trade, and by discussing with them the matters on which we disagree, especially bearing in mind the fact that in the first six months of this year we had £170 million of trade with Indonesia, which is double last year's amount.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Does my hon. Friend agree that since the massacre in Dili in November 1991 the reaction of the Indonesian Government in seeking to bring the perpetrators to justice has been totally inadequate? Does he also agree that if the East Timor problem is to be resolved in the long term it is crucial that East Timor's representatives are given the opportunity to sit at the negotiating table with representatives of Indonesia and third parties, such as Britain as the president of the Community, and the Portuguese, so as to resolve their differences?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We made clear our abhorrence of the East Timor massacre. There was an inquiry by Dr. Wako, the representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, and an inquiry by the Indonesian Government followed by prosecutions and sentences of members of the security forces. That was unprecedented in Indonesia. My hon. Friend asks about the issue between Portugal and Indonesia over East Timor. We believe that the way forward is discussion between those two countries under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General.

Middle East

22. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the middle east peace process.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The seventh round of bilateral negotiations between Israel and her Arab neighbours started in Washington on 21 October. The atmosphere at the talks has improved considerably since the Israeli elections. Some progress was made in the sixth round, especially in negotiations between the Israelis and the Syrians and Palestinians. We have urged all parties to demonstrate courage and flexibility in their efforts to reach a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the dispute.

Mr. Atkinson: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the Government, with our Council of Europe colleagues, stand ready generously to aid the permanent resettlement of the Palestinian refugees living in the appalling refugee camps in which they have been for so long, as well as to aid the Russian and Soviet immigrants into Israel proper once a peace agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbours has been signed?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is right when he says, in effect, that the conclusion of the wider peace settlement is a necessary pre-condition to the tackling of the other issues, both economic and those involving weapons, which must be resolved but cannot be resolved until the peace process is complete.

London Ambulance Service

3.31 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the breakdown of the recently introduced control procedures of the London ambulance service.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I am very concerned about recent reports relating to failures in the London ambulance service. These were caused by exceptional circumstances which led to a breakdown in the computer-aided dispatch system earlier this week. I have had urgent talks with the London ambulance service, and with the South West Thames regional health authority, which is responsible for overseeing the LAS. They have assured me that firm action has been taken to tackle these difficulties and make sure they do not happen again.

The computer-aided despatch system, which cost £1·5 million to install, has the potential greatly to improve the service to patients. Ambulances can be despatched in seconds rather than minutes. However, it is obvious that there are initial technical problems. The LAS will therefore establish, from 11 pm tonight, a support system, involving, where necessary, direct voice contact between the control centre and ambulances. This will build in an extra safeguard to ensure that ambulances are on their way. This system will remain in place until we are satisfied that the problems with the CAD system have been remedied.

The LAS has also decided to conduct an external inquiry into the operation of the CAD system and the circumstances surrounding its failure on Monday and Tuesday of this week. Full details of this inquiry will be announced as soon as possible, but it is envisaged that it will be headed by a chief ambulance officer from another metropolitan region. The inquiry will identify lessons to be learnt for the operation and management of the service.

The House will want to know that, as a result of recent difficulties, staff levels in the LAS control room have been increased—*[Interruption.]* The House will also want to know that earlier this afternoon the South West Thames regional health authority accepted the resignation of John Wilby as chief executive of the London ambulance service. Martin Gorham, deputy chief executive of the regional health authority, will take over as acting chief executive of the LAS immediately until a permanent replacement can be recruited.

My overriding concern is to ensure that proper management is in place in the LAS so that the problems which exist can be dealt with speedily and effectively. In particular, I am concerned that the problems with the computer-aided despatch system are solved and that, in the meantime, the support system that I have already described is functioning properly. Mr. Gorham will be reporting regularly, on behalf of the board of the LAS, to Chris Spry, the chief executive of South West Thames RHA. In turn, he will be reporting to Duncan Nichol, chief executive of the NHS.—*[Interruption.]* This reporting system will ensure that Ministers are kept in proper and regular touch with progress.

The problems in the London ambulance service do not result from a lack of resources.—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Members below the Gangway must come to order while the Secretary of State is making this very important announcement—and that includes Members on both sides of the House.

Mrs. Bottomley: I well understand that London Members are concerned about these matters, but I find it difficult to understand why they should seek to interrupt throughout my statement. I appreciate that many London Members, rightly, want to be sure that their constituents will have the benefit of a good ambulance service.

The problems in the London ambulance service do not result from a lack of resources. Funding this year is up 9 per cent. over last to nearly £70 million. In 1991-92, Government investment enabled the purchase of 130 new vehicles. There will be another 80 this year. The number of fully trained paramedics has risen in the past two years from three to 326.

The Government have invested substantially in the London ambulance service. The capital needs and deserves a better return on this investment from the service than it is currently receiving. It is a job for management and the work force to see that this is achieved. A better ambulance service for London is our top priority. The action that I have described today will help to bring this about.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Secretary of State agree that, over the past few months, she has had representations from London Members on both sides of the House, from the Back Benches and the Front Benches, about the progressive deterioration in the London ambulance service? Is she aware that, in June 1991, her predecessor refused to see a deputation of London Labour Members about the shortcomings of the ambulance service in general, and in particular the failure of the £3 million first computer despatch system? Does she recall that, on 3 June, 17 July and 14 September of this year, I wrote to her warning of the impending crisis in the LAS? On 28 September, a junior Minister replied, blaming ambulance personnel for some of the problems and stating that the computer system was functioning correctly.

Is the Secretary of State aware that, on 14 September, I spent over an hour with the chairman of the London ambulance board, telling him that, if in October he introduced new rosters, as was his intention, together with activation of the computer-aided despatch system, he would be gambling with the lives of Londoners?

Do not all these matters show that a terrible disaster was wholly preventable and that the Secretary of State's action in bringing into the picture members or officers of the South West Thames regional health authority was entirely inappropriate as they are responsible for the appointment of the London ambulance board, which is responsible for this mess? Will the right hon. Lady appoint a well experienced and well regarded ambulance officer from outside London to take over the direction of a vital service to Londoners, being accountable directly to her and through her to the House and to the people of London?

Mrs. Bottomley: I think that I have made it clear that I well understand the concerns of London Members generally and those of the hon. Gentleman in particular. There has been a substantial investment in the London ambulance service. Many Members who have ambulance services operating in their constituencies that are not within the London service would envy the investment in terms of computer equipment and vehicles that has taken place in London. About one third of the fleet will be replaced by 1993. The fact is that the service, especially the new computer system, has suffered from considerable teething difficulties. That is why I have made my announcement this afternoon.

As for the hon. Gentleman's point about the skills of a chief ambulance officer benefiting London, that is why I have announced that there will be an external inquiry into the operation of the system, the circumstances surrounding its failure this week, and any lessons that can be learnt from the operation and management of the service. I shall announce in the near future who that officer is.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): There is undoubtedly a long catalogue of complaints from London Members of Parliament on both sides of the House about the London ambulance service. Is it not time that my right hon. Friend announced a completely independent and deep-seated inquiry into the working of the ambulance service in London? We understand that there are far more calls for ambulances in London than anywhere else in the country. Far more people leap for a telephone to call an ambulance in London than elsewhere. Will the inquiry look into the working relationship between the officers and the union in the London ambulance service?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend identifies what has been a particularly difficult area for the London ambulance service—some of the management issues and the relationship with those providing the service. I hope that effective management, good communications and an understanding of the new system will lead to full co-operation and an improved service. The vast majority of those working in the ambulance service want to give the standard of service that is routinely available in other parts of the country, often with fewer resources than are available in London. I am confident that the arrangements that I have announced will result in clear improvements. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), who has responsibility for the London ambulance service, will be more than happy to speak to any hon. Member about particular constituency problems.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Secretary of State give us an assurance that the new management of the London ambulance service will listen seriously to those who have given a lifetime of work to the service, instead of condemning them and attempting to break up the union organisation, as the unlamented Mr. Wilby was trying to do? Will she also assure the House that she will no longer even countenance any proposal to create an NHS trust out of the London ambulance service but instead will give Londoners an efficient, safe and accountable ambulance service, which is so desperately needed and which so obviously has not been provided for the past few years?

Mrs. Bottomley: The answer to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question is yes, good communication is essential to good management. The answer to the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's remarks is no. Many hon. Members' constituencies benefit from an ambulance trust, providing a first-rate service. I advise the hon. Gentleman to visit Essex, Northumbria and many other areas to see what can be achieved when an ambulance service becomes an NHS trust.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): Will my right hon. Friend, who knows that I have put several cases to her recently, bear in mind that her explanation does not adequately explain why a 92-year-old lady should have to wait seven hours for an ambulance despite the fact that crews were available throughout the day only a few miles away? What is the minimum time that people can now expect to wait for an ambulance in the light of the new arrangements that my right hon. Friend has just announced?

Mrs. Bottomley: I agree with my hon. Friend's comments about the inadequate service that was available, but some of the stories that have been alleged about that day have not been borne out by the facts. However, I accept that, as things are, the service is not delivering good enough results. My hon. Friend will know that we expect 95 per cent. of calls to receive a response within 14 minutes. There are also standards to be met regarding the time that it takes to activate an ambulance once a call has been received. That is why it is so important that we have the 16 extra call takers at the headquarters in order to ensure that people do not have the unacceptable response of a telephone answering machine. We have sufficient lines and sufficient call takers.

Exceptional circumstances arose on Monday and Tuesday this week. It will take us longer to identify all the aspects of those events, which is the reason for the external inquiry. I may say that there was a dramatic increase in calls and a large number of exception messages, in which ambulances did not notify their status to the headquarters.

Mr. Malcom Wicks (Croydon, North-West): Ambulance staff in Croydon telephoned me this morning to tell me what has been happening, and some said that there had been tears this week because of the appalling situation. I was told about a woman who suffered a heart attack and who, after waiting 45 minutes for an ambulance, died after her husband took her to hospital by car. Does not the Secretary of State agree that Londoners are in pain and misery, that some are at risk, and that many have died? The right hon. Lady has been warned about the situation for months. We have met with complacency, and my questions have not been answered by the Department. I say with sadness that complacency and inaction have cost the lives of too many Londoners.

Mrs. Bottomley: I have made it clear to the House that we must await the results of the great investment made in the London ambulance service. It is not a good enough explanation to say that there are unique reasons for inner-city ambulance services delivering the required standards all over the country but failing in London. In Greater Manchester, 97·4 per cent. of responses are made within 14 minutes, but in London the figure is only 64 per cent. In Merseyside, it is 94 per cent., and in the west midlands it is 92 per cent. Other inner-city and urban areas deliver results that are not achieved in London. We have made clear our investment commitment and announced the external inquiry, and must now deliver the result.

Mr. David Mellor (Putney): Recently I wrote to my right hon. Friend to draw her attention to a series of incidents in my constituency that caused widespread

[Mr. David Mellor]

concern when the London ambulance service failed to arrive in proper time to deal with casualties. In one case, in which a constituent had a heart attack and subsequently died, it took 45 minutes for an ambulance to reach him. That suggests that London ambulance service failures are not isolated and cannot be blamed merely on a computer system, but are systemic. Does my right hon. Friend agree that they call for top-to-bottom reform?

While it is helpful that responsibility is carried by those at the top of the organisation, will my right hon. Friend confirm that there is nothing for the unions to be proud of? Why has it taken so long for new rostering arrangements to be introduced? I hope that my right hon. Friend——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The Secretary of State is in charge.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Who is in charge?

Mr. Mellor: It is a jolly good thing that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is not in charge.

I hope that my right hon. Friend agrees that it is crucial that the crisis that has arisen is not used as a tit-for-tat battle in the service's industrial relations problems, which have continued for far too long, but provides an opportunity for everyone to look to their consciences and to give the people of London the ambulance service which they deserve and which they do not currently have.

Mrs. Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend is exactly right. The real progress that we want to make can be achieved only if management and staff co-operate and work constructively together. There must be more effective and harmonious dealings within the London ambulance service.

My right hon. and learned Friend mentioned the new rostering arrangements, which should result in 20 per cent. more ambulances being on the roads in peak periods. However, we have not been making the staff side progress with that practical improvement which the management wants, and which would benefit London and Londoners.

Mr. Jim Dowd (Lewisham, West): Does not the Secretary of State realise that simply recounting stories about increased resources and efforts by the London ambulance service cuts no ice with Londoners whose simple test is whether or not the service works, and it is patently clear that it does not. This is merely the latest episode in the deterioration of London health services.

Can the Secretary of State give an assurance that no one telephoning a 999 service—which by definition will be in exceptional circumstances—will receive a response other than a human operator, and that no caller will suffer the trauma and distress of having to hang on, listening to an answering machine, while waiting for a loved one to receive emergency treatment?

Mrs. Bottomley: I think that I have made it clear that there are to be 16 more call takers for the London ambulance service. About half that number have already been appointed. They have experience in the field, and they are also receiving careful training.

I am satisfied that sufficient lines are available. I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman that calls should be promptly received, promptly answered and promptly responded to, and it is clear that improvements are needed at every level in management, with co-operation and determination to provide a first-class service throughout the ambulance service.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does my right hon. Friend accept that not only the emergency ambulance service but the ordinary service is unsatisfactory and causing great distress across London? Many elderly people —and others who are not so elderly—sit at home waiting to be collected for an urgent hospital appointment by an ambulance that never arrives. After receiving hospital treatment, people find themselves waiting for an ambulance that never arrives to take them home.

Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that there are sufficient ambulance men in London to deal with both emergency and ordinary cases? Will she also ensure that the inquiry looks into attendance levels, and into whether ambulance men are fit to be at work all the time? Should not that factor be considered?

Mrs. Bottomley: I think that the entire London ambulance service will benefit greatly from the advice of a chief ambulance officer from outside London, who will be able to review some of the difficulties and advise on the way forward. As I have said, however, many hon. Members take for granted an ambulance service that is resourced less generously than the London ambulance service and achieves a very much higher standard of service.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) asked in particular about absentee rates. It is cause for concern that, in the London ambulance service, the rate is running at about 10 per cent., compared to about 6 or 7 per cent. in the rest of the health service.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): The Secretary of State said that resources were not an issue. How does she explain the case of my constituent, 18-year-old Keeley Donaghy, who died of an asthma attack while her frantic mother rang the ambulance service between 4 and 5 am on 4 July this year? An ambulance was indeed dispatched within a reasonable time, but it could not find the address. We understand that the reason—referred to by the coroner—was the fact that there was no local ambulance available at that time in the morning, and those who were sent were not familiar with the geography.

Surely the Secretary of State's inquiry must examine staffing levels and the number of operational vehicles available at any one time.

Mrs. Bottomley: I offer my great sympathy to the hon. Lady's constituent, who underwent a very distressing, frightening and tragic experience.

The computer-aided despatch system is intended precisely to ensure maximum use of the available ambulances. Its teething difficulties are the reason why we have taken half a step backwards and supported it with radio contact. The very large investment of £1·5 million in the London ambulance service, however, was made with the precise purpose of enabling ambulances to be located, and to be put in touch immediately with callers in their vicinity.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Does my right hon. Friend accept that many people in London believe that the problems of the ambulance service predate this week's difficulties with the computer? Given that the service receives such good resources, must not the problem be one of management or bloody-minded employees? The people of London will welcome my right hon. Friend's inquiry, which will lead to a much better service in the months to come.

Mrs. Bottomley: I have nothing to add to what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on his tenacity and his wholly justified pursuit of this issue over the past six years.

Will the Secretary of State join me in offering further congratulations to the *Daily Mirror* on its excellent exposé of what has been happening over the past few days? I suspect that, without that, we would not have heard this statement today. Does she agree that the time for prevarication is over, that lives have been lost and that people continue to be at risk? She should immediately introduce outside managerial expertise, not merely for the inquiry but to run the service in the interim period.

Does the Secretary of State agree that she failed to respond to the clear signs of crisis in the service or to the appeals of hon. Members? She refused my request in a letter of 16 September for a public inquiry, but wrote to me instead about the computer system, saying:

> "When fully operational, this system will result in improved response and call waiting times. Calls will be answered in seconds rather than in minutes."

Does she agree that that not only proved to be incorrect but led to the situation that arose this week, when people have died? Their demise and their families' bereavement could have been avoided.

On Friday, the closure of London hospitals was announced. Yesterday, we learned of the scandal of what is taking place in the west midlands. Does the Secretary of State agree that the time for complacency and neglect is over and that she should act in the interests of everyone, as Conservative and Labour Members have suggested?

Mrs. Bottomley: About £70 million is being spent on the service in London. A third of its vehicles will be new by next year and it will have an extra 326 paramedics. I think that I made it clear that other parts of the country would envy such investment.

I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's view that the computer system is without value. It clearly stands to benefit London and Londoners. It has had teething difficulties, and we shall have to think further about how we can ensure that it works properly and that all the staff co-operate with the new working procedures. Teams throughout London must understand that, for the computer to work properly, they must press the buttons at the right moment and be in touch with the centre. Management must effectively lead that change so that Londoners can benefit. Martin Gorham, deputy general manager of South West Thames regional health authority, will be acting, and we will have the benefit of the chief ambulance officer from another metropolitan area to advise us.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the west midlands. The requirement is that 50 per cent. of calls should be answered within eight minutes. It is managing to answer 72 per cent. of calls. Ninety-five per cent. of calls should be answered within 14 minutes, and the west midlands is just meeting that target. It is setting a good example in ambulance services. If we can get the London service to match the west midlands service, all Londoners and hon. Members should be content.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 13 NOVEMBER

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Bernard Jenkin
Sir Michael Grylls
Mr. Tony Lloyd

Sexual Offences (Amendment) Etc.

3.58 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1976; to make further provision in respect of the offences of rape and sexual assault; to provide protection for women and children at risk of rape, sexual assault or domestic violence; to make related new provision in respect of compensation and legal aid, and consequential entitlement to certain social security benefits; to amend the Child Support Act 1991; and for connected purposes.

Sex is fine, but rape and sexual assault are not and they must be criminalised. The important distinction involves consent, as against coercion, violence or threats of violence. The House needs to modernise the rape laws to make that distinction crystal clear.

On 21 February 1990, I introduced my Rape in Marriage (Offence) Bill, which secured some action. After that, I met members of the organisation Women Against Rape, who said that the rape laws in general were badly out of date and in need of reform. Working with them, I introduced my Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill—a version of my present Bill—on 19 June last year. Now, still working with Women Against Rape, I introduce the present Bill, which would bring about an even more comprehensive and radical update of the rape laws.

There are four crucial necessities, the first of which is recognition of the crime of rape in marriage, and the second a recognition of the crime of male rape. The third necessity is greater rights for survivors of rape, including increasing their physical safety, giving them improved protection in courts hearing rape cases and ending the discriminatory compensation arrangements which now work against them. The fourth necessity is a redefinition of rape, based on coercion and lack of consent.

First, the Law Lords made a judgment that rape in marriage should be a criminal offence, and the Government referred the matter to the Law Commission, which in January reported that legislation was needed to make the existence of such an offence absolutely clear. We are still waiting for a response from the Government.

It has been argued that, if rape in marriage were made a crime, vast numbers of women would bring charges, so, although the Law Lords made the recommendation, I shall still quote what Helena Kennedy QC said about that idea:

> "The real position is that that's not going to happen because the evidence is going to be difficult to find . . . the Crown Prosecution Service is going to have a great difficulty in looking at the cases which will stand up evidentially in court, and those which will, will be ones where there's been a history of domestic violence or where there's going to be evidence of domestic violence".

That sounds much like the law before the Law Lords' ruling. Clearly, the Crown prosecution service will not move unless the House lays down instructions for it.

What the judges can give they can also take away. Their discretionary powere should go. We need legislation so that there is no such discretion in cases of rape in marriage. There are no two ways about it; it is a serious crime and it must be written into the statute book.

Secondly, my Bill would for the first time make male rape a specific criminal offence. There is an assumption that only women can be raped, but that is not true. There is no law concerning male rape, but there is a law concerning indecent assault on a male, and the numbers of such cases are increasing. There was one in my constituency only yesterday, and in London the numbers of such cases have doubled over the past 10 years. More than nine out of 10 such cases are not even reported to the police, perhaps because of the fear, the humiliation and the shock which are felt or because of the fear of being criminalised or branded as a homosexual. A law on male rape is needed, so that victims have the confidence to come out into the open. As that happens, more such cases will be reported. Another reason why such a law must be on the statute book is that at present the rapists get away with it, perhaps to do the same thing again. That must be changed.

The third necessity is for greater rights for rape survivors. Those rights fall into three categories, one of which is the right to physical safety for the victim. My Bill would enable secure places to be provided for victims while cases were heard: a local authority would have to provide emergency accommodation. There would also be income support for a woman in danger from a partner who had raped her. With that assistance, women would not be forced to go back to the rapist.

Furthermore, bail would not be given to a man with previous convictions for similar offences. If bail were broken, he would be subject to immediate arrest. That would be in the interests of the victim's better physical safety. Victims would also have protection in court and there would be guaranteed anonymity. At the moment, discretion should be repealed and the victim guaranteed anonymity. Victims should have the right to legal representation in court and to have someone with them in court while the case is being heard.

The Bill would also end the discriminatory compensation arrangements that currently apply. It would extend legal aid to the victim in any compensation board hearing. A carer who has been raped may incur costs in the care of a child or elderly relative, and those costs should be reflected in the compensation. At present, there is a limit of £5,000 on the compensation that can be awarded to a woman who has had a child as a result of a rape. That goes nowhere near reflecting the costs of bringing up a child. The Bill would get rid of that limit.

The Bill would prevent any arbitrary assumptions made by the compensation board about the victim—for example, an assumption about the reason for a victim's delay in reporting a rape. Such delay should not be held against him or her. Similarly, the compensation board—and judges, too—often make assumptions about a victim's dress or alleged character. That should be stopped and should certainly not penalise the victim in any compensation arrangements. No social security benefit should be deducted from the compensation and compensation should be disregarded in calculating any means-tested benefit entitlement. The key point here is that women should not be prevented for financial reasons from using the law to leave violent husbands or partners.

The Bill would contain a redefinition of rape based on coercion without consent. That includes not only physical force but deception, economic coercion or threats to women or their children. The Bill would thus widen the definition of rape.

This change in the law is needed because the rape laws are out of date—just consider the fact that rape in marriage and male rape are not properly covered—and because victims cannot be confident of obtaining justice or even a fair and sympathetic hearing.

Let me refer to the comments made by Mary Tuck, the former head of the Home Office research and planning unit and the chair of a working party that looked into these matters for the Home Office. She said:

> "Dealing with domestic violence is the single most important preventive strategy we could put into practice against violent crime. Domestic violence is a central problem for society."

I agree with that comment. The House must come to terms with domestic violence, which often includes rape.

A survey conducted by Women Against Rape in 1985, whose findings have been confirmed in other surveys since, showed that one in seven wives had been raped by their husbands; one in six women had been raped; one in three women had been sexually assaulted; one in eight black women had suffered racist sexual assault; one in five women had been raped or sexually assaulted as children or teenagers; three in four married women who had been raped had been prevented from leaving by lack of money and/or housing and one in 12 women who had been raped had reported the rape to the police. Those are amazing figures, and we need action on them from the House.

Immigrant women should not lose their right to stay because they leave a violent partner and a child support action——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but I cannot allow the hon. Gentleman to conclude his speech. I assure him that I have been trying to attract his attention to the clock.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Harry Cohen, Ms. Diane Abbott, Mr. Tony Benn, Mr. Malcolm Chisholm, Ms. Jean Corston, Mrs. Maria Fyfe, Ms. Mildred Gordon, Mr. Ken Livingstone, Mr. Eddie Loyden, Ms. Marjorie Mowlam, Ms. Dawn Primarolo and Ms. Joyce Quinn.

Sexual Offences (Amendment) Etc.

Mr. Harry Cohen accordingly presented a Bill to amend the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1976; to make further provision in respect of the offences of rape and sexual assault; to provide protection for women and children at risk of rape, sexual assault or domestic violence; to make related new provision in respect of compensation and legal aid, and consequential entitlement to certain social security benefits; to amend the Child Support Act 1991; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December and to be printed. [Bill 66.]

Public Accounts

4.9 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Although certain reports are listed in the motion, may we debate any reports of the Public Accounts Committee? For the sake of clarity, may we be sure that that is the case?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman and the House may debate all the reports listed on the Order Paper under the public accounts motion.

4.10 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): I beg to move,

> That this House takes note of the 36th to 43rd Reports of the Committee of Public Accounts of Session 1990-91, of the 1st to 24th Reports of Session 1991-92, of the 1st to 11th Reports of Session 1992-93, and of the Treasury Minutes and Northern Ireland Department of Finance and Personnel Memoranda on those Reports (Cm. 1725, 1784, 1798, 1819, 1865, 1856, 1949, 1998 and 2074), with particular reference to the following Reports:
>
> Thirty-sixth, Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Qualification of accounts, 1989-90;
>
> Thirty-seventh, Fraud and irregularities at defence establishments; Session 1991-92
>
> First, Sale of Rover Group to British Aerospace plc;
>
> Third Management of road maintenance;
>
> Twenty-second, PSA Services accounts 1990-91; Session 1992-93
>
> Seventh, Sale of the water authorities in England and Wales.

This is the annual debate on reports of the Public Accounts Committee. Last year, we had 45 reports and this year we have 43. As usual, we have highlighted several of the reports in the motion, but others will, as usual, be mentioned in the debate. Of course, the debate is on all the reports—43 of them—that we prepared last year and were published. Almost every report could warrant a full debate on its own. In fact, on an estimates day when no suitable subject for debate could be found, we volunteered one of our many reports, and the debate ran for its entire length with a number of hon. Members being unable to be called. One of the problems is that the large number of reports tends to frighten some colleagues and, as a result, they do not take part in these important debates.

My first thanks must be to the Committee. It meets more often than any other Select Committee and it agrees many more reports. The pressure on hon. Members to digest the voluminous information is very great. My thanks, of course, also go to the Committee members and my particular thanks must go to Sir Michael Shaw, who was the senior Government Member for many years. The development of the Committee owes much to him. As a result of the general election, we lost a number of valuable Members, one of whom is the present Chairman of Ways and Means, but there were others, too, some who found their way to the other place and others who have played a part in other aspects of our public affairs.

As usual, the House is by no means full. I do not interpret that as a lack of concern about our work, but in some peculiar way we must regard it as a tribute to it. We know full well that if we failed to hold Departments to account and if we were felt to be failing in that crucial

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work, the House would fill immediately with demands for action by the Committee. I hope that, in this debate at any rate, we can show that we are fulfilling that role.

We have more information presented to us than at any previous time. We now have the departmental reports, and Andrew Likierman has shown how useful they can be. I hope that the departmental Select Committees will make use of them, as well as comment on the public expenditure White Paper as it applies to the Departments they cover. It is my constant concern to encourage them, for heaven's sake, to look at those matters for which they have some responsibility and say that, yes, they agree with everything that the Government are doing and so issue a new return. However, often they do not even look at them. There has been some improvement, but it has been very slow and much more is required.

The Public Accounts Committee normally takes its evidence from permanent secretaries, so we have a wider overview of senior civil servants than any other Committee of the House, or indeed most Back-Bench Members and even most members of the Government, because twice a week we see those people and we get to know their characteristics and assess their capabilities in the efficient use of public money. We do not bully or harangue them. In the main, we are impressed with their abilities, and we hope that our work assists them to improve the work of the Department as well as ensuring that the taxpayer gets a fair deal. That is what unites the Committee.

Politically, we are naturally partisan. However, we do not examine policy. However distasteful we may personally find the policy, our task is to assess the way in which the policy has been implemented and to see whether we have obtained value for money. As a result of that, all our reports are unanimous and, more important even than that, they are untainted by fudging to create a bogus consensus. They are direct and hard hitting, and they mean what they say.

The Committee and the National Audit Office have an excellent relationship. The Comptroller and Auditor General has complete discretion in selecting investigations. A regular discussion of the programme takes place in the Committee, and also takes into account suggestions made by members of the Committee.

We are pleased that the work of Sir John Bourn has been recognised and that he has acquired a United Nations audit role. The National Audit Office has produced information showing where it has obtained savings from its activities. Although the office gives illustrative figures, the most important aspect of its work is not the instances of mismanagement that it discovers but those that it prevents. The very existence of the National Audit Office, the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Public Accounts Committee only improves the situation as they find it, but prevents worse errors from being made because of the possibility that such errors will be uncovered by our work.

The Comptroller and Auditor-General for Northern Ireland, Dr. Jack, and his staff do valuable work. On Monday of this week I was able to see the construction of their new offices in Belfast, which should be ready by the summer of next year. The Committee also thanks John Beastall, the Treasury Officer of Accounts, and others who assist us with our work. I welcome the Financial Secretary to his new position, and look forward to his interest in value for money leading to a valuable dialogue with the Committee.

There is a heavy responsibility on those in public life to maintain and improve standards in the public service. We must do our best to overcome the dangers of a civil service that might consider itself from time to time undervalued. That brings me to the first point that I wish to make. The prime aspect of the control of expenditure is to eliminate or reduce to the absolute minimum the possibilities of fraud and the lack of probity within the civil service. That must be a continuing aspect of our work. Value for money and saving money are of enormous importance and are a major preoccupation of the Committee, but even more important are the standards in the public service. We pride ourselves naturally and rightly on our standards.

Many overseas visitors who have come from public accounts committees within the Commonwealth and others who have responsibility for overseeing public expenditure in other parts of the world have asked me and other members of the Committee, "How can we obtain the kind of standards that you have?" The most important aspect is prevention—stopping fraud arising in the first place. Once a civil service is rooted in corruption it is almost impossible to remove it. So prevention must be our first priority. The greatest peril is when a group within a unit colludes to defraud. The greatest protection that we have is the honest public servant who prevents fraud from arising. So, although it does not take much of our time, prevention must always be the most important aspect before us.

Looking at the major themes of the year, I shall concentrate on only four. The first issue is fraud and the need for probity in the civil service. The second is objectives and performance.

Years ago, we had problems when many of the Departments engaged on a programme and were unaware of the precise nature of what they were trying to achieve. We have established right from the beginning that when a programme is started, a clear statement of objectives is set out and a means of monitoring the progress of that programme and comparing objectives with achievements is established. Departments can thus see exactly what is trying to be achieved and are able ultimately to compare the objective with the achievement.

Most of the examples that I hear about when I go around and speak on these matters happily relate to a long time ago. The worst examples are those of the past, but we still have a number of bad examples and some way to go. Some aspects of that can be found in the advisory services to agriculture, the pollution inspectorate, the polytechnics and the safeguarding of jobs in Wales. I am sure that we shall hear more on that from some of my hon. Friends. I mention those only in outline and do not intend to go in to them in great detail.

The relationship between what Departments set out to achieve and what they actually achieve is important. I understand that not everything can be quantified, but one can attempt to quantify those programmes as closely as possible so that the final outcome is more clearly related to objectives.

We heard today about the London ambulance service. I regret to say that its problems are not untypical of some of the serious problems that we see with computerisation within the civil service. Help is available to Departments when they are computerised, and I fear that proper use of them has not been made. An extreme example, the like of which I hope never to see again, is that of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Insolvency Service, to which I shall refer in greater detail.

My fourth theme is the role of non-departmental public bodies, and control over them. An increasing number of Government functions are being delegated from Departments to a wide range of non-departmental bodies, and such work is funded by grants or grants in aid, rather than direct expenditure borne on Bills. The general aim is to move away from that detailed departmental involvement with delivery of programmes and services and still maintain a broad oversight and overall control to bring management and accountability closer to the point of delivery.

Although that is fine in theory, some of those programmes have, unfortunately, failed wretchedly. I refer to two cases in particular, the first of which is the 23rd report—1991-92—on "Financial Management and Control in the National Rivers Authority", which involved the relocation of the authority's headquarters. It demonstrated bad management and repeated failures to observe the care required for the spending of public funds. Some £1 million of taxpayers' money was wasted. We criticised the board and the senior management of the authority for their failure to establish proper, effective management and monitoring arrangements. That should have been accompanied by regular reviews of progress and costs, but those were inadequate, and tendering and contracting arrangements were poorly controlled, with attendant risks of fraud and corruption.

Once control is lost in that way, one also loses control over how much fraud and corruption is taking place. In that case, a contract of £2·6 million was made available on the basis of a tender for a few thousand pounds, without competition. Those and other matters went to the heart of the authority's proper accountability for public funds. We called on both the authority and the Department of the Environment to strengthen systems of controls, clarify responsibilities and introduce a wide range of improvements without further delay.

We also criticised the severance payment to the former chief executive who had a key responsibility. His severance settlement was £125,000 for the loss of three of the five years of his contract, plus £2,350 for legal expenses, plus £1,057 for financial advice, plus his normal pension. Had it not been for the Comptroller and Auditor General being able to look at the accounts, we would never have found that out.

My colleagues will recall the unhappy occasion when evidence was given on the 11th report—1992-93—on the Development Board for Rural Wales. The terms approved by the Welsh Office and the Treasury for the early retirement of the board's former chief executive were substantially exceeded. Amounts were paid that went substantially beyond the normal retirement settlement terms without the knowledge of the Welsh Office—the sponsoring Department. Payment of £15,563 was made for untaken leave; records were inadequate and the sum went beyond the terms that had been approved by the Treasury.

There were also weaknesses in the Welsh Office's monitoring and control. We were not convinced that payment in lieu of notice was necessary. The former chief executive was also given consultative assignments worth up to £30,000. That is not the way to handle such matters. We were grateful to the Comptroller and Auditor General for uncovering the incident.

The Welsh Office was not aware that the board had acted beyond its authority. The board failed to consult the Welsh Office legal adviser or the Treasury solicitor over recovery action. Both cases underline the general lessons to be learnt about the oversight of non-departmental public bodies and the need for further clarification of the role of chairmen of boards and their chief executives.

The 37th report—1990-91—on fraud and irregularities at defence establishments is one of the reports highlighted on the Order Paper. The amount of expenditure at the Ministry of Defence was £1,800 million in 1989-90. Such expense is incurred locally at more than 3,000 defence establishments in the United Kingdom and overseas. That expenditure relates to items such as the local purchase of stores, minor works contracts, travel and subsistence claims, and general administration costs. In addition, there are stocks of equipment and stores worth £16 billion that are held at 50 major storage depots and hundreds of subsidiary storeholding units. If any irregularities occur, there is large scope for considerable losses.

Following the Committee's earlier report on fraudulent travel and subsistence, we expected an improvement in the controls of those large sums of money. A number of subsequent cases prompted the Comptroller and Auditor General to undertake a further examination. Paragraph 7 of the report states:

> "the Department reported to the Treasury a total of 283 proven cases of fraud, excluding procurement fraud, perpetrated by civilian employees or Service personnel".

We found the increased incidence of reported fraud disquieting.

In paragraph 11, we noted:

> "the 1990-91 figures for theft of assets included the loss of computers and office equipment valued at some £500,000. There is a ready second-hand market for such equipment, the custody and movement of which needs to be tightly controlled. A key factor in preventing the loss of such equipment is site security, including a reliable system of checking vehicles and personnel leaving establishments."

In paragraph 17, we say that an adequate separation of duties is needed. Such a separation is an essential feature of any accounting system. The National Audit Office found that there were weaknesses in this important area at many of the establishments visited and that such weaknesses had contributed to some of the recently reported fraud.

It is important that those in control are not the same people as those who carry out the tasks of security. We say:

> "where it is not possible, for example in a small office, to arrange adequate separation of duties, it is, in our view, essential that the staff should be closely supervised and their work subject to frequent management checks."

We say in paragraph 24:

> "where it is established that a civilian member of staff has committed fraud or theft, the Department claims their policy is that dismissal will invariably follow unless there are exceptional circumstances."

Nevertheless, we found that only 45 per cent. of those guilty of fraud were dismissed. Could 55 per cent. of them claim exceptional circumstances? We find it hard to reconcile the dismissal policy with the number of exceptions to it, now running at 55 per cent., and we have asked the Department to analyse the reasons for these

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exceptions and to review its guidance to line managers on the circumstances in which exceptions to the dismissal rule are appropriate.

The Treasury minute states that the Treasury is now issuing guidance to clarify the exceptional circumstances. Perhaps the Financial Secretary will comment on that later.

I come now to the most important of our reports, the 36th report for the Session 1990-91 on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "Qualification of Accounts, 1989-90". Between 1989 and 1990, the Foreign Office introduced a new computerised accounting system to make payments, record transactions and produce its four annual appropriation accounts. The system did not work properly and the final accounts which should have been signed in August were not produced until the end of November. They were based on ledgers that did not balance, and the Comptroller and Auditor General was unable to complete his audit and qualify his opinion on all four accounts.

This is such a serious matter that I must go into some detail. The situation is wholly exceptional. We say in our report that we agree with the Department that it made a mistake in believing that it could manage such a computerisation on its own. We were disturbed that it should have taken the Department so long to recognise that and to adopt a better standard of computer project management.

The old accounting system broke down irreparably; it did not have adequate back-up in case of failure. The Department acknowledges that, in retrospect, this had been a mistake and that it had been cavalier in not obtaining expert advice. The same story has been told on a number of occasions—a new computerised system is introduced and instead of having a back-up or a parallel operation in case things go wrong, none has been installed. It is essential to have two systems running side by side: the old system, which may not be good but which at least works, and the new system which it is hoped will replace it. After a certain amount of time it is possible to have confidence in the new system and to move over exclusively to it. Meanwhile, the old one is kept in operation. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office did not do that and we considered that a serious failure. It was unfortunate that the old system broke down at such an inopportune time, but we were concerned that the Department operated an aging system without back-up.

That experience underlines the necessity to provide alternative facilities to cover system failure and those facilities should continue to work should the need arise. Paragraph 18 of our report states:

> "Since the old system had broken down, the Department had no option but to run their accounts entirely on the new system, even though it had not been fully tested and had known faults."

Therefore, the old system had no back-up at all, and when the Department introduced a new system and the old system failed, it was completely caught out and had nothing on which to depend.

The matter is even worse because, as paragraph 19 states:

> "From their attempts to reconcile the two systems it soon became evident to the Department that there were serious problems. Some payments had not been recorded on the new system while others had been posted two or three times. Incorrect opening balances were found on the new system; programming errors had allowed wrong or single entry postings; a large number of journal transfers had been made to the wrong month; and other transactions had not been recorded for several months."

Paragraph 20 states:

> "The Department were unable to produce their usual monthly trial balances . . . there was a difference of £485 million on the Parliamentary Grant account and a net £46 million across all votes on the Paymaster General account."

Those are extremely serious matters, and in paragraph 21 we say:

> "By early May 1990 it became apparent that the Book-keeping Section were unable to resolve the serious discrepancies between the two systems. Extra staff, including internal auditors, were drafted in to undertake a major exercise to reconcile the two systems and to rectify the errors made by the new software."

As a result of all that, the Comptroller and Auditor General was unable to complete his audit. He considered that the Department had failed to maintain proper books of account and qualified his audit opinions accordingly. Paragraph 24 states:

> It was the most serious qualification of an appropriation account which the present Comptroller and Auditor General had made."

In our conclusions, we say:

> "We are alarmed at the catalogue of accounting errors that were made by the Department."

As you know from your experience, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Committee chooses its words very carefully and does not use such words lightly. I have never used words as strong as those in our report and I hope never to use such words again. I have kept them in reserve for disasters of the kind that we now face.

Of the accounting errors we say:

> "Their gravity is illustrated by the size of the imbalances which were revealed, by the scale of the sums posted to 'dump accounts' and by the exceptional nature of the qualifications made by the Comptroller and Auditor General. We cannot do other than strongly criticise the Department's accounting arrangements."

I am afraid that the matter does not end there, because we say in paragraph 30:

> "In June 1990, while the cashier was on holiday, the Department found £8,000 cash and £23,000 cheques missing. These sums have been recovered; the cashier has since been found guilty of theft and has received three concurrent suspended sentences of one year's imprisonment. He has been summarily dismissed from the Department.
>
> We asked whether this fraud was due in any way to the breakdown of the old computer or to the introduction of the new one."

Once control is lost, all things are possible, and only continuous control can make sure that such things do not happen. The Department could not say whether the fraud was due in any way to the breakdown of the old computer or the introduction of the new one and was unable to comment further.

We conclude:

> "We note the Department's evidence that the theft in this case was attributable more to an abuse of trust than to any weakness in the system of control. However, we consider that inadequate controls create a climate which is conducive to fraud and thefts."

Such controls need to operate effectively. There is more bad news for the House. At a critical time when there was an aging system on one hand and a new and untried system was being introduced on the other, the entire bookkeeping staff changed. Having inexperienced staff with limited training and insufficient guidance and supervision led to many additional errors and that was one of the underlying problems beyond that of software.

When changing from a system that has its faults to one that one hopes will be effective, it is crucial to retain the staff who know how to operate at least one system and who know the figures that are being put in. To replace them all at the same time defies belief, but that is what happened. It did not happen in a far-flung part of the civil service empire—it happened in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, one of the great Departments of State. We should be seriously concerned that this could ever happen.

In our conclusions, we use the word "astonished", which I have never used before and hope never to use again when we say:

> "We are astonished that the Department should have allowed a complete turnover in book-keeping staff at the very time when major changes were taking place in their accounting systems, the more so since the new staff were given inadequate guidance and supervision. We consider it essential that departments should provide continuity of experience on accounts work, employ a sufficient number of qualified personnel and provide sound training, guidance and supervision."

The Treasury minute that is the reply to the report says that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has learnt and applied valuable lessons. I look forward to hearing how this is proceeding.

Another case involving computerisation was that of the Insolvency Service. To qualify the accounts of the Insolvency Service filled us with horror. It started to computerise, but did not even consider the use of the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency. The CCTA, which is an advisory body working within the Whitehall machine, is well staffed and equipped, as I know because I had quite a lot to do with it 20 years ago. It is the fount of a great deal of information and understanding about the essential problems that have to be faced when one computerises.

The Insolvency Service thought that it could go it alone rather than asking for advice. The imbalances that were found, the fraud and the over-payments were inevitable and the qualification of the account, which I hope that we will never see again, was the outcome. The Treasury minute tells us that the service has appointed a director of information technology and now discusses its requirements with the CCTA. Thank goodness for that, but it has come rather late.

Our first report in the Session 1991-92 was on the sale of Rover Group plc to British Aerospace plc. We had gone into this matter on a previous occasion. In 1975, the British Leyland Corporation, which was making heavy losses, was taken into public ownership. In August 1988, it was returned to the private sector by sale to British Aerospace for a price of £150 million, after a cash injection of £547 million in recognition of the company's debt and to support its investment programme. The report does not describe the sale of the Rover Group to British Aerospace because we had already fully described it in an earlier report when we took evidence from Sir Peter Gregson of the Department of Trade and Industry. The Select Committee on Trade and Industry went into the matter as well.

In this important report, we draw attention to the main lessons for privatisation in general that emerge from the sale, and make recommendations. The brevity of our report should not be taken to mean that we place anything but the greatest importance on our inquiries into this subject. We hope that the Treasury and other Departments will ensure that all future sales of public assets have regard to our recommendations. I hope that they will be used as a check list by those who sell public assets, to ensure that we get value for money and that sales are handled efficiently.

The first recommendation is:

> "Anything other than full and open competition should be the exception. Should this not be possible, we would expect some limited form of competition to be arranged in order to establish a benchmark against which to test the price finally negotiated."

The great advantage of these recommendations is that they result from our examination of the Comptroller and Auditor General. We have a great respect and admiration for the work of the National Audit Office and its staff. It has changed fundamentally, and you will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the change has been to the enormous advantage of the House. We now have proper accountants and auditors who are held in respect by the highest organisations in the country, including the City of London and big private industries. We have people who produce results that are universally admired in the accountancy and auditing professions. When they produced these conclusions, we examined them and we added one or two of our own, and came up with this report, which sets out the tasks that have to be undertaken before selling public assets.

Our second recommendation was:

> "Before entering negotiations, we expect the selling department to make their own comprehensive valuation of the undertaking to be sold."

That is elementary, but in so many cases, it did not happen and all that seemed to matter was the price that would be got for the undertaking. That is a test, but the market may not be suitably placed and there may be undervaluation of the assets. There must be a longer-term assessment of the value and the price achieved should be as close to that as possible.

Thirdly we said:

> "Specifically we expect departments, in making such valuations, to identify any land or other assets surplus to the needs of the main business. We recommend that such assets should be separately valued; in the case of property sites these values should reflect any higher figures appropriate to possible alternative uses to which the land might be put."

Again, that is elementary, but, like other elementary precautions, it was not taken. We make that point and we set out these precautions in a form that everybody can understand. We continued:

> "We also expect departments to consider whether the separate disposal of surplus assets, such as stocks and shares in other companies, may yield a higher return for the taxpayer than selling them with the main business.
>
> In situations where a department decides not to dispose of surplus assets ahead of the main sale because, for example, their future value is uncertain, we expect them to protect the taxpayer's interest by providing for the public purse to claw back any gains arising within a reasonable period subsequent to the privatisation."

I am pleased to see that this, at least, is being undertaken in some cases. We continue:

> "Where departments consider that to include clawback provisions within the terms of the sale might depress the price which the purchaser is prepared to pay, we expect them to assess where the balance of advantage to the taxpayer may lie before they make any binding commitment either way."

We make a number of other recommendations that I am sure will be taken into account by Departments undertaking such an exercise. We continue:

> "we expect departments to be forthcoming when fulfilling their obligations to keep the United Kingdom Parliament informed, and not simply to comply with the letter of the requirements. Information should not be provided piecemeal

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> in scattered notes, but in a coherent statement. While the Department gave us an account of how Parliament was informed of this transaction, we cannot accept that the DTI discharged its duties in this regard in a helpful or effective manner. This must improve, in any future privatisations of other financial transactions."

The transaction involved there was the sale of the Rover Group. In the next paragraph but one we recommend

> "that Departments do not subject themselves to time deadlines . . . which"—

perhaps the appropriate word is "produce"—

> "pressures to sell at a lower price than that"

which they might have been able to achieve.

As the House knows, the Committee of Public Accounts does not examine policy, which has nothing to do with the Committee. The members of the Committee are concerned only with getting best value for the taxpayer. I am seriously worried about the pressure of time that causes assets to be sold at prices below those that might have been achievable.

When the Treasury makes its forecasts it takes account of what it is hoped to achieve by the privatisation or sale of public assets. That factor is built into its forecasts. The Treasury will ask a Department what it intends to achieve, and it will be told how much is expected to be obtained from the sale of a public asset or assets. That is then followed by the unexpected. We all know that the unexpected always happens. It is found that the market is not quite right because something has gone wrong and it is not possible to meet the timetable. In the normal course of events one would have a postponement and wait for a more suitable time. There would then be more time to make and implement the necessary arrangements.

The Treasury timetable, however, is inescapable. Certain things have to be obtained within a certain period or the Treasury's forecasts will be even more wrong than they usually are, which would be unforgiveable. So pressure will be on a Department to carry out the sale. That leads to the serious problem of sales at prices that are well below what otherwise might have been achievable. That greatly concerns the Committee.

It can be argued—we have advanced this argument in several of our reports in previous years—that the sale of public assets should be phased. After all, when the Government come to sell their gilts they do not sell on 1 January for however many billions of pounds are involved. Instead, they look to the Government broker and decide how much it is worth selling at a particular time given the state of the market. They are extremely knowledgeable about the state of the market. Unfortunately, they are not knowledgeable when it comes to privatisations. Instead of a phased approach, they try to get everything in one go. That is nonsense, and we have stated repeatedly and unanimously that it is something that must be considered. On one or two occasions the Treasury has listened to the argument, as have Departments, but not enough has been done or is being done.

We are told in the Treasury minute that the Government are considering further guidance on sales of public assets. I hope that it will include the points that the Committee has made.

Mr. Maxton: My right hon. Friend will be aware that one privatisation to come before us will be the railways. It is possible that the coal industry and the water and sewerage industry in Scotland will also be privatised. Given what my right hon. Friend has said about sales of public assets, should the Committee of Public Accounts be examining the valuations that the Treasury is putting down, as it were, prior to any sale taking place, rather than retrospectively, which is often the case with the Committee?

Mr. Sheldon: It would be hard to tempt me into taking that course of action. The Committee is essentially an auditing body, and we shall examine matters in that way. We find out what has happened and then we are able to produce our reports. It should be appreciated that the reports have a future impact. Civil servants, or even the Minister, are aware that these matters will come before the Committee. We have examined every privatisation, of course. The Minister might not be quite so concerned as the Permanent Secretary, but it might be said that he will be vaguely aware of what is happening. We hope that the effect of our reports in future will be based on that process.

The third report is entitled "Management of Road Maintenance", something that we have had several goes at over the years. It has been a rather sad story. The introduction reads:

> "The Department of Transport are responsible for expenditure of £440 million in 1991-92 on the capital maintenance of the national roads system. Their maintenance aim is to preserve the life of motorways and trunk roads in England at minimum cost, including delay costs, and to ensure roads are safe and are strong enough to carry the expected traffic."

In 1984, the Department of Transport estimated that there were 70 miles of motorway to renew to keep pace with deterioration. In 1985, the backlog had increased and a new target was set of 80 miles. In 1990-91 the backlog was still great and a fresh target was set of 86 miles. It was decided for 1992-93 to employ consultants, and it was found that 100 miles of motorway should be renewed each year to keep pace with deterioration. The increase in trunk road maintenence was even greater.

The Department has had difficulity in obtaining a comprehensive and consistent picture of the condition of the road network. In 1988 it abandoned a national structural survey because of its unrealiability. It was only after consultants advised the Department in 1989 that it had a complete picture of road conditions. I find that surprising. Roads can be expected to deteriorate and there is surely a need to know which roads need to be repaired, which roads will disintegrate and how the system can be operated effectively. Paragraph 12 reads:

> "We are concerned that the Department now face a situation where so much of the country's main roads network will continue to be closed for repair, with about one-third of every single lane or motorway expected to be coned off at some time in the next five years. We are disappointed that the Department have not been more successful in dealing with the growing backlog maintenance, and that the clearance of the backlog promised by the end of 1992-93 has now been extended by a further five years to 1997-98."

Paragraph 13 states:

> "We consider that the Department need to have better information on the condition of roads in order to deploy their funds most cost-effectively. We are concerned about the past inadequacies of the Department's data on road condition, and note that the national structural survey of the condition of roads had to be abandoned because the data provided by their agents were incomplete and inconsistent."

In paragraph 15 we said:

"We regard it as unsatisfactory that for the last six years the Department have consistently underestimated the levels of maintenance required because their traffic forecasts have been too low."

Paragraph 16 reads:

"We note that the revised target of clearing the backlog in 1997-98 is based on the assumption that roads past the critical condition are expected to last as much as a further eight years before requiring reconstruction."

This is a serious aspect of the report.

If a road has not been looked after properly, it becomes necessary to reconstruct it, and we are then faced with extremely heavy expenditure. That is what happens. If the Department is not aware of the conditions of roads it can be faced with the cost of reconstruction. The Committee reported:

"There are two main methods of road maintenance: reconstruction, which is the process of removing most or all of the materials past a critical condition and replacing them with new materials; and overlay, which involves putting a layer of blacktop or concrete over an existing road. Reconstruction is some three times more expensive than overlay".

It should be said that the true cost are rather less than that.

Again, it is a serious matter. If we do not know the condition of our roads, more of them will pass the critical condition. As a result, there will be extra expense. Paragraph 23 reads:

"We asked the Department why they had not adopted the information systems used by other countries instead of producing new systems themselves. The Department said that their planned information system is more elaborate and comprehensive than those used in other countries, and that it would be dangerous to introduce a tailor made and sophisticated computer system too hurriedly and without sufficient preparation."

I hope that that is true.

The report continues:

"In view of the Department's evidence that reconstruction is much more expensive than overlay, we are concerned that the Department's planning and management of the maintenance programme has failed to prevent a significant proportion of the road network passing the critical condition which entails expensive reconstruction. We note the Department's assurance that roads approaching the critical condition will generally now be overlaid."

We shall be watching that, because we have already had a number of goes with the Department of Transport on those matters.

The Committee says that it welcomes the useful results of lane rentals. We think that that has been a good idea. But the reality is that still one third of every single lane of motorway will be coned off at some time in the next five years.

The Treasury, in its reply, accepts past inadequacies and points to a number of improvements. We look forward to hearing those.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): The study of the management of road maintenance was carried out before I became a member of the Committee, but on the M5 in my constituency, between Taunton and Wellington, repairs have proved to be inadequate a few years later and the process of coning and vastly expensive repair has had to be gone through again. I do not want to tempt the right hon. Gentleman into subjects that might be debated tomorrow, but my attention was drawn this very day to the vast cost of aggregates from, for example, the Mendips in Somerset, which are used for road repairs and the damage caused by heavy lorries, which I believe is estimated to be about 1 million times more than that caused by the average car. That may be something at which the Public Accounts Committee or other Committees of the House could look in terms of value for money for the taxpayer and the use of natural resources.

Mr. Sheldon: We have looked at some of those aspects on previous occasions, as you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, may recall. I am sure that we shall return to many of them. It is such a pity that, despite our efforts, so little has been done. Much more remains to be done and I hope that it will be.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I am interested to hear what my right hon. Friend has had to say about the performance of the Department of Transport south of the border in relation to the maintenance of motorways and trunk roads. Has his Committee done any work on the situation north of the border where such matters are dealt with by the Scottish Office and, if so, does the Scottish Office perform any better or worse?

Mr. Sheldon: I regret that I cannot make a comparison. However, we shall be going further into the matters and we may be able to see whether there are any improvements north of the border.

Mr. Home Robertson: I doubt it.

Mr. Sheldon: We look forward to investigating that in due course.

I now come to the 22nd report of Session 1991-92 on PSA Services accounts 1990-91. On 1 April 1990, Government Departments were untied from PSA Services and became free to employ private sector companies to carry out their works services. In consequence, PSA Services had to involve all Departments for work undertaken on its behalf. It had to issue fresh invoices.

The report says:

"Difficulties experienced by PSA Services in introducing the new cost coding structure and inadequacies in the underlying records led to errors on customers' invoices. That, in turn, led the customers to delay or withhold payments. By the end of 1990-91 works expenditure totalling £65·6 million had not been accepted by departments and, with Treasury approval, it was charged by PSA Services to their own Appropriation Account. . . Since there was no certainty that the sums making up this figure would ever be accepted by customers, the Comptroller and Auditor-General qualified his audit opinion."

The number of qualifications that we are seeing is disturbing, and this one is more disturbing than most.

The report continues:

"PSA Services told us that the level of expenditure not accepted by customers had now been reduced to £22 million. It is a most serious matter that PSA Services' financial system should have broken down to the extent that they had to charge £65·6 million on their own Vote instead of being able to recover it from their customers. Moreover we find it unsatisfactory that, despite having had sufficient time to do so, PSA Services were so poorly prepared for what was clearly a major change in their status and procedures."

PSA Services' inability to produce proper invoices is one of the fundamental aspects of proper management and control.

Paragraph 41 of the report says:

"We recognise that the present time is one of very considerable change not only in PSA Services but across government generally. There are new bodies, new financial systems and new people are being appointed to run them. We conclude therefore that, where the role of a department changes significantly"—

that may happen to an increasing extent—

[Mr. Sheldon]

"it is essential that there is adequate planning; that new systems are fully tested; that staff are given the necessary training and, above all, that there is effective management and supervision."

Those changes have gone through now, but we think it important to refer to them at this stage.

The last of the reports to which I wish to make special reference is the seventh report of Session 1992-93 on the sale of the water authorities in England and Wales. The report says:

"In December 1989 the Government sold all its shares in the 10 water companies of England and Wales for net proceeds of £3·6 billion. The sale was complex and was undertaken against a very tight timetable."

It is a pity that the question of timetables crops up again and again, but in this respect it is even more unfortunate, because the timetable was particularly complicated by the arrangements made in the 10 water companies. We point out:

"the Secretary of State had two distinct roles: first to ensure that the companies would be able to finance their functions and that customers were not disadvantaged; secondly, as seller of the companies, he had an objective to maximise proceeds."

The report continues:

"First, the Department found themselves running out of time to conclude the negotiation for sale on satisfactory terms. By the time their final week was reached they had still not settled terms with the chairmen and the 10 new companies, who knew the deadline to which the Department were working. In this final week, the cash injection rose to £1·1 billion and the illustrative net proceeds fell from £5·7 billion to £4·4 billion. Secondly, the Department had not been able to set any benchmarks for what they were aiming to realise by the sale. They told us that the 'illustrative net proceeds' which they had calculated were not meant to imply that this much money could actually be raised."

I am not sure what it was used for. What is the point of having illustrative net proceeds if use is not made of them? In the event, even that sum was not reached, since the final net proceeds were £3·6 billion against the illustrative net proceeds of £5·7 billion.

The report continues:

"Thirdly, the Department were understandably concerned to see that the companies started operations on a reasonable enough basis to finance their capital investment programmes. To assist them, the Department gave substantial benefits in the form of debt write off of £5·2 billion, cash injections of £1·5 billion and tax allowances of £7·7 billion. But they could not say to what degree these measures were reflected in the sale proceeds."

The Committee recommends:

"consideration should be given to future cases for responsibilities for regulatory decisions and for selling to be located separately. This would enable the Departments concerned to demonstrate clearly to Parliament that both had received full attention."

Mr. Maxton: As a Scottish Member, I read that recommendation with considerable interest. I am aware that the Scottish Office is at least considering the possibility of selling off Scottish Water, which is at present run and owned by Scottish local authorities. How could the Scottish Office separate—within that Department or otherwise—the two functions of regulation and sale?

Mr. Sheldon: That should not be too difficult. I do not know the situation in Scotland, but in England the regulatory function is distinct from the administrative function, and the two can be handled separately. I refer to the Treasury minute:

"The Government agrees with the Government's description of the arrangements in its first four conclusions, but does not accept that those arrangements gave rise to difficulties outlined in the fifth conclusion"—

which relates to separating the functions.

If this debate had taken place five years ago, that minute might have been more convincing than I find it now. At that time, Chinese walls were held to be rather more valuable than they are today. Few people have faith in Chinese walls today. We know that the two functions interact, and that when they are within the same Department—with individuals meeting one another regularly, arranging the proper price and sale, and adhering to a time scale—it is right to separate the two functions of getting the best price and of disposing of the industry successfully.

I have spoken long enough. It has been a fruitful year. Given the matters that will come before us over the next 12 months, I shall be surprised if we have anything unworthy to report to the House. I hope that our activities will maintain some of the standards of public service that we should like to be evident.

5.11 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): The House has just listened to a remarkable overview of the work of the Public Accounts Committee by its Chairman, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). I pay tribute again to his excellent chairmanship. One of the Committee's features is that it is perhaps the only Committee of the House that operates on a non-party political basis. All its members are united in their determination to deal with facts and to report objectively to the House.

I pay tribute also to two former members of the Committee who retired at the last general election. I refer to Sir Michael Shaw, the former Member for Scarborough, and to Mr. Michael Latham, the former Member for Rutland and Melton. Sir Michael served the Committee for many years with great distinction and made an enormous contribution to its deliberations. Mr. Latham will be remembered by all who served on the Committee for his special contribution in connection with the De Lorean inquiry.

The Committee's work results in a major saving of taxpayers' money. The National Audit Office estimates that in the three years from 1988 to 1991, an average of £200 million per annum was saved as a result of PAC recommendations based on NAO inquiries. In 1991-92, Government Departments accepted 95 per cent. of the Committee's recommendations. That record of work and achievement could well be emulated in other parts of Government service. We certainly feel that we have made a useful contribution, and the figures speak for themselves.

Our Chairman spoke to all the reports to which the motion refers, but I shall refer to only one or two. The first, for which I also have reserved some of the strongest comments that I have ever felt compelled to make in the House, concerns serious and disturbing matters that came before the Committee as a consequence of the qualification of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's accounts for 1989-90 by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

As a result of the Foreign Office's computerised accounting system not working, final accounts that should have been signed in August were not produced. The accounts were based on ledgers that did not balance, and as a result the Comptroller and Auditor General was unable to complete his audit, and qualified his opinion on all four accounts.

How could that happen to the mighty and influential Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which sits at the very heart of Government service and whose influence spreads around the world? It happened because the Foreign Office replaced its six-year-old software with software that did not conform to the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency's standard system of computer project management. The Foreign Office had not prescribed its own means of managing such projects and, most importantly, made that decision because those responsible thought that they could manage the project on their own—but they could not.

The Foreign Office intended to run the old and new systems in parallel, but the delayed delivery of the new system made that impossible. The old accounting system broke down irreparably and no adequate back-up system existed in case of failure. I suggest to right hon. and hon. Members that, if our secretaries behaved in that way when working on constituency business and did not maintain adequate back-ups, we would have some fairly harsh words to say to them.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office representative told the Committee:

> "This had been a mistake."

While all that was happening, the Foreign Office allowed a complete turnover of the bookkeeping staff at the very time when continuity would have helped to avoid the catastrophes that occurred.

The PAC rarely uses strong language. The strongest word in its vocabulary was used by our Chairman, when he said that the PAC had been astonished. That is a strong word; I can think of stronger ones, but I shall not use them this evening. The final result was the most serious qualification of accounts since Sir John Bourn's appointment as Comptroller and Auditor General.

When the Committee took evidence, I asked Sir Patrick Wright, permanent under-secretary, Foreign and Commonwealth Office—one of the most eminent of Whitehall mandarins—why the official responsible for selecting the Memory software system was not present to give evidence. Sir Patrick replied:

> "I am not clear who that official was, I am afraid."

I asked Sir Patrick whether he should not know. He replied that the present incumbent's predecessor

> "has retired from the service."

He explained:

> "I am afraid it is partly an aspect of Diplomatic Service careers that people move quite rapidly."

They obviously moved very rapidly in that instance—and well out of sight of the Committee's inquiring eyes.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): Does my hon. Friend agree that many accounting officers miraculously retire before they are due to come before the Committee, leaving their successors to explain past deeds? Is that purely coincidental?

Mr. Shersby: It is not unknown for that to happen. If it happens again, the Committee should, if necessary, call the former, retired official to give evidence. We cannot have people spirited away into retirement, with the Committee left unable to question them.

I say this with all due respect to Sir Patrick Wright, but I was very surprised by the attitude taken by such a great man and by his lack of any real knowledge of what was going on down the line in his Department. I realise that, viewed from the lofty heights of the permanent under-secretary's office, the mundane business of keeping accounts and knowing who is responsible for making the system work may not seem very exciting stuff. In the private sector, however, such a responsibility would form a vital part of the work of any good managing director —which is what the permanent under-secretary is, in addition to his many other duties.

I hope that the same thing will not happen again. I remind the House that we pay our permanent secretaries pretty well to do their job. I note that Sir Patrick's salary is more than £100,000 a year. Surely the least that we can expect from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is that it keeps its accounts properly.

I turn next to a situation that would border on farce were it not so serious. It concerns the Development Board for Rural Wales. The retirement settlement for the board's former chief executive is mentioned in the 11th report of the 1992-93 Session; it has already been referred to by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne and involves one of the most scandalous episodes that I have encountered during my membership of the PAC.

When the chief executive accepted an offer of early retirement in December 1990, his retirement settlement —approved by the Welsh Office and the Treasury in February 1990—was exceeded. One of the payments that he received was the sum of £15,563 for untaken leave. Neither the Welsh Office nor the Treasury was able to justify giving that retrospective covering authority, and the Comptroller and Auditor General qualified the board's 1990-91 accounts accordingly.

However, when the PAC questioned the principal witness—none other than Sir Richard Lloyd-Jones— about that and related matters, we unravelled a chain of further irregular payments. At one moment I thought that they would never stop coming out of the woodwork. We discovered, for example, that the settlement included the capital cost of pension enhancement amounting to a further £180,000. There could be no doubt that the board had gone beyond the terms of the retirement package approved by the Treasury in making the payment for untaken leave.

We found the position all the more incredible when we discovered that the former chief executive had not even kept reliable leave records, and that it was impossible to check whether the amount that he had received related to leave actually taken. As we all know, such records are required to be kept in Government Departments, and clearly they should also be kept in sponsored agencies such as the Development Board for Rural Wales.

I tabled a parliamentary question for answer on 19 October to find out what action the Treasury had taken as a result of our report to draw to the attention of non-departmental bodies the rules governing untaken leave and the obtaining of prior approval from the Treasury Solicitor before agreements are made with employees. I am pleased to say that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has confirmed, in a written answer, that non-departmental public bodies were reminded on 5 October of the need to ensure observance of the general principles of sound management and provisions relating to untaken leave. I hope that such bodies will keep that very much in mind in future, and that they will not need to be reminded again.

[Mr. Shersby]

Let us return to the retirement settlement, for the story is not yet finished. It seems clear that the settlement was reached by the chairman of the board, Mr. Glyn Davies. On taking office, Mr. Davies wanted to change the chief executive, who was then Dr. Skewis. He reached an agreement with Dr. Skewis on terms that went way beyond the package approved by the Welsh Office and the Treasury. It is true that Mr. Davies informed the board of his intention, but any discussion with board members was informal and no minutes of the decision were kept. The fact is that the board had not formally approved the terms and was told of them only after Dr. Skewis's retirement had been publicly announced.

To make matters worse, we discovered that the package included a consultancy assignment for Dr. Skewis of up to 150 days at £200 a day, without the precise scope of the work being defined at the outset. That is another £30,000. We we continued our investigation, more and more such items emerged from the woodwork. This is a disgraceful state of affairs—particularly as it is not the first time that the PAC has taken evidence from the Welsh Office on its monitoring of non-departmental public bodies. In 1987, we were highly critical of the way in which it had operated.

I put it to Sir Richard Lloyd-Jones that this was an unsatisfactory, indeed appalling, state of affairs. The permanent secretary readily acknowledged that monitoring and control arrangements were not effective. The Welsh Office even told the Committee that it could not give an unqualified assurance that it had adequate controls over the remuneration and terms and conditions of staff employed by non-departmental public bodies.

Sir Richard Lloyd-Jones is still in post and seems to be able to continue in post, despite a record of mismanagement of whose like I have never heard in the House. If the same thing had occurred in the private sector, it would have led to the instant dismissal of either the boss or senior officials in the enterprise concerned.

Sir Richard is not being paid tuppence-ha'penny a year to do his job. His current salary is £86,720. This is a serious matter, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will tell the House what action the Treasury intends to take—not only in dealing with the question of mismanagement but in dealing with the officials who allow it to continue. It really is not good enough, and I feel that we are entitled to know what action will be taken.

Mr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Did not the PAC identify one of the special problems affecting the Welsh Office—that Wales is administered through quangos? It is very difficult not simply to issue directives insisting that such quangos keep proper records but to prevent the inevitable consequence of running the Principality in such a way: jobs are done on the nod, through private agreements and understandings. Basically, the same people run all the quangos.

Mr. Shersby: That is interesting. I seem to remember a song that went something like this: "If you ever go to Wales, you will hear such funny tales." I am quite prepared to accept that in Wales matters are run very differently. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will take that into consideration when he gives his heavyweight reply.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne has mentioned the sale of the Rover group, and I shall do so only briefly. I think that the sale of Rover for £150 million gave us all cause for great concern, especially as the £150 million was not paid up until some months after the deal had been done. Many of us will remember that, over a long period, we tramped through the Division Lobbies voting tranche after tranche to the British Leyland Motor Corporation in its various guises. Over a long period, about £5 billion of public money was invested in that enterprise.

When Rover was eventually sold to British Aerospace, a first-class British company, I felt that at least Rover would be able to produce motor cars that the people of this country would be proud to drive once again. So it has proved to be. Rover is now a successful company, with a fine record of quality, and its cars are extremely popular. In selling the company, a contingent liability of about £1·5 billion was removed from the shoulders of the taxpayer. It was not, therefore, all bad news.

There were lessons to be learned from the sale of Rover, to which the Chairman referred, and it is right that they should be learned, but it is important to put the matter in perspective and to be thankful that we no longer have to grant huge sums of public money to a company that was not viable and which produced a poor product.

The Chairman referred to the possibility of a third of the motorway system being coned off for repairs. That is an appalling prospect, because expenditure on the road programme is at its highest for many years. It has always been my understanding that the citizens charter contained some assurance that we would not have to face the horrors of the epidemic of coning that has occurred on our motorways in recent years. I hope, therefore, that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will take to heart the words of the Chairman. That is a serious problem that every hon. Member is anxious to overcome.

The debate is of much importance to the House and to our constituents, because it gives members of the Public Accounts Committee and other hon. Members an opportunity to put on record our views, so that if future events show that our work had not been heeded, the necessary action can be taken. We can be modestly proud of our record that savings of more than £200 million a year have been made as a result of our work.

I pay tribute to Sir John Bourn and his colleagues at the National Audit Office for the splendid service that they provide to the Committee and to Mr. Beastall at the Treasury, whose wise advice often helps us to defuse a difficult situation.

5.32 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I, too, congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) on the way in which he performs his role as Chairman and on the way in which he manages to keep the goodwill of the Committee and to achieve consensus. In this Chamber, I shall later stretch consensus a little further than I would ever dare under his chairmanship. That, of course, is no criticism of you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am trying desperately to protect myself and my future.

I pay tribute to the Comptroller and Auditor General for the work of the Audit Office. Without its detailed analysis, it would be impossible for us to carry out our investigations.

I repeat the criticism of the system that has been voiced by several hon. Members: it is frustrating when the incumbent at a Department whom we have questioned as part of our investigation is moved sideways or is prematurely retired before we can make further investigations. That has happened time and again. The hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) mentioned the Welsh Office. The permanent secretary at the Welsh Office is due to appear before us again in December on yet another qualification of Welsh Office accounts. I understand that members of the Committee have initiated a sweep on whether he will appear.

It would be helpful if we could put in a little overtime and increase our productivity further to reduce the backlog of NAO reports and ensure that our investigations are more contemporaneous with its reports.

I shall ignore the rather racist innuendos of the hon. Member for Uxbridge about us Welsh and the way in which affairs are run in Wales, but sometimes even Welsh Members speculate about was going on in some of the nominated organisations.

To borrow words that our Chairman used about something of far greater financial magnitude, we had an astonishing session on the Development Board for Rural Wales. All members were incredulous about what they heard. We sat to discuss a £15,000 irregular payment authorised by the board's chairman in relation to holiday pay to get rid of a chief executive, but in the process of our sitting discovered a pension package that had not been revealed to anyone. Astonishingly, no one had costed it. I remember passing my calculator to my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) and the hon. Member for Uxbridge supplementing some of my arithmetic. We costed the package at £120,000, at which point our Chairman rightly said that it would be helpful to ask the Welsh Office to give us a document showing the full costing.

It emerged that the £15,000 irregularity was the tip of the iceberg. The total package was worth much nearer £250,000—all to get rid of a chief executive who had served for 12 years. The new chairman had taken up his duties in April and, according to the permanent secretary, was determined that the chief executive should go. The chairman went to the Welsh Office in January and, without any attempt to cost what he was doing, set about negotiating any terms that would persuade the chief executive to go. The whole thing smacks of autocracy. He did not even inform the board of the details of the package that he had negotiated. He indicated that he was negotiating terms, but he informed the board of them only after the retirement had been announced and a package had been agreed.

What emerged from the permanent secretary, which endorses the suspicion of autocracy, was that, although the chairman is paid for only two days a week, the new chairman does four or four and a half days a week. In fairness, that extra time is unpaid. Some members of the Committee expressed concern that that suggests someone wanting to have rather more hands-on control of the organisation than a two-day-a-week chairman should have. The chairman, in his previous manifestation as a councillor in Montgomeryshire, had sat on a committee that negotiated three retirement packages for senior retiring officials. One would have thought that he would be aware of some of the costs and risks involved. Someone told me that, amazingly, he has been reappointed, but I think that it is slightly early for that.

Sadly, at this point in my speech, consensus comes to an end. I shall now deal with an issue touched upon by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne—the sale of the 10 water companies. I have never seen anything more akin to statutory theft than that sale, and I shall demonstrate that resemblance with some figures.

We had 10 water companies with an asset value of £34·5 billion, yet they were sold for £3·6 billion—that was 10 companies for the price of one. The permanent secretary confirmed to me in answer to a question that, if those same water companies with their assets as on that day had to be re-created, it would cost £34·5 billion, not the £3·6 billion which it cost to buy them.

Furthermore, as I shall prove, we have lost money on the operation; the deal was even worse than our report suggests. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne has told the House that there was a £5 billion write-off of national loans fund money which was yielding 12·5 per cent. interest to the taxpayer. In writing that loan off, £625 million a year in income was lost to the taxpayer. Given the level of tariffs at the time, the write-off meant that, by definition, as the privatised companies were not paying that money to the Exchequer, they had a built-in £625 million profit before they even started. On the basis of such profits, the chairmen of the companies gave themselves productivity bonuses for earning extra money.

That was not the end of the matter. Next, there was a cash injection. Hard public cash—£1·5 billion in taxpayers' money—was given to those private companies. Again, that cost the taxpayer money. We lost the interest which we would have received on the loan. Then another £190 million a year was lost to the taxpayer. Between the cash injection and the write-off, we gave the companies unsolicited profits of £800 million, and in doing so we robbed the taxpayer of £800 million a year. That was not a once-and-for-all payment; it was £800 million a year in interest payments.

I shall follow the sequence through. We received only £3·6 billion for selling the companies, and we are losing £800 million a year as a result of having sold them. Therefore, by the time the companies have been in private hands for four and a half years, all that the Government received—the proceeds of the sale of the water authorities—will have been lost.

The companies were given away for nothing—or rather, they were given away at a loss to the taxpayer. The loss on the written-off loan—the £800 million a year—will continue after four and a half years, so our national assets, our industries, as represented by the 10 water companies, were literally given away not for nothing but at a loss.

Those calculations do not take into account other aspects of the sale. As if what I have described were not enough, not only did we give the companies away but we then gave them £7·7 billion in tax allowances, when the shareholders had spent only £3·6 billion to buy the assets in the first place. The companies are receiving in tax allowances twice what it cost them to buy the industry. Those 10 companies will pay virtually no tax for the rest of the century.

Those 10 water companies were ours. They belonged to everyone here. Our companies were given away, and we

[Mr. Alan Williams]

are now making an on-going loss as a result. Moreover, we are allowing them to rip us off with their charges and profits, and allowing the chairmen of the boards to milk obscene salary increases at the expense of the consumer. All that is happening as a result of the private giveaway —or throwaway—monopolies. That is why I described the process as statutory theft, and I do not retract that description.

I wish that I could be kinder about the electricity industry, but I cannot. Electricity privatisation was the same but different. It was not statutory theft but an exercise in how to make the deprived owner pay the burglar's costs. The same initial pattern was observed. Sixteen billion pounds of taxpayers' assets—our assets— were sold for what the Government describe as £8 billion in proceeds.

One could be misled into thinking that that £8 billion in proceeds means that the new private owners, the shareholders, paid £8 billion for the £16 billion-worth of assets, but I am afraid that you, like me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would be naive if you made that assumption. In fact, the shareholders paid only £5 billion; that is all that was raised. The shareholders got £16 billion-worth of assets for £5 billion. Guess where the other £3 billion came from.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Will the right hon. Gentleman remind the House which Public Accounts Committee report covered the electricity industry? I do not recollect one. I may be wrong, but I should be grateful if the right hon. Gentleman would specify the report.

Mr. Williams: I was referring to the report on the electricity industry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand that we are free to discuss——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: What is the number of the report?

Mr. Williams: I must ask my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne.

Mr. Sheldon: It follows by implication.

Mr. Williams: It follows by implication, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Committee has already carried out the investigation, and I am trying to demonstrate that what happened in one instance——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman knows full well that the debate is to cover certain specific reports—a great number of them. He must refer to those reports; he must not anticipate the results of the Committee's current inquiries. The right hon. Gentleman has plenty of reports to choose from, and there is plenty of meat on them, so I urge him to stick to the reports before the House.

Mr. Williams: I am trying to draw an analogy, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am trying to show that what happened once can happen again, despite the fact that there has been a National Audit Office report and a PAC report on water privatisation, both of which demonstrated the disregard for public assets. One case is a variation of the other and I am explaining that variation. The Committee must consider the detail, but what happened was that the Government created a notional, non-existent debt of £3 billion which the companies had been made to pay back to the Treasury. However, that money did not come from shareholders; it came from us, as customers.

I am trying to explain that, whereas in one instance an industry was given away at what proved to be a net loss to the customers, in the other case—that of the electricity industry—there was a variation on the same system. The electricity industry was given away at a cost of £5 billion to the shareholders but at an on-going cost of £3 billion to us, the customers. That is reflected in the tariffs paid by every customer in the country. In both cases, the financial interests of the nation and the consumer have been ignored in the pursuit of dogmatic political objectives.

It is rather fascinating to note that not only the permanent secretaries who are so often responsible for the offences—if that is the appropriate term—that the PAC has to investigate but the Ministers who are the architects of the arrangements move on. In the case of both water and electricity privatisations, the perpetrators have either been promoted or elevated to the other place. In view of the facts that I have put before the House today regarding the ongoing loss that is being carried by the taxpayer, it seems to me and to many of my constituents that, instead of elevation, they should have faced incarceration.

5.51 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I must first apologise to the House and to my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary for the fact that I have unfortunately accepted a speaking engagement later this evening and so will not be present for the end of the debate. For weeks, the shadow of the Maastricht debate has been hovering over our timetable, and I was not sure when this debate would take place.

I add my thanks to our Chairman, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), who chairs us with quiet determination. No matter how much we push and try, he always gets his own way, and it is one of the strengths of our Committee that he manages to ensure that we produce a report on which we are united. When we speak, we speak with one voice, even if we may not have extrapolated as much from our criticisms of aspects of the way in which the water companies were privatised as the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams). The unanimity of our reports is our strength.

The Conservative Benches are remarkably empty. I should explain that quite a few members of the Committee have retired, some have been promoted, and one has even managed to become Chairman of Ways and Means. I urge the House not to regard the absence of my hon. Friends as indicative of a lack of interest.

Mr. Maxton: Is the hon. Gentleman honestly suggesting—perhaps there is a little of this on the Opposition Benches, too—that the only hon. Members who are interested in these debates are the members of the Public Accounts Committee? One would have thought that many more hon. Members on both sides of the House would be interested both in the accounting done by the PAC and in the general political points that are raised in the reports.

Mr. Page: I can only agree with the hon. Gentleman. The substance of the reports is absolutely fascinating, and I am surprised that our debates on them are not used by more hon. Members as a vehicle for making points, political or otherwise. The evidence is there. The baseline information is agreed, and I should have thought that many an hon. Member could make quite a few telling points on it. One need only look at the pile of papers beside me to realise that the source material for a filibuster is almost endless—although I do not propose to use the documents for that purpose tonight, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I also appreciate greatly the work done by the National Audit Office under the guidance of Sir John Bourn. His consistently positive and helpful replies to our queries assist us in taking evidence.

I do not propose to mention any of the reports to which the motion particularly draws attention. I propose instead to refer to the evidence we took on the progress of the first executive agency—the Vehicle Inspection Agency. The Committee considered that matter with great interest because it was our first progress report in respect of a concept that has attracted a great deal of attention and intense interest—not least because of the number of activities that are going down the agency route.

It is another strength of our Committee that we do not simply make reports and leave it at that; we are constantly reassessing the position. We took the evidence on the agency in July and were able to draw comparisons between the evidence that we heard and the information contained in our 1987-88 report on heavy lorries. Those comparisons showed that there had been improvements—for example, in the weighing of heavy lorries.

The message of the evidence seemed to be that there was greater flexibility and a better, more consistently hands-on management approach. Let me give an example. To begin with, it took 2·5 days to process test applications. The time taken then dropped to 1·5 days, and I believe that the target is now one day. A similar message emerges from the number of axles per lane coming through each of the testing stations.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) asked Mr. Brown, the new head of the agency, what was meant by the statement that the inspectorate intended to undertake a review of its grading structure to overcome the inflexibilities of the civil service code. Mr. Brown replied that the agency intended to do that because it felt that the code made the organisation more hierarchical than he would like and brought in artificial dividing lines between one grade and the other which did not necessarily equate to natural breakpoints in the vehicle inspectorate's organisational needs. That again points to flexibility and the ability to make changes far more quickly than previously seemed possible in the civil service.

We shall watch the changes with interest, and with the anxiety with which one watches anything new. The agency may have some way to go, but if all the agencies get off to as good a start, the idea will no doubt gain weight and momentum.

I am one of the members of the Committee who likes to try to paint a happy picture at times. To my mind, however, the next report to which I intend to refer—the 10th report on major defence projects—is an unhappy one. We are now faced with the point that I put to my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) concerning the change of accounting officer. For years we had the delights of Sir Peter Levene, who dealt with us with his customary skill and relaxed attitude and approach. He answered most questions by saying, "Yes. It is a problem but it was before my time and before my new system was introduced." Now, of course, before we have an opportunity to examine the effectiveness of his system and his changes, Dr. McIntosh has moved to the crease to try to defend and explain the actions not only of Sir Peter Levene but, because of the time that some Ministry of Defence projects take, of his predecessors.

The report contains parts that condemn the delay, procrastination, changed minds, dithering and unexplained gaps in decision making, all of which cost the taxpayer money and represent a lost opportunity not only for this country but for exports. The House knows that, if any company wants to sell a defence product, it must have the endorsement of being bought by the British armed forces. Overseas buyers will not buy a unique product, something that is made by one arms salesman or one arms company for defence purposes. They want the British Government's endorsement. Some of the time scales involved in the British Government giving their endorsement are sad and sorry tales. When we took evidence, I mentioned the saga of the advanced short-range air-to-air missile. I can only quote the PAC's conclusion. One must be a little careful because some of the topics involve confidentiality. However, the report shows that the PAC is concerned that it has taken 13 years for ASRAAM to enter full development.

There have been two competitions and delays for more than a year in deciding when and how to go to the next step. More frightening is the fact that, now that there is a new world order so that the immediate pressure is not upon us, it emerges that at a crucial point the Ministry of Defence was not pushing ahead in ordering the development of a missile that this country could have needed. On that point alone, the Ministry of Defence stands condemned.

A thread that runs through the MOD is its unsatisfactory speed in making decisions and in giving a clear sign whether it wants to go ahead with a certain project. A particular example has arisen in my constituency. A British company is not being allowed to quote in respect of the servicing of military helicopter engines that are to be shipped abroad instead. I find that exceedingly unsatisfactory.

My final point relates to ground that has already been trampled over. It relates to the No. 11 report on the retirement of the chief executive. I shall not recount the story, because that has already been done all too well. However, if hon. Members had been present and seen members of the Committee teasing out information, whether it be about overpayment in lieu of leave, a consultancy package, payment in lieu of notice, or the make-up of a pension package, they would have seen it all come out steadily bit by bit. It was just like a television courtroom drama. Undoubtedly, when the verdict was given, the man in the dock was guilty.

That is one reason why the work of the Public Accounts Committee is so valuable and should continue. You will know more than most people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the value of the Public Accounts Committee. I look forward to it continuing its work for many years to come.

6.4 pm

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): I also reflect the gratitude of members of the Committee to my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). He has been a superb Chairman during the past

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two sessions in which I have taken part. I also thank Sir John Bourn and the Treasury officials and their teams. They have provided us with superb back-up.

I should like to discuss the fifth report, entitled "Creating and Safeguarding Jobs in Wales". I do so because we are going through a time when for those of us who represent Welsh constituencies, creating and safeguarding jobs has never been more important. The first paragraph of the report deals with the relative position of jobs in Wales and it sets the scene very well:

> "Over the last 30 years unemployment in Wales has been consistently higher than the average for Great Britain. Successive Governments have placed considerable importance on tackling unemployment and creating and safeguarding jobs in Wales. The Welsh Office, the Welsh Development Agency . . . and the Development Board for Rural Wales spent about £200 million in 1990-91 on various schemes directly or indirectly aimed at creating and safeguarding jobs in Wales."

That is a large sum and it proved a source of great concern among members of the Committee. We looked at it very carefully and tried to quantify as best we could exactly what that sum had returned to Wales in jobs. In other words, we tried to find out whether we were getting value for money. Right hon. and hon. Members have already said that that is the prime purpose of the Committee—are we getting value for taxpayers' money?

The Committee makes it clear that, in terms of the performance indicators, it is not easy to decide whether we are getting value for money in Wales. For example, passages of the report clearly show that we have in Wales a very poor statistical data base upon which to judge the success or failure of the various schemes of job creation that have been put forward. For example, the first page of the report also states:

> "We consider it unsatisfactory that, despite the Welsh Office's undertaking in 1988 to improve the accuracy of the figures provided by the database for regional selective assistance, inaccuracies subsequently remained uncorrected."

We have already heard much about some of the problems that have emerged in terms of the Welsh Office's job in monitoring its various functions and Departments. Calculations of success or failure rates throughout have been proved to be rather poor in the published report. For example, the first page further states:

> "We are concerned that a large percentage of regional selective assistance projects did not start . . . We are concerned that the jobs achieved on regional selective assistance projects were well below the forecast."

That is of enormous importance. The report recommends, for example, that the Welsh Office should tighten up the process of appraising project applications in order to discourage applicants from making what it calls over-optimistic job forecasts. Perhaps nowhere in any of the reports is there a more prescient warning.

I should like Conservative Members to give some sign that they have read that recommendation. It should be extended to Ministers and to the Secretary of State for Wales, all of whom are very fond of quoting job projections which, in terms of their usefulness, are about as valuable as a ripped dap. For those who may not be familiar with it, "dap" is a term that Welsh people use when referring to a plimsoll. It is very difficult to call it anything else if one comes from south Wales.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): As useful as a wet echo.

Dr. Howells: Indeed, the job projections are about as useful as a wet echo.

The affliction of over-optimism, rightly condemned in the report, appears to have taken a grip on the Welsh Office during the dark ages when the Cathays Park fortress was presided over by Lord Crickhowell and Lord Walker. As Secretaries of State, they developed hype and repackaging to a fine art. When Peter Walker was Secretary of State, over-optimism became a religion. Anyone who dared to challenge it with more than a whisper of scepticism was accused of talking Wales down. Many of us have been accused of talking Wales down by showing a little scepticism.

I am sure that right hon. and hon. Members who are present know that Lord Walker has been appointed by the President of the Board of Trade to supervise the distribution of the as yet mysterious and unquantified barrel of aid to the coalfields to soften the impact of the pit closures. Most people in Wales believe that the appointment is designed to substitute with hype what cannot be provided by financial resources. Its brazenness makes Madonna look positively modest. I hope that the President of the Board of Trade will read the report before he dispatches Lord Walker and his wagon train to the north and the west of this troubled land.

The President will read on page vi that, despite the much heralded triumphs of Wales in attracting inward investment, which we all welcome and celebrate, there has been a rise

> "in the number of persons claiming unemployment benefits; a continual decline in the levels of employment in heavy industries; and relative to other economic regions in Great Britain there has been a higher proportion of people unavailable for work, a decline in the average wages for full-time workers and a continuing lower gross domestic product per head."

I may add that the GDP is lower than that for any part of the United Kingdom except Northern Ireland.

To counter that gloom, the afflicted over-optimists—as they are described in the report—told the people of Wales that the various employment schemes administered by the Welsh Office, the Welsh Development Agency, the Development Board for Rural Wales and so on—job creation schemes themselves constituted a new and burgeoning industry in the Principality—had undoubtedly had a

> "beneficial effect on the economic situation in Wales."

However, as the report says, proving that assertion is less easy than boasting about it.

The report says:

> "the forecasts and the figures for jobs achieved were always calculated in terms of gross jobs created and safeguarded without adjustment for various factors such as additionality, displacement and supplier effect. Therefore, the published figures almost always over-stated the net jobs."

That is a serious charge, if ever there was one. It calls into question the veracity of a significant part of the Hollywood rags-to-riches success story which successive Ministers of the Welsh Office have attempted to project for the Welsh economy in the past 13 years. However, no one who lives in Wales regards that charge as surprising. We are glad that the report highlights it.

No one who witnesses the misery of high unemployment and low wages, from Holyhead to Newport and from Delyn to Pembroke dock, finds the charge surprising. We watch the very fabric of Wales being torn and strained by the substitution of hype for real action and we ask whether we are getting value for money from the sums expended on job creation in the Principality. It is not easy to find a reliable answer, for the simple reason that the Welsh Office fails to honour an undertaking that it gave in 1988 to the Public Accounts Committee to improve its systems of monitoring and measuring the results of its expenditure. The report says that "inaccuracies subsequently remained uncorrected". That is significantly the case in respect of regional selective assistance, which is vital for Wales and will become vital for other parts of the United Kingdom.

The report says,

> "We note Regional Selective Assistance is one of the largest schemes operated by the Welsh Office and is expected to create or safeguard over 12,000 jobs each year. We are concerned that a large percentage of regional selective assistance projects did not start, and we endorse the Welsh Office's intention to identify the reasons why this was so."

The Welsh Office should have been able to tell us why this was so, but it could not do so. We may well ask why. Perhaps we can explore the matter further. The report says:

> "We are equally concerned that the jobs achieved on projects were well below the forecasts but note that the Welsh Office will secure a better understanding of the reasons for the shortfall in achievements when the evaluation study is completed. We recommend that, in addition, they should tighten up their process of appraising project applications in order to discourage applicants from making over-optimistic job forecasts".

There is that phrase again—"over-optimistic job forecasts". We are a land cursed by this over-optimism, and that is the truth of it.

If I may for a moment mangle Antonio Gramsci's dictum, may I suggest that the Welsh Office Ministers should display a little more

> "pessimism of the intellect and optimism of the spirit",

rather than their version, which tends to be optimism of the intellect and, reflecting their dismal electoral results in Wales, pessimism of the spirit.

There is no doubt that evaluation exercises in job creation are expensive. We watch that carefully. We want to ensure that even evaluation exercises give value for money. Highly professional staff are required to carry them out. There may be people among us who would argue, "Spend the money even on failures, rather than endless evaluation exercises." That is a dangerous theory.

We have already heard about the non-departmental government bodies—the so-called quangos. They appear before the Committee and we realise that they seem to be answerable to no one at the moments when it matters most that they should be. It is all very well to drag them in. As my colleague on the Committee, the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) said, mysteriously the guilty men have been retired or moved on. They have gone for some reason or other. They never step into the Public Accounts Committee. They seem to be outside the direct control and accountability of the Government.

We have heard the saga of the redundancy package of the chief executive of the Development Board for Rural Wales. As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Committee was captivated. It was absolutely extraordinary. We all sat there trying to do our bit. We were captivated as layer after layer, like an onion, was peeled away from one financial perk after another. The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West out of modesty did not mention that in the end he said to the chief accounting officer, "Don't tell me you gave him a car as well." The chief accounting officer said yes. If I remember rightly, he could not confirm its colour.

The problem is serious in a small country of 2·8 million people, which is ruled by quangos. Often, the administrative cadres which control the quangos are incestuous and self-sustaining. Small numbers of powerful families predominate and have their fingers in almost every pie in Wales. I have heard the kind of conversation that go on. Given the serious and pointed criticisms that we have heard this evening, it was frivolous of me to jot down such a conversation. It would run as follows: "OK, you be chairman of the tourist board and the water board this week. I'll be chairman of the Welsh language board and the broadcasting board next week and the week after, your son can take over the Welsh Ruritanian branch of the sports council and my son can be chief reporter on 'This Week in Westminster'."

Wherever we look, those people seem to run things. If we do not have checks and balances in such a society, we shall witness the Welsh Taffia continuing to thrive in the manner to which it has become accustomed—born to rule by means of mutual back scratching.

Mr. Shersby: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. Not so many years ago, quango shooting was a popular pastime of my hon. Friends. Sir Philip Holland, the then hon. Member for Carlton in Nottinghamshire, made a successful name for himself through badgering the Government to get rid of those quangos. Over a period, many of them were disbanded. Listening to what the hon. Gentleman says about the position in Wales, it appears that the shooting may not have been too good there and that many of them have thrived despite Sir Philip's keen eye. I hope that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will say a word about that. It is an aspect of government in Wales that should be looked at.

Dr. Howells: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his pertinent intervention. The problem is that, while one is attempting to shoot those quangos, the Welsh Office is throwing grenades and appointing new quangos. There is no accountability in terms of who is appointed to quangos.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I trust that the hon. Gentleman will agree that, in any review of quangos within the United Kingdom, we would appreciate a thorough examination of the continuing growth of quangos to the total exclusion of elected representatives at any level in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Howells: I could not agree with the hon. Gentleman more. It is a serious question, which, I am glad to say, the Public Accounts Committee has tried to address. I hope that the point will be well noted by the Financial Secretary to the Treasury and that he will tell us what he thinks about the subject when he sums up.

The report is vital because we need to know the reasons behind the creation of those quangos. The Welsh Office, which appoints the quangos, is the branch of Government that has, in the past two weeks, signalled the end of another 1,000 mining jobs in Wales, a further slimdown in steel making, and the possible shake-up of as many as 3,000 jobs at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency in Swansea and innumerable other jobs spread throughout the Principality.

Mr. Alan Williams: Does not my hon. Friend think that there is an odd poetry about that situation? The DVLC was brought to Wales in the late 1960s under a regional aid programme, and now 3,000 jobs will be up for sale. The

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contracts are to leave Wales and go to private purchasers in England. It would be interesting to work out what it cost to bring them in and compare it with what the Government hope to gain by selling them off again.

Dr. Howells: Absolutely. One of our reports on the great computer sagas—perhaps it was the Metropolitan police computer saga—said that cheap labour in the Philippines may programme the new police computer or put the physical records on the computer sheets. I hope that that does not happen to the DVLC jobs in Swansea.

We should be acutely aware of the need to ensure that the Welsh Office at least has the statistical gathering ability to identify and target successful job creation projects and to learn from its failure in other areas. That is at the heart of the report. I do not blame the civil servants in the Welsh Office, who have enough of a burden to carry anyway, if only the cruel jibes often aimed at the Welsh Office by its critics in Whitehall—allegations that it is second only to the Ministry of Defence in its ineptitude. I have heard it said that a posting to the Cathays Park fortress is the equivalent of a Wehrmacht officer being sent to the eastern front in 1943. I have always found Welsh Office staff helpful and efficient and, in private conversation, frustrated because they know full well the difference between the hype and the reality of claims made about job creation. No one is in a better position to know that.

For example, they know about some of the dubious triumphs claimed by Welsh Ministers for jobs created by inward investment. A brief example from the report is contained in a passage involving an exchange between me and Ian Rooks, executive director of marketing in the Welsh Development Agency. I said:

> "I have the most important jet engine refurbishment plant in Great Britain in my constituency. It used to be owned by British Airways and has lately been taken over by General Electric of America. Is that takeover by General Electric going to be defined as inward investment?"

Mr. Rooks answered,

> "Yes, it is."

I said:

> But no new jobs have been created."

Mr. Rooks replied:

> "That is correct. We use the same definitions as laid down by the IBB."

I asked the Library what IBB stood for and a helpful research assistant said that it means the Invest in Britain Bureau, which is a quango that we have not had up before us yet, but I hope that we will.

Mr. Alan Williams: It is a section of the Department of Trade and Industry.

Dr. Howells: I am sorry to hear that.

Mr. Rooks then said:

> "There is a standard approach by all regions throughout the UK in measuring inward investment and that, according to the criteria, is a legitimate inward investment for Wales."

I said:

> "Presumably it comes within the definition of safeguarding jobs, does it?"

Mr. Rooks answered,

> "Yes it does."

I said:

> "But no new jobs are created."

He said:

> "Not in the short term; there may be, we do not know."

I said:

> "There may be layoffs as well of course."

He replied:

> "Correct. At the moment we are just regarding it as an acquisition."

I find that extraordinary. If the people of Wales are to have confidence in those paid to create and safeguard jobs in the Principality, they should not be subjected to such double-speak—perhaps we should call it Walker-speak, after its prime exponent. In a less complicated language, such statistical exercises might more accurately be termed "cooking the books". That is the last thing that Wales requires in its effort to stave off the spectre of mass unemployment hanging over it.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Does my hon. Friend remember how, in the last Parliament, Lord Walker, as he is now, told the Chamber that Wales's unemployment problems were over and that we could happily look foward to a future in banking and banking services? Significantly, when the recession made itself known to us in Wales, Lord Walker decided to leave office and is now under what we might call "House arrest" in another place.

Dr. Howells: If Lord Walker is under house arrest, I beg it is a comfortable one. However, my hon. Friend made an important point.

Still less do the people of Wales require any cooking of the books in respect of training and enterprise councils —also covered by the report—or in relation to the provision of training, retraining and upskilling generally. As the report makes clear, it is a serious on-going problem in Wales. I quote Mr. Phillip Head, the chief executive of the Welsh Development Agency, who gave evidence during the inquiry:

> "I should like to see a position where certainly training provision is there for the unemployed and for the school leavers, but I should also like to see some sense of upskilling for those in work because as you quite rightly point out Wales is at the bottom of the wage league in the UK. We are changing our own actions and our own strategies towards trying to attract what I would call more added value investment, another glib phrase economists use I am afraid though I think it sums it up. That will include skill availability. In some of the surveys I have seen, skill availability or the lack of its is mentioned as a constraint by companies but not necessarily as a constraint to expansion at the moment. It is a coming problem."

For too long, Wales has been held up as some sort of unmitigated triumph for hands-on interventionist government. It deserves that accolade in some respects. It has certainly provided a temporary home for a series of refugees from Thatcherism, despite efforts to plant fanatic Thatcherite agents like Mr. Nicholas Bennett in office to keep an eye on some of his less dry colleagues.

However, the proof of the Government's pudding is in the eating. At present Wales is eating little more than dust. Statistically and organisationally, the business of job creation and protection in Wales must be reviewed with a degree of energy and commitment which, until now, has been significantly lacking in some crucial respects. If the Welsh Office as now organised and administered is not up to the job, we must have an elected and accountable Welsh assembly that is.

The matter cannot be allowed to slide. The confusion of the maze of agencies claiming to be in the job creation business must be straightened out and a clear referral system for potential investors and employers devised. Geographically, Wales is on the periphery of Europe and must live off the talents, skills and professionalism of its work force. We require clarity of language and statistics, not Walker-speak or creative accounting. To continue with those policies will be to continue to court economic suicide.

6.35 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): My remarks relate largely to Command Paper 2074, the Treasury minute and, particularly, the fifth report on creating and safeguarding jobs in Wales. The context in which we discuss the report is as follows: the number of people out of work in Wales is 129,000, 3,000 of them in my constituency; so far this year, there have been 4,500 actions for mortgage repossession in Wales; the coal industry faces oblivion; the steel industry fears short-time working; the aerospace industry is questioning its long-term future; 1,800 businesses have already failed this year; the construction industry is on its knees; and, importantly, the Government are instituting a review of assisted area status in Great Britain, under which Wales is certain to lose some of its development area status.

It is fair to put the discussion into context by stating that a Labour Administration set up the Welsh Development Agency and that a Labour Administration created the Department of State—the Welsh Office. They created the office of the Secretary of State and transferred from London to Cardiff the important powers contained in sections 7 and 8 of the Industry Act 1972.

We heard a superb, magisterial speech from my right hon. Friend the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. It was a privilege to hear his unrivalled exposition. Right hon. and hon. Members have levelled harsh and justified criticism of matters related to the Development Board for Rural Wales. I hope that the organisation is picked up and shaken vigorously. There is a smugness and complacency at its heart. In some ways it is good, but in many ways bad, that its headquarters are a long way from both London and Cardiff. Those at the top should consider their position in relation to the board and recent decisions. I say that with some sadness as I helped to handle the legislation that created the Development Board for Rural Wales long ago when there were Labour Administrations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) mentioned training. Paragraph 76 on page 17 of the Treasury minute relates to training in Wales. There is considerable complacency at the Welsh Office. The Committee said that it wanted a review of the skills and training needs for Wales at the earliest opportunity. The response in paragraph 76 is far from urgent. Those of us who follow such matters in Wales know that nothing substantive is being done about them by Her Majesty's Government or the Secretary of State for Wales.

I can give examples from my constituency of the predicament that we face in Wales. We had three great companies: British Steel, British Aerospace and Courtaulds. Each company had a large, quite famous and very successful apprentice and training school. Courtaulds left the district, and there is now no apprentice school. The one at British Steel, arguably among the finest in the world, now barely merits the name. Sadly, the apprentice and training school of one of Europe's greatest aerospace factories, the Broughton works—which has 4,000 staff—has recently closed in all but name.

Decisions as serious as those three on the future of our industries in north-east Wales ensure that there will be a serious problem throughout Wales in the next century. The skills required to enable our industries to compete will no longer exist. I do not like the Government's response which is contained in the Treasury minute and I urge the Department to consider the matter urgently.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd made some shrewd remarks on safeguarding and creating jobs in Wales. I am not at all sure that the Welsh Office is capable of responding to the strictures, advice and prodding of the Public Accounts Committee. Jobs are one of the most important issues facing Wales and are critical for the next century.

I should like to offer an example of why I believe all is not well, despite the detailed investigations of the Committee. One week ago, when the Secretary of State for Wales was winding up the debate on the future of the coal industry, he said:

> "In one day we lost 8,000 jobs at Shotton steel works. This Government created the Deeside industrial park, which now provides 10,000 jobs."—[*Official Report*, 21 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. 527-28.]

The right hon. Gentleman is head of the Welsh Office and hence the political head of Wales. I should like to explain why I am far from sure that the Welsh Office will do what the Committee wants it to do while the right hon. Gentleman is its political head.

My local knowledge enables me to say that the Government did not create Deeside industrial park: Mr Callaghan's Government did. And 8,000 jobs were not lost in a day: they were lost between Christmas 1979 and Easter 1980. Nor were 10,000 jobs created—possibly 5,000 have been. We welcome every new job, of course, but this story shows why the PAC has criticised the Welsh Office in the past for exaggerating.

The political head of the Welsh Office last week gave forth in this Chamber—I am sure unintentionally—a series of major inaccuracies that no member of a British Cabinet should ever have uttered. When I rose to attempt to correct the right hon. Gentleman, he would not give way to me.

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd: (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is not altogether surprising that the Secretary of State should make such remarks when he was not even consulted about the pit closures in Wales?

Mr. Jones: I am sure that that welcome intervention was wholly in order. We are talking about the safeguarding of jobs in Wales. We are desperately worried about the future of our coal mining industry, and we are angry about and disappointed by the contribution of the Secretary of State. It appears that he was not consulted about the proposed death of, for instance, the Point of Ayr colliery. Precious, highly skilled jobs in the mining industry in Wales are at stake. Other collieries in south Wales can probably find more persuasive advocates in other right hon. and hon. Members, but I speak about that particular colliery because it is but a few miles from my constituency.

The Secretary of State for Wales appears to have allowed himself to be pushed around by the President of the Board of Trade, and I suspect that he did not fight hard in that informal group of Ministers for the collieries of south Wales. He appears to have gone along with the

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closures. In those last few hours, it seems that British Coal and the President of the Board of Trade and his civil servants decided to add Point of Ayr colliery to the list because not enough of a fight had been put up in the informal meeting of Ministers. The Secretary of State was treated like a tea boy, as some of my hon. Friends have already said. He did not defend the pits and he has not delivered the goods. We must all work with him to save our pits and we hope to remove Point of Ayr from the list.

It is also clear from the PAC report that the Welsh Office database was not good enough. I hope that the Secretary of State will take that matter in hand. I hope, too, that he will stop making glib, irresponsible and unjustifiable statements to the House. I fervently hope that he will find it within himself to apologise.

6.44 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): I congratulate the Chairman and the whole Committee on the work that they do in producing these excellent reports. Many years ago I was a member of the Committee under the chairmanship of Joel Barnett and of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). Two reports stand out in my memory: the major report on De Lorean, and the investigation into the closure and sale of Hamilton college. The latter was a test case for the Committee to which I could bring expert knowledge, because I used to lecture at the college before the Government closed it.

It is, however, a pity that so many reports are being taken together and that so few Members appear to be interested in them. I do not know about the Conservative party, but my party is on a one-line Whip. I do not know whether I should say this, but Members tend to go elsewhere when they are on a one-line Whip, assuming that the business of the House is unimportant. It is nevertheless absurd that we should debate 43 reports by the PAC in one evening. The control of public finance is one of the most important jobs of any legislature.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) said, all this comes about because of our over-centralised legislature, which is dominated by the Executive. Only when we decentralise power to the nations of Wales and Scotland and to the regions will we have legislatures that can properly consider these matters and scrutinise public finance in the way that we need.

I intend to limit my remarks to just two reports, the report on the sale of the water authorities in England and Wales and the report on the condition of Scottish housing. In an earlier exchange that I had with the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) we agreed that this was an opportunity to raise political points arising out of the reports. I am therefore surprised that the Scottish National party, which has made great play of the possible sale of water in Scotland—it is to be the party's next great political issue—is not represented here this evening. Nor are some of my own colleagues who are members of an organisation known as Scotland United. *[Interruption.]* I was not of course talking about my hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) and for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes).

The members of Scotland United have claimed that they will raise great issues relating to Scotland on every possible occasion, yet none of them is present to discuss the sale of water in England and Wales, which presents the opportunity to see what happened there and to make valid political points about what might happen if a similar sale takes place in Scotland. We should always remember that, when water was sold in England and Wales, it was not sold in Scotland. In Scotland, it is still owned and run by the Scottish regional and islands councils. It remains a local government function.

The ownership of water in Scotland, and certainly in the Strathclyde region, involves some of the most beautiful countryside not just in Scotland, but in Britain and even in the world. These facilities belong to the people of those regions, and the Government have no mandate whatever to sell water to private companies. Before any hon. Member says that that makes me a nationalist, let me say that the Government have no mandate because water privatisation was not in the manifesto that they placed before the Scottish people at the recent general election. There was not a single reference to that, and just before the election Ministers assured us that they had no intention of going down that road.

Within weeks of managing to cling on to his job by his fingertips, the Secretary of State for Scotland announced that he was looking at that possibility. Why? The reasons are the same as those given for selling off water in England and Wales and some of them are given in the report.

One of the Government's reasons for selling water in England and Wales was that it was a local government function. The Government want to introduce a new single-tier form of local government in Scotland and believe that, by selling water, they can finance that reform and achieve their desired structure of small, weak local councils which are unable to stand up to central Government. There is the same need to finance water and sewerage developments in Scotland as there was in England and Wales, and that is driving the Government down the road towards privatisation.

EC regulations mean that higher standards are required from our water authorities. Perhaps we are trying harder to meet those standards than some of our fellow members of the EC, but as is shown the PAC report and the report which I am grateful to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities for sending me on the sale of water in England and Wales, it is not necessary to put water and sewerage services into private hands in order to finance the necessary developments. That is clearly shown in the reports.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): In his excellent contribution, my hon. Friend mentions that the proposal to privatise water was not included in the Conservative party's Scottish manifesto. Has he read the results of the interesting poll published in the *Glasgow Herald* showing that only 4 per cent. of Scottish people are in favour of the privatisation of water and that only 7 per cent. of Tory voters there are in favour? Even if the Tories are interested only in self-preservation, they might have a rethink on the issue.

Mr. Maxton: I am aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you are beginning to get slightly edgy. I agree with my hon. Friend and I read that opinion poll. Rightly, the people of Scotland have made it clear that they do not want privatisation.

However, reforms and developments of Scotland's water supply and sewerage system are needed. In Strathclyde large amounts of sewage are still dumped in the sea, and although at the moment there appears to be no risk to Strathclyde, we do not want dumping to continue.

Privatisation is not necessary for development and some of the questions in Committee asked by my hon. Friends, especially by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis), bore that out.

The Scottish National party and the organisation that now calls itself Scottish Militant Labour suggest that somehow we do not pay for water now but will pay for it if it is privatised. Water is currently paid for through the poll tax and in the near future it will be paid for through the council tax. We must accept that in future we shall have to pay more for our water and sewerage systems to ensure that necessary developments are carried out. Investment is essential, but there is no need to privatise.

An interesting feature of the report is that all the arguments advanced about water privatisation in England and Wales were to the effect that it would allow companies to enter the market and raise share capital which would then be used to recapitalise and invest in the industry. What happened? First, the evidence in the report shows that 61 per cent. of investment in water in England and Wales since privatisation has come from the consumers by way of increased prices. The money has not been raised by loans or by new share sales. I agree that the water companies have borrowed money for investment, but there is no reason not to give Scottish regions greater power to borrow money to carry out the necessary investment.

Almost none of the money that was raised for improvements in England and Wales has come from increasing the share capital, even though the share value has increased enormously. I accept that to meet Scottish needs price increases might be necessary, but that will happen whatever way the Government decide to proceed. Scottish needs could also be financed by giving Scottish local authorities a green dowry equivalent to that given by the Government to the new privatised companies in England and Wales. We have heard about a £5 billion write-off and a £1·5 billion cash gift.

Privatisation would have too many drawbacks, the Scottish people do not want it, and it would be little or no benefit to the Scottish people. We do not want Scottish water and sewerage services run by private companies which are interested only in profit. We do not want them to have our land—and I emphasise that it is our land. I am a ratepayer in Strathclyde, and the land around Loch Katrine is owned as much by me as by every other ratepayer and taxpayer in the region. We do not want that land to be given away to private companies which will then sell it to developers who may ruin some of our most beautiful landscapes. Scotland does not want laws that will allow the new companies to cut off people's water supply. Scottish local authorities currently have no such rights, and such cuts would give rise to health risks and social dangers.

I hope that the Secretary of State for Scotland and his financial and political advisers have read the PAC report. His advisers will tell him that water privatisation in Scotland is not the answer, that it is not wanted by the Scottish people, and that it is not the way forward.

I have some criticisms of the report on the condition of Scottish housing which I thought was over-reliant on the word of Scottish Ministers, because the Committee had allowed itself to be taken in by what they were saying. For example, it says:

> "We questioned the Department on the reliability of their information on house condition, the reasons for shortcomings in their information, how they intended to improve their information and what action they intended to take to monitor progress in house condition.
>
> The Department agreed that comparatively little information was available on the condition of the housing stock in Scotland. They explained that they were actively seeking more information and that the picture was becoming clearer all the time. . . . they were conducting a national house condition survey of the sort which had been conducted regularly in England, Wales and Northern Ireland."

Reading that, one would wonder who had been in charge of the condition of Scottish housing for the past 13 years. The answer is, of course, the Conservative party and the officials of the Scottish Office. If one read that, one would also think that, out of the blue, those people had suddenly become aware that there was a need to know about the condition of Scottish housing. One would believe that nobody had ever raised the subject before, and then along came these forward-looking civil servants and Ministers who said, "We need to know more about Scottish housing than we do. It is not in the state in which it should be."

The simple fact is that, in every housing debate that I can remember since I came to the House, and in every debate on a Scottish housing Bill—many have been before the House—a Labour Member, whether it was me or somebody else, has tabled an amendment, and spoken to it, suggesting that we have a house condition survey in Scotland. Time and again, to the point of tedium, I have made that point.

Mr. Foulkes: Hear, hear.

Mr. Maxton: I can do without my hon. Friend saying, "Hear, hear."

Although we may have made that point, we have consistently been ignored by Ministers. "Ignored" is too weak a word: we were mocked. We were told that it was nonsense and that we did not need a house condition survey in Scotland, because they had all the information anyway. Therefore, we presented them with the facts and told them about the number of houses suffering from damp, those that needed rewiring and those that needed major redevelopment. Again, Ministers said that the figures came from local authorities and were grossly exaggerated, the Scottish Office is saying that there are not enough figures about unsatisfactory housing in Scotland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): Will the hon. Gentleman accept that, as soon as this came up in the last Parliament, when I first became Minister, I said that the matter was under review? Will he also accept that the figures have increased because many local authorities, on our recommendation, have been carrying out local house condition surveys? This is to be warmly welcomed and will lead to action.

Mr. Maxton: The first major house condition survey —that by Glasgow district council—was carried out without any help from the Scottish Office. It was almost actively discouraging the council because it knew what would come out and that what it would cost to get

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Glasgow's housing back into proper condition would be millions more than it would make available. There is a smugness in the words of the Scottish Office about the house condition survey.

When the Minister came to his job, I welcomed him, and I admit that he has done a better job than most of his predecessors, although that is not a great compliment. However, his predecessors told me that there could not be a house condition survey and that they did not have the true facts.

In paragraph 4 of its report, the Committee says:

> "Prime responsibility for the condition of Scottish houses rests with their owners. Local authorities, in addition to their responsibilities for the housing stock which they own, also have the major responsibility for implementing housing legislation in their areas. The Department's role is indirect. They exercise influence and control over the housing sector by a variety of means".

I do not accept that the Scottish Office played an indirect role in the condition of housing in Scotland over the past 12 years and the present crisis in housing. Instead, its role is central and direct because, over that time, it has been cutting the funding of local government housing in such a way as to make it impossible for local authorities to carry out their function of ensuring the good condition of Scottish housing.

Eleven years ago, the housing support grant was £228 million and the general fund contribution provided a further £100 million. This financial year, the two of them will contribute £49 million. Since 1979, £1·5 billion of direct Government support for Scotland has been lost. These are cash figures. In real terms, the facts are even more catastrophic.

In 1979, 40 per cent. of housing costs came from rent, 39 per cent. from housing support grant, and 14 per cent. from rate fund contribution. This year, 93 per cent. comes from rent, 7 per cent. from housing support grant, and less than 1 per cent. from the general fund contribution. Thus, the Government's cutting of housing support in Scotland makes a direct contribution to the decline in the condition of Scottish housing, including the increased number of houses suffering from dampness, with all the ill health that that can lead to, and the increased number of houses that need rewiring, replumbing and redevelopment. That is not an indirect role; it is a direct role.

Capital allocations have also played their part in the condition of Scottish housing. Again, the Department has a direct role in this. The capital allocation has been cut again and again. I take the point made by my hon. Friends who represent English constituencies, that they want the capital receipts from the sale of council houses released to be used in housing. In Scotland, those receipts have always been used, but there has been a net receipt. In other words, there is a gross capital allocation, but local authorities are then told that they will have to sell a certain number of council houses and are given a net allocation. Far from benefiting from what other sales might take place, they find that they do not have the money that they require. It is ludicrous that this year eight local authorities in Scotland—Berwickshire, North-East Fife, East Lothian, West Lothian, East Kilbride, Hamilton, Perth and Kinross and Orkney—are required to sell more council houses for more money than the Government will allow them to use for building and redevelopment.

The role of the Scottish Office when it comes to the condition of housing in Scotland is not an indirect one. The Scottish Office is largely responsible for the fact that the condition of Scottish housing has declined over the past 13 years. A massive job needs to be done in either rebuilding our housing stock or redeveloping it, and it can be done only when the Government are prepared to make proper public financing available. I hope that the Government have read the report and will take account of it.

7.10 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): First, I join my colleagues who are members of the Public Accounts Committee in expressing appreciation of the work of Sir John Bourn, the Comptroller and Auditor General. We have paid tribute to his work—the whole House is indebted to him—but we should pay tribute also to the other people who work in the National Audit Office. Altogether, about 900 work there. We know that Sir John and the other senior people at the NAO serve the PAC and the entire House extremely well, but we should not forget that there are others who do important work but do not undertake the perhaps glamorous value-for-money studies. There are those who undertake the vital work of checking the Government's accounts to ensure that they can be certified as correct. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) said, during the past year, these staff have brought to light some extremely worrying examples of the misuse of taxpayers' money. I pay tribute to all those who work in the NAO.

I join my right hon. and hon. Friends in expressing appreciation of the contribution made to the work of the PAC by five Conservative Members who served on it over the past few years. The hon. Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) went on to become a Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) has gone to sort out the Conservative party. The three other Government supporters who were members of the Committee retired from the House at the general election. The hon. Member for Beaconsfield will be welcomed back on the Committee when he feels that his time has come at Conservative party headquarters.

The three Government supporters who were members of the Committee and who left the House at the general election were Michael Latham, Sir Michael Shaw and Sir Ian Stewart. They all made valuable contributions to the Committee's work. I mention Sir Ian Stewart in particular, because he came to the Committee as a former Treasury Minister. He served on the Committee for only about 12 months, but he made an extremely valuable contribution during that period.

Like other members of the Committee, I pay tribute to the contribution to its work by our Chairman, my right hon Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne. He brings to the Committee nearly 30 years of experience in the House and makes a unique contribution as a former Treasury Minister. We all benefit from his deft chairmanship and the kindness with which he keeps us in order and tells us when our time is up in Committee.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) left the Committee some years ago. He, too, is missed. I welcome his interest in the debate, and he is right to draw attention to the fact that we are trying to debate many reports. As I have said before, too many reports are before us during these debates and we find that we cannot do justice to the work of the Committee and to the Departments whose work and inefficiencies we examine. We should have more frequent debates so that we can concentrate, for example, on a group of reports that concern a particular Department. I hope that that will be taken into account by those who determine such matters.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne reminded the House that there are four themes to the work of the Committee during the past year. The first and perhaps most important theme has been to focus on the detection of fraud and the maintenance of high standards in the public service. We are concerned not only with honesty, because during the past year we have come across one or two cases—as my right hon. Friend said, one or two is too many—of dishonesty and fraud. When examining the complete range of Government activities, however, we came across few examples of fraud in the expenditure of taxpayers' money.

We must have regard, too, to the efficiency and effectiveness of public expenditure, and twice a week we review examples of that. We examine instances where public money has been wasted or misspent. It is a scarce resource and there are instances when it could have been spent in a much better way. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I wish not to reduce public expenditure but to spend public money in a more effective way. Every £1,000 that is wasted by civil servants is £1,000 less that can be spent on social services, which my right hon. and hon. Friends and I want to expand and improve.

Although the Committee does not consider the merits of policy decisions, it examines the way in which those decisions have been implemented. That is the second theme of the Committee's work. As I have already said, we review far too many examples of inefficiency and the ineffective use of the taxpayers' money. We do not review policy decisions, but there are instances when politics are much involved in our work. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne referred to several examples of privatisation and the Committee's criticism of the way in which that policy has been implemented.

One of the Committee's reports focused on the sale of the Rover Group. We criticised, rightly, the way in which the sale was conducted. It is important to remind the House that it was not conducted by civil servants. It was a classic case of a Minister who had a hands-on attitude. The then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—it was not the Board of Trade, and I believe that the right hon. Gentleman preferred to describe it as the enterprise Department—conducted negotiations, if they can be called that, with British Aerospace about its acquisition or takeover of the Rover Group. We were represented by the wrong man. We would have been much better off if we had been represented by British Aerospace's negotiators. They took our representative—the Secretary of State, our so-called salesman—to the cleaners. Instead of being sold, the Rover Group was given away.

I draw attention to one detail in the report on the sale of the Rover Group that shows the way in which the sale, if that is how it can be described, was conducted. In one paragraph we point out that the negotiations were conducted on the basis of profit forecasts in respect of the Rover Group. We learned from a confidential memorandum from the Comptroller and Auditor General that there was a wide range of profit forecasts. The then Secretary of State and his assistants at the Department took the lowest forecast and used that as the basis for the valuation of the Rover Group. No one in his right mind would do that when selling a company. Throughout his questioning by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry—the then Secretary of State declined to appear before the PAC——

Mr. Sheldon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing me to intervene. It is important that we get the facts on the record. The then Secretary of State did not decline to appear before the Committee. He thought that it was not normal to be invited and therefore he did not expect to appear. I wrote to him to point out that, although a peer of the realm is not required to appear before the PAC or any other Select Committee, I should be astonished if anyone with responsibilities for the handling of public money ever refused to attend the PAC. We have powers to call to the Committee virtually anybody who has such responsibilities.

Mr. Davis: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for having put flesh on the bones of what I was saying. We did not try to require a peer of the realm to appear before us, but we did suggest that it might be helpful if he did so, in order to discuss the result of negotiations with us, especially as he publicly criticised the National Audit Office report. However, he preferred not to attend the Committee. It is not too much to say that he did not want to attend the Committee.

From the details of the negotiations, it was clear that the Secretary of State had used the lowest forecast for the profits of the Rover Group as a basis for its valuation. One might expect someone selling a company to use the highest forecast for profits, not the lowest. One might expect the person trying to buy the company to want to base the valuation on the lowest forecast. That is why I say that the taxpayer had a bad deal. It was the taxpayers' assets that were given away.

As my right hon. Friend said, the third theme of our work during the past year has been computerisation and the apparent inability of almost any Government Department to get it right. A succession of Government Departments told the Public Accounts Committee that their problems were all due to the computer. Anyone would think that the computer was a divine institution, some piece of mysterious equipment which struck at random, rather than a piece of technology which does what people tell it to do.

Civil servant after civil servant, permanent secretary after permanent secretary, accounting officer after accounting officer, seemed to believe that to say that something was the fault of the computer was sufficient defence or explanation of what had gone wrong in a Department. The classic case was the accounting officer from Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Sir Patrick Wright, the permanent secretary at the time.

My right hon. Friend has explained in detail how that project went so disastrously wrong. My impression was that, at the beginning of the session with the Public Accounts Committee, Sir Patrick Wright could not understand why he was there. I had the strong impression that he did not think that it was important that the accounts of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office could not be certified by the Comptroller and Auditor General as accurate, that there was a possibility—I put it no higher than that—of fraud. He did not think that that was a

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matter that required his attention as the permanent secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. However, I think that he changed his mind as a result of his appearance before us.

I notice that the Treasury minute in response to the Committee's report says that the accounting officer, Sir Patrick Wright, gave new written instructions to finance staff in March 1991 requiring them to inform him immediately of problems that might prejudice the maintenance of proper accounts. I welcome that belated action by the permanent secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. It is clear that such action was the result of his appearance before the Public Accounts Committee, because he came before us on 4 March and that instruction was written during March. Therefore, I have no doubt about the connection between those two events.

Connected with the point about computerisation is the constant employment of outside consultants. If the Government have failed miserably to undertake computerisation, they also seem to have great difficulty in finding competent consultants to help them with computerisation. In the case of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the blame does not entirely attach to the accounting officer, because an expensive firm of outside consultants, Price Waterhouse no less, was employed. But it got it wrong. The new system did not work. The account that we were given of the work of those consultants was incredible.

I want to make it clear that I am not criticising one section of the Government. There is one group of people about whom I have heard no criticism in the past 12 months, and that is the group employed at the Government centre for information systems. They are supposed to be the Government's experts on computerisation. My complaint is that far too often, as in the case of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, those Government experts are ignored.

Time and again, permanent secretaries seem to try to want to re-invent the wheel. Instead of going to the people employed in the Treasury who know about these things, they try to do it themselves with the assistance of outside consultants at great expense. It costs more to employ consultants than the experts working for the Treasury, and the results are hardly encouraging, certainly in the case of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Insolvency Service, which also thought that it could do it alone.

The Government seem to be cutting back the welfare state for people on low incomes or with no income at all, while running a welfare state for consultants.

These reports also show an amateurish approach to administration. When my right hon. Friend talks about the need to maintain high public standards, he is referring not only to the standards of integrity and honesty, but to the standards of administration—efficiency and effectiveness. Time and again, we read criticisms in National Audit Office reports of the way in which Departments such as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have handled these important matters.

I do not want it to be thought that we are concerned only with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. That other major Department of State, the Home Office, came out of our discussion about the allocation of police manpower very badly. We were discussing value for money from the provincial police forces. The Home Office controls the number of police officers who can be employed by any police authority.

It is not open to the members of a police authority—elected councillors from the district councils covered by the police authority and some magistrates—to decide, in consultation with the chief constable, how many police officers it should employ and then face local taxpayers to defend the increase in taxes required to pay for extra police officers. That is a proper matter for political argument and debate and an entirely proper matter for local democracy, but it is not open to the police authority to make such decisions. It cannot employ any more officers than it is allowed to employ by the Home Office. I cannot think of any other public service where a Government Department specifies the maximum that can be employed by a local body, whether it be a local council or any other appointed body. I can think of no other group which is controlled in such a way.

I do not understand why we need such restrictions to be imposed on police authorities made up of local people who understand the needs of local areas and who should be able to decide, on the basis of locally expressed opinion, that it is a sufficiently high priority to improve and increase the number of police officers in the area and be answerable to the local electorate. The local electorate, too, are rendered incapable of making a decision because Big Brother, the Home Office, controls the number of police officers employed by each police authority in the provinces.

When we examined the matter in detail with the Home Office and Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary, we were told that, having decided on the size of the cake, extra slices were given to those areas where there were already, according to their calculations, more than enough police officers. At the same time, other police authorities, such as the West Midlands, which were desperately undermanned, were not allowed to employ as many as they wanted.

Conservative and Labour members of police authorities, who agreed unanimously, on the advice of the chief constable, on the number of extra police officers that they would employ, were thwarted by the Home Office which, meanwhile, was giving extra police officers to other parts of the country which, according to its own statistics, were overmanned with police officers. It was incredible. We were told that the then Home Secretary was pleased because his constituency happened to be in one of those areas. I leave that comment, which is on the record, to rest where it is for others to read.

Therefore, the Home Office too is a most amateurish organisation. It does not seem to have learnt anything since it came before us a few years ago to explain why there were such long delays in the issuing of passports and told us that the number of passports was affected by international difficulties and said that, for example, riots in Tiananmen square could affect the number of people who applied for British passports to go abroad. I think that it was a Conservative member of the Committee who asked whether it was really thought that people who would otherwise have gone to Peking would go to Brighton and therefore would not need a passport. It was ridiculous. Administration in the Home Office is still at that level.

I come now to the most important theme of the past 12 months—the way in which some agencies have behaved. My right hon. Friend drew attention to reports highly critical of two of the new-fangled quangos—the National Rivers Authority and the Development Board for Rural Wales, which shared similar problems. The NRA clearly had poor control of contracting arrangements, particularly in respect of the relocation of its offices to Bristol. That project involved awarding a contract to an outside company—another firm of consultants—to advise the NRA on relocation and to assist it in the tender process. National Audit Office figures showed that £1 million of the project's £2·65 million cost was wasted. The Committee expressed concern at that evidence of inadequate and poorly controlled tendering and contracting arrangements.

The Treasury minute appears to accept the Committee's conclusion, saying that the NRA has established an internal inquiry, informed the police, and tightened up its procedures—but that is shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted. What happened to the people who wasted £1 million of taxpayers' money?

The NRA's chief executive was made the scapegoat for that debacle, but the PAC concluded that the board and senior management together should bear the responsibility, and be reminded of their duty to exercise proper care in the stewardship of public funds.

The NRA is not alone. Last year, the Committee's 42nd report found that the national health service's purchasing control was deplorable, to put it mildly. It pointed out that the same topic had been investigated by the Committee in 1984, when it was said that the health service's organisational weaknesses in supplies procurement would have to be overcome if the benefits of greater co-ordinated purchasing could be enjoyed. Seven years later, a new Comptroller and Auditor General found that significant weaknesses in NHS supplies activities remained.

What happened during those seven years? So often, we receive bland Treasury minutes giving assurances that action has been taken, everything will be all right in future, and that the problem will never arise again. In the NHS example that I cite, the situation remained almost as bad as seven years previously. Sometimes, we should take the assurances of Treasury Ministers with a big pinch of salt —especially as the same Government remained in power throughout those seven years, when it appears that little was done by Ministers or civil servants.

The Committee's hearing on that matter was in May 1991, and the Treasury minute was able to report the establishment in October 1991 of a new body—the NHS Supplies Authority—to deal with national health service purchasing and supplies. Clearly, that was the result of the PAC hearing. I welcome that new body, and I hope that it will be more successful than its predecessors. That experience proves the weakness of Government purchasing—whether it be in the National Rivers Authority or the NHS.

I return to the NRA, and refer to the departure of its chief executive "by mutual agreement." He did not resign, but received a golden handshake of £125,000. It is hardly surprising that the Committee regarded the financial terms on which that executive left as generous and open to question.

Nor was that experience unique. As other hon. Members mentioned, the report on the Development Board for Rural Wales revealed an even worse situation. That board's chief executive left because he was not able to get on with the DRBW's chairman. It may be fairer to say that the chairman could not get on with his chief executive, because no criticism was made of his performance. The chairman had obviously taken dead against him, and went to the Welsh Office to have his chief executive paid off.

I am concerned about the way in which that matter was handled, and the waste of taxpayers' money, in disregarding proper consideration of the proper amount to pay. A payment was made in lieu of notice that was wholly unjustified, and payment was made for leave not taken. However, it is clear that those responsible for calculating that sum started at the bottom of the page, decided how much money to pay as a sweetner—so that the chief executive would leave smiling and not shouting—and devised a way of justifying the bottom-line figure. Because the National Audit Office staff picked up on £15,000 that had been paid irregularly and without proper authority, the PAC set out on the trail that led to it teasing out the £150,000 given as a golden handshake, so that the board's chairman could have as chief executive someone he could get on with.

The Treasury minute published in October this year states:

> "The Treasury has issued new guidance reminding departments of the need to put in place arrangements designed to ensure that non-departmental public bodies do not make irregular payments and do not act beyond their authority."

When the Financial Secretary replies, I hope that he will say—for reasons I shall explain shortly—when that guidance was issued. The Treasury minute added:

> "There is no entitlement to payment in lieu of leave for staff subject to Civil Service conditions of service, which includes staff in departments, Agencies and most controlled fringe bodies . . . The Treasury has reminded departments of these conditions."

Paragraph 155 of the minute states:

> "Payments in lieu of notice should be made only where it has not been feasible for the employer to give the employee appropriate notice of termination of employment or to allow him or her to work until the end of the period of notice."

I hope that the Financial Secretary has made a note of the minute, because I shall be returning to it in the light of a report issued yesterday by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

We cannot debate the details of the report tonight, but I very much hope that it will be the subject of a PAC hearing in the months to come. It is an important report, although it arose from the unglamorous work involved in certifying the accounts of West Midlands regional health authority. It is a sequel to other reports that we are debating: in the opening paragraphs, the Comptroller and Auditor General refers to the earlier PAC report on the Development Board for Rural Wales.

The health authority report discusses the awarding of yet another contract to consultants. Originally, the contract was expected to cost £2·5 million; we now know that the total cost was £4 million—more than half as much again as the contract awarded by the National Rivers Authority. The contract was awarded by the director of regionally managed services at the health authority. The Comptroller and Auditor General and his staff found that the director did not follow the proper procedures for awarding a contract to a firm of consultants.

Members of the Public Accounts Committee have been here before: we have heard similar tales about the National Rivers Authority. The auditors found that the director had shown

[Mr. Davis]

"cavalier disregard for the standards of conduct expected from public officers",

and concluded that

"the contract was improperly entered into".

The House will be interested to learn that the £4 million cost of the contract included expenses, over a single year, of £350,000. That included the cost of houses leased in London for executives and their wives; the use of aircraft to take executives to work; and, in the words of the auditors, lavish entertainment. The report does not, of course, tell us who was entertained by whom and for what purpose. No doubt my colleagues on the PAC will be anxious to establish that at a future hearing; there are many more questions to be asked. Tonight, however, I simply wish to draw hon. Members' attention to the fact that we have yet another scandal on our hands. Yet another contract has been improperly entered into; yet more money has been squandered on lavish entertainment —if I may use the strong language employed by the auditors. And, yet again, a resignation is involved.

The director of regionally managed services at West Midlands health authority left the employ of the national health service in June 1991. As the report reveals, he did not simply leave; he resigned. He was not sacked; nor did he leave according to mutual agreement. He resigned, which might indeed be considered the honourable thing to do—but he then received a severance payment. Again, my colleagues on the PAC will point out that we have been here before. This time, the sum involved was £62,000, including £20,142 for redundancy.

I do not understand how someone can resign, and then receive compensation for redundancy. According to the calculation, however, that director received £20,142 in redundancy compensation, plus £12,876 in lieu of notice. He was paid as though he had been dismissed—unfairly dismissed, perhaps—or declared redundant and paid in lieu of notice. Despite the Treasury minute, £12,876 of public money was spent in that way.

It did not stop there, however. A total of £28,982 was classed as a "special payment"—compensation for an earlier error in the calculation of the pension that the director had been led to expect. It is not the director's fault that the health authority told him that he would receive a higher pension than the one to which he was entitled, and I do not criticise him at all. This was another blunder by the health authority.

According to the Comptroller and Auditor General, a total of £41,500 has been overpaid, without approval by the Department of Health. Again, my hon. Friends will say that we have been here before: other severance payments have been made on the authority of the chairmen and directors of the boards of agencies. Money is paid out so that people can be got rid of quietly. Sometimes it is seen as hush money or a sweetener; sometimes it is spent simply to get rid of a nasty problem quickly. But—although it is paid without proper approval or authority—no one else has resigned; at least, no one had done so by 3 pm today. As far as we can establish, no member of West Midlands regional health authority has been dismissed for a blunder that has cost the taxpayer and the national health service money.

It does not stop there. The Comptroller and Auditor General tells us that, for an entirely different reason, the regional director of finance has also resigned. He has resigned because South Birmingham health authority ran up a deficit of £10·5 million, with a continuing overspend of £5·4 million. Now the regional health authority has had to bail out South Birmingham to the tune of £16 million.

That director of finance resigned on 7 September 1992. I emphasise that date. It was in July 1992 that we issued a report referring to severance payments, which has led to the issuing this month of a Treasury minute that states that people should not be paid in lieu of notice; yet the director of finance was given six months' pay in lieu of notice, as though he had been declared redundant. Moreover, he was given two months' pay for untaken leave in the current year and in previous years. We keep hearing the same story. My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), who raised the question of company cars, will want to know that the director of finance has also been allowed to keep his car for six months.

We must conclude that the same thing is happening in places other than the National Rivers Authority and the Development Board for Rural Wales. Other parts of Government, other agencies and sections of Departments, are wasting the taxpayers' money in identical ways. What worries me is the examples of which we do not know. Is this just the tip of the iceberg? How many other people are receiving unjustified payments in lieu of notice? How many other people are being allowed to keep their company cars after resigning under a cloud? How many other people are being given money for leave that they have not taken in previous years? In spite of the issuing of Treasury minutes on a date that the Financial Secretary will give us later, such practices seem to be widespread.

What emerges from all the reports—including one that is still to come before the Committee—is this. At a time when thousands are losing their jobs as a result of genuine redundancy and through no fault of their own and are receiving pitiful sums in compensation or no compensation at all, as a result of changes introduced by the Government in the calculation of such payments—the recipient must have worked for his employer for two years —and at a time when people who lose their jobs are put on the dole and must worry about their mortgage repayments, others are receiving big golden handshakes. There is one policy for those who are well off, and another for those who are not.

People who have not been genuinely made redundant receive thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money to which they are not entitled. The Government are running a gravy train for directors and senior managers.

7.49 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): As the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) said, I was privileged to serve as a member of the Public Accounts Committee for most of the last Parliament. I should like to endorse what he said about our colleagues who retired from the House, and therefore from the Committee—Michael Latham, Sir Michael Shaw and Sir Ian Stewart, who all served on the Committee with much distinction, some for a long time.

I apologise for not being present at the beginning of the debate. Like other members of the Committee, I pay tribute to the Chairman of the Committee, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), who has served as Chairman for, I think, nine years. It is impossible to think of a replacement for him. He does a splendid job and, in my recollection, only once in the last Parliament failed to chair a sitting of the Committee, which usually sits twice a week and considers many reports.

One of the themes of the debate has been the importance of finance and regularity audit. The Committee's report on the Development Board for Rural Wales is a classic of its kind. It should be read by every accounting officer on his appointment. The guidelines to accounting officers should direct them to read the report so that they understand, beyond doubt, what is meant by regularity and the importance that the House attaches to all payments being properly approved and regularised.

That was the most scandalous example of irregular payments to come before the Committee in the last Parliament, but as the hon. Member for Hodge Hill pointed out, there have been many other examples. He mentioned recent examples involving the national health service. One of the changes that were made as a result of the Committee's reports was the establishment of the NHS Supplies Authority in October 1991. Judging from the report that was published yesterday, to which the hon. Member for Hodge Hill referred in detail, there is still a strong case for investigating purchasing in the national health service.

I hope that the Committee will consider the report that was published yesterday, because, although I do not want to give all the details, a constituent of mine is in a position to supply goods to the NHS at a price considerably lower than that prevailing at the moment. He has had considerable difficulty in persuading the supplies authority of the value of his proposal. I shall take that up with the chief executive of the NHS, Duncan Nichol, but if I do not make any progress, I shall certainly send the details to the Comptroller and Auditor General, because that aspect of purchasing must be fully investigated, especially given the close relationship between those responsible for purchasing and the very large suppliers. Some of the companies are very large suppliers and, because the NHS has a virtual monopoly, they are almost totally dependent on the NHS for contracts. That is why that aspect of supply must be scrutinised carefully. The first lesson that needs to be learned from the reports is the importance of financial and regularity audit, especially regularity.

I was reminded of the report on Scottish housing by the speech of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton). He obviously has personal knowledge that I do not have, and he gave his view of the condition of Scottish housing. I was struck by the Scottish Office's lack of information on which to base any decisions. There are 700,000 council houses in Scotland. My questions in the committee established that, between 1985 and 1990, 287,000 were improved. In a memorandum sent to the Committee subsequent to the inquiry, further information was given to the effect that, in the five-year period up to 1984-85, another 186,000 houses were improved and, in 1990-91, 72,000 houses were improved. That makes a total of about 500,000 houses, from a total local authority housing stock of 700,000. It appears that the vast majority of council houses in Scotland have been improved in the past 13 years. That does not accord with the description given by the hon. Member for Cathcart, but we never received a satisfactory answer to the questions.

I believe that the situation may be rather different from the one that the hon. Member for Cathcart described. I was sorry that he felt it necessary to criticise the Committee's report, particularly in respect of what I thought was the factual description of the indirect responsibility of the Scottish Office.

I want to mention the Committee's report on the privatisation of water. I well recall the questions that were asked by the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams). As it was just before the election, I thought it right that he should be given considerable latitude, but simply to extrapolate the total value of the assets is not a sensible way of valuing a company. There are two different valuations of assets—the net book value, which was £8·7 billion in historic cost terms, and the value in current cost terms of £34·5 billion, which the right hon. Gentleman compared with the sales proceeds. Paragraph 29 of the report says:

> "the accounting value of assets is not a reflection of the underlying value of a company and investors will base their value of a company on the expected stream of future dividends."

That is exactly what happened and, in the circumstances, the sale produced a reasonable deal for the taxpayer.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): Will my hon. Friend draw the attention of the House to the Committee's conclusion:

> "we recognise that for the water companies to have been sold for a figure approaching the replacement cost of their assets, the price of water would have needed to be raised to a very high level"?

We did not hear about that finding from the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams).

Mr. Smith: Absolutely. The Committee said that the Department

> "had sold assets worth £34·5 billion at current values for net proceeds of £3·6 billion. The Department explained that they were not selling assets, which had no marketable value, but an industry which had an income flow which had a value on the open market."

I entirely agree with my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary.

The right hon. Member for Swansea, West suggested that it did not matter whether the water industry was in the public or private sector, because if it were in the public sector, it would still be able to borrow. Of course it could do so but, if it did, it would find itself—because that borrowing is in addition to the public sector borrowing requirement—in competition with all the other Departments that are lining up at the door of the Treasury, no doubt at this moment, pleading their case for increased public expenditure. The virtue of transferring the water authorities to the private sector—this will apply equally to Scotland—is that they are able to go to the market for their increased borrowing. In the end, somebody must pay, either the taxpayer or the customer—the right hon. Gentleman conceded that. There are limited resources available in the public sector, whereas if the companies go to the market, as they have, they are able to obtain the substantial amounts of capital that they need to make environmental improvements and to invest.

I want, finally, to mention the process of audit in the public sector, the role of the National Audit Office and the role of the Public Accounts Committee, because in my five years as a member of the Committee a number of improvements were made. I shall give the House one example of those improvements. Five years ago, the Treasury minutes tended not to be very specific. They did not necessarily deal with every recommendation of the Committee. Now, the Treasury minutes set out the

[Mr. Smith]

recommendations of the Committee and the Government's response. That is an important part of the process.

There is a natural tendency for the Committee to focus on past events and I make no complaint about that, because it is inevitable. However, there has sometimes been a tendency to concentrate on ascribing blame to people and trying to attach responsibility to individuals. Although that is important, it is not the most important element. The most important element, and the object of the whole exercise, should surely be to learn lessons for the future and to ensure that they are fully understood and implemented. In that respect, there is some room for improvement.

I understand that one reason why it sometimes takes a long time for a National Audit Office report to be published is that the NAO people have to obtain the agreement of a Department on the contents of the report —by that, I mean the facts. It is not acceptable for an accounting officer to come to the PAC and dispute the facts. Those facts must be agreed between the NAO and the Department before the report is published. Clearly, that is to the advantage of the Committee.

The difficulty is that reports tend to be a mixture of fact and judgment. I suppose in theory it is possible to split those two aspects, but in practice that is difficult. Nevertheless, I believe that it would be an improvement if there were some separation between the facts—the history of a matter—and the conclusions reached, especially the NAO's recommendations for future change. Those recommendations should be set out more clearly, and the PAC should focus more clearly upon them in drawing up its recommendations. That would be one way of ensuring that the Government were not let off the hook in implementing the recommendations.

I endorse what the hon. Member for Hodge Hill said about the work of the National Audit Office. Over the 10 years since the National Audit Act 1983, the work has been transformed out of all recognition. The 900 staff to whom the hon. Gentleman referred do a fine job, but there is never any room for complacency, and we should examine ways in which the system could be further improved.

In that context, I mention a report published recently by Certified Trust, part of the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants. The report, which was written by Andrew Likierman and Alison Taylor is about Government departmental reports. That valuable study examines both the departmental reports published over the past two years and the uses to which those reports were put by Select Committees.

A couple of years ago, before the reports before us were published, when the PAC was asked for its view it said, not surprisingly, that such reports should be like an annual report—a report to Parliament by the Department accounting for the way in which it had spent the sum of money voted by Parliament. The PAC said that in that context it would be appropriate to include the appropriation accounts in the report. There are tiny difficulties in doing that and it has not happened. Perhaps that does not matter, but clearly there is a slight dilemma over what the role of the reports should be.

The question is whether the reports should be backward-looking or forward-looking. Should they be an account by Departments of what they have achieved over the past year, how they have measured up to their aims and objectives and whether they have met their performance targets? On the other hand, such reports are now in effect what used to be the public expenditure White Paper, so they set out the Department's public spending plans for the forthcoming year.

The role of the Treasury in all that raises an important and interesting question, especially about the extent to which the Treasury should influence the reports. If the Treasury had no influence over them, there would be no consistency from one report to another.

Mr. Sheldon: I referred to Andrew Likierman and the valuable report which he produced, and I also said that it was the role of the Select Committees to undertake a proper examination of those matters as, indeed, it was their proper duty to undertake an examination of the public expenditure White Paper. The fact is that that has been done only to a very limited extent. I teased the Committees, as I have often done, by saying that, if they were happy with expenditure on the issues that concerned them, they should say so. They should say that there is nothing to object to in what the Government have in mind. That is such a ludicrous proposition that it makes it clear that the Committees are failing in some of the important tasks that they should undertake. We must take such matters into account, too.

Mr. Smith: I am delighted to hear the right hon. Gentleman say that. When we consider the basic purpose of the departmental Select Committees, our starting point should be the reports. The great advantage of such reports over the traditional public expenditure White Paper is that Departments are now required to set out clearly their aims and objectives, the resources committed to pursuing them and performance indicators to measure how far those objectives have been achieved. I agree with the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne that every Select Committee should take evidence on the reports from the permanent secretary—and from customers and clients of the Department, too, to establish whether they are getting a good deal.

I understand that unfortunately, this year, because of the intervention of the general election, many of the 1992 reports which were published six months ago have not been examined by the Select Committees. I hope that that will be put right, or if not, I hope that next year the reports will be examined by the relevant Select Committee. Some Committees have a good record, but one or two, which are mentioned in the report, have never considered the spending plans of their Departments. I believe that it is important that they do so. Such consideration is complementary to the work of the PAC.

The PAC performs an invaluable service, but it is not in a position to examine public expenditure overall. It is clear from the debate that Parliament has a vital role to play.

8.7 pm

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to participate in the debate; I have been waiting for about four hours to do so. My speech will not be over-long, but I shall not rush, either, because I have some points to make.

I am delighted to associate myself with what has been said about the work of the members of the Public Accounts Committee, especially my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). I disagree somewhat with my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton), who said that the Committee somehow let the Scottish officials off the hook. From what I read, it appeared that the officials got the third degree from some of the members of the Committee.

The hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) mentioned the length of service of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne as chairman of the PAC. It is ironic that the Tory party vice-chairman should congratulate my right hon. Friend on the length of his service, because a similar length of service is not possible for Conservative members of Select Committees. No doubt the hon. Member for Beaconsfield was a supporter of the vindictive removal of the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) from the Select Committee on Health on the spurious basis that he had served for longer than two periods.

The PAC's fifth report is about "The Condition of Scottish Housing". Paragraph 3(ii) of the introduction and summary of conclusions and recommendations says:

> "We consider that the Department need better information on the condition of housing in Scotland".

That has been mentioned by more than one hon. Member. I support what my hon. Friend the Member for Cathcart said about the fact that councils and a whole range of organisations in Scotland pressed Scottish Office Ministers for many years to conduct a survey. The Scottish Office point blank refused to do so. The hidden agenda was that the Scottish Office did not want the full extent of Scotland's needs to be exposed to public scrutiny, because that would put pressure on Scottish Office Ministers to supply the resources to meet those needs.

It is ironic that paragraph 3(iv) says:

> "We are glad to note the Department's decision to launch a national house condition survey and their intention to conduct further such surveys every five years".

We welcome the conversion of Scottish Office Ministers—in particular the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton)—although during the time that it has taken to convince them, there has been suffering throughout Scotland.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cathcart mentioned the fact that the report says that the Department's role is indirect in relation to the support—or, rather, the non-support—of Scottish housing. The report says that the Department exercises

> "influence and control over the housing sector by a variety of means".

It exercises complete control in its function of limiting net capital expenditure by local authorities. It dictates the agenda of the district councils which are the housing authorities in Scotland.

In one respect, I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Cathcart about the conversion of Scottish Office officials. One of the main purposes of a national housing survey would be to try to tackle the curse of dampness in council housing in Scotland. At paragraph 109 on page 11 of the report, Mr. Michael Latham, the former hon. Member for Rutland and Melton, is reported as follows:

> "I have worked in the building industry for 25 years and these points here are well known in the industry. Why is there such a large number . . . of units in Scotland, I suspect many of them relatively new units, built in the last 20-25 years which are subject to damp penetration?"

Here is someone who has knowledge of the building industry making a point about bad design in Scotland causing problems of damp penetration.

At paragraph 113, Mr. Latham asks the officials:

> "Are the local authorities coming to you in Scotland saying, 'Listen, we have a terrible problem of damp penetration of council houses in the west of Scotland which have been built in the last 20-25 years. We must have more resources to tackle this'? Do they ask you that?"

Dr. McCrone replied:

> "Yes, they do and we take that into account in determining the housing allocations; that is one of the main factors which we consider."

Yet that allocation has fallen in every single year since the Conservative Government came to office.

On page 14 of the report, my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) makes that point—and we are certainly grateful for the support of Welsh Members on this matter. My right hon. Friend said:

> "With the worst weather conditions anywhere in Europe, with evidence that shows that housing was deteriorating more rapidly than similarly aged housing in England, we actually have a reduction of about £2·4 billion in central funding towards the expenditure of the local authority."

Between 1979 and 1989, the Government deducted from central Government support to housing authorities capital receipts from the sale of council housing. When they were asked where the money would otherwise have come from, they replied that it would have come from the Secretary of State's block allocation.

Council housing in Scotland—in particular, the west of Scotland—has terrible problems of damp penetration. The Government constantly criticise councils for the number of void properties that they have, failing to take into account the fact that many of those properties are void because they suffer from dampness and the councils do not have the resources to tackle the problem, cure the dampness and put the houses back in the pool for letting. Greenhill court in Rutherglen—a systems-built block with flat roofs, built in the 1970s—has had nothing but problems with dampness and rain penetration since day one, yet under the capital allocation of Glasgow district council, the tenants have no chance of getting anything done to the block.

To its credit, Scottish Homes showed an interest at one stage, but that plan fell through, and while Scottish Homes is under pressure with its capital programme, there is no way that it can tackle the problems of Greenhill court. We are talking about expenditure and support coming from central Government to local government. The people in Greenhill court in my constituency are in a similar position to people throughout Scotland: there does not seem to be any hope of the Government's supporting them and coming across with the resources to tackle their housing problem.

Let me refer to the 16th report of the PAC on the control and monitoring of pollution and the review of the pollution inspectorate. On page vi, the report states:

> "We note with interest the Inspectorate's approach of requiring industry to take a proactive role and exercise greater self regulation in pollution control, whilst continuing to

[Mr. Thomas McAvoy]

> recognise the particular difficulties that may be faced by small businesses struggling to meet the higher demands of integrated pollution control."

That is a reasonable statement to make.

The Rutherglen part of my constituency contains the site of a former chemical works set up in the 1830s or 1840s —White's chemical works—which continued to operate until 1970, some 140 years later. There is no doubt that it created local employment: my grandfather, my father, my brother, several uncles and a whole stack of cousins worked there. It produced chromium. I was brought up only 200 or 300 yards from that place.

It is amazing how people's perceptions of what is acceptable change. A matter of 150 yd from the chromium works, the burns and streams ran all sorts of different colours because of the chemical discharge from the factory. Nobody thought anything of it. If that happened now, everyone would be up in arms, trying to get something done about it. We could have done with this inspectorates-type approach in Rutherglen between 1830 and 1970. A result of that company's existence was the indiscriminate dumping of toxic chromium waste throughout large areas of Cambuslang, Rutherglen and south Glasgow. The company simply sent out its lorries and dumped the chromium waste anywhere that it could. We are now discovering it on sites adjacent to schools, playing fields, housing schemes and the spectators' area of a local junior football stadium. A nursing home in Rutherglen has been found to have been built on a site where White's dumped toxic chromium waste. It is a big problem in my constituency.

People are even more frightened and confused because the medical world cannot seem to get its act together and come up with a definitive answer to people's fears. The dangerous chromium, we are told, is hexavelent chromium. But another school of thought says that that dangerous chromium is unsafe only to those working with it in unprotected conditions, while a third school of thought says that it is dangerous outside—on the sites that I mentioned, for example—only if the wind disturbs the top layer and spreads the dust over the surrounding area. Nevertheless, there is a seemingly high incidence of cancer-related illnesses in the Cambuslang and Rutherglen area. It is worth remembering that, 25 to 30 years ago, workers were being told to work with asbestos dust, and that there was nothing wrong with it, whereas we now know the problems that it causes. Hexavelent chromium is in the same category.

White's, which changed its name, first to British Chrome and Chemicals and then to Albright and Wilson, left Rutherglen in 1970. For 140 years, it used the community, making its profits out of the area. It has left us with a potential toxic waste time bomb. I am not one for scaremongering, and one must always listen to experts and get their advice—although I do not have complete faith in the experts—but the fact remains that people fear the consequences of that industrial waste. I have been asking the local district council to pursue the legal liabilities of the former companies and demand that they contribute to cleaning up that waste.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): I congratulate my hon. Friend on the job that he has done in dealing with this problem for the past two years. Does he agree that, in addition to his constituency, the problem is a matter of great concern in Carmyle in my constituency, immediately adjoining his constituency, and in the east end of the city of Glasgow? Does he agree further that the devastation that was caused by the de-industrialisation of the city cannot be tackled adequately by the district council unless the Scottish Office gives additional adequate resources to deal with that worrying and serious problem?

Mr. McAvoy: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. I can certainly confirm that the problem exists in Carmyle and other parts of east Glasgow. The lorries went as far as they could to dump the waste.

I was about to refer to resources because, at the end of the day, that is what this matter is about. There are various points of view. There is the expert view that one can cover up the hexavelent chromium and another view that it should be transported out of the area. The problem is where it is to be dumped. Whatever response is required, it needs money.

Clearly, Glasgow district council and Strathclyde regional council do not have the sums available to tackle that problem. To be fair to the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), he came to the constituency, looked at the situation and managed to come up with about £70,000 to try to make the site safe, but the overall problem is still to be addressed. Resources are still to be made available to the local council. I can rely on the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) and Scottish Members of all persuasions to try to persuade the Government that the people of the surrounding areas should not pay the price of 140 years of industrial exploitation.

8.21 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I shall refer to some of the points that have been raised mostly by Opposition Members, as the debate has generally been much better attended by the Opposition. I was glad to hear the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) because——

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Perhaps my hon. Friend will observe that there is nobody sitting on the Conservative Back Benches.

Mr. Morgan: My hon. Friend is right, but when I started my sentence there was one Conservative Member present, and he has just re-emerged to make what I said true again.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hodge Hill at least managed to divert attention away from shenanigans in Welsh non-departmental public bodies and indicated that shenanigans are also going on in west midlands public bodies. It is not a matter of feeling proud about that; it is a matter of showing that the system is still failing and that, as soon as the Public Accounts Committee manages to shut a stable door in Wales, another one opens in the west midlands and another team of horses escapes. It is possible that, at the next PAC meeting, that stable door will be shut after those horses are stolen in the west midlands as well. That reinforces the need for a Public Accounts Committee and for an effective control mechanism, even if it always does its work after the wastage has taken place, after the mis-spend has taken place, after the value for money has not been achieved, and after the regularity standards that we as hon. Members representing our taxpayers have a right to expect have not been followed.

I wish to raise some points which will extend the scope of debate beyond Wales because we have given Welsh public bodies a fair old going over because they received a fair old going over in the reports. Some of the points that have been raised have universal United Kingdom significance. I have been very interested to see how the National Audit Office does its work. I am not a member of the Public Accounts Committee, but I have an economic brief and a general economic interest, but it strikes me that the National Audit Office has a difficult job, and it is probably getting more difficult all the time because of the increasing number of public bodies and the diverse way in which they are expected to be audited.

Public bodies divide themselves into three categories. Fortunately, the third category is very small. There are public bodies—quangos—which are audited, nice, plain and simple, by the National Audit Office on behalf of Parliament. They can bring matters straight to the attention of the Public Accounts Committee if they want to. There is a significant and rapidly increasing number of public bodies which are not audited by the NAO but which have private auditors in respect of which the NAO Comptroller and Auditor General—the personal title that we tend to use on such matters—has a reserve power of audit, as well as the Peat Marwicks, the Ernst Youngs and so on.

The NAO can act over and above the private auditor. The private auditor can call the comptroller's attention to what the private auditor is unhappy about, and then of course the comptroller can draw the PAC's attention to it. That is a rapidly increasing class of quango—privately audited, but with reserve powers to the Comptroller and Auditor General.

There is a third category of Government quango in respect of which the Comptroller and Auditor General does not have that reserve power. Therefore, there is a very weak form, if any form, of parliamentary accountability. Some of those bodies are very small and have insignificant budgets so that lack of accountability probably does not matter, but one or two of them are quite big. The one that interests me is the Cardiff Bay development corporation, which is certainly the big daddy of those quangos which do not have either the primary duty of auditor laid on the Comptroller and Auditor General or even that reserve, long-stop power to read the books and records and have matters drawn to their attention by the private auditor so that they can bring them to the attention of the PAC.

Cardiff Bay development corporation has an annual budget of £33 million, which possibly will rise sharply if the Bill that we discussed last night completes its stages in another place and comes back to this House at some point in the spring of next year. If the corporation were to get permission to spend a great deal more money on civil engineering works, the famous barrage that we discussed last night, it would be in an even more unique position than it is now because it would have the power to spend perhaps £50 million or £60 million a year, and still without very much parliamentary accountability.

It is possible to say that the corporation has the other kind of parliamentary accountability and that the Comptroller and Auditor General can do the value-for-money audit, but then that can be done to all public bodies, anyway. We are talking about the prorietary duty which at the moment cannot be done. At least that is how I interpret the report on public bodies and of course the famous Treasury note which was issued on Thursday. That Treasury minute was in response to the now notorious Development Board for Rural Wales's access payments to the retiring chief executive, a saga which has been referred to half a dozen times already and will no doubt be referred to by the Financial Secretary.

It was very interesting to read through all the papers to the final page, then to the final page of the final paper, and then the final paragraph of the final paper to find out what the Treasury's proposals are on how to shut the stable door after the team of horses has been stolen in the case of the Development Board for Rural Wales. It is worth while to draw the attention of the House to paragraph 161 of Command Paper 2074—the Treasury minute on the first of the 11 reports from the Public Accounts Committee.

The final paragraph deals with the PAC's consultation, after the Development Board for Rural Wales's chief executive's retirement fiasco. The conclusion was:

> "it is most important that the Comptroller and Auditor General is able to identify control weaknesses of this type and bring them directly to the attention of Parliament as he did in this case."

We can certainly say that again, particularly after what my hon. Friend the Member for Hodge Hill said about the follow-on saga in the west midlands.

What was the Government's reply? I am glad that the Financial Secretary will hear this. They said:

> "in the case of executive non-departmental public bodies"

in other words, quangos—

> "where he"—

the Comptroller and Auditor General—

> "is not the auditor, the Government believes that the C & AG should have rights of access to the body's papers and records so that he may bring to Parliament's attention, whenever he considers it appropriate, any material departures from the requirements of regularity and propriety."

We can certainly say that again.

The paper continues:

> "The rights are frequently provided by statute."

That is the category denoted under the letter Y in "Public Bodies 1991". The provision of those rights by statute is the long-stop power of the Comptroller and Auditor General to audit the quango, even though it is privately audited. The paper continues:

> "Sponsor departments will seek to secure such rights in cases where they do not exist at present."

That was last week. The Treasury said that it would provide the right to audit in examples where the right does not exist at present.

I have gone through "Public Bodies 1991". It is a copious volume which is available to everyone in Parliament. It is about 100 pages long. It lists every Government quango. There are three significant bodies which the Comptroller and Auditor General does not have the reserve right to audit, let alone the primary ability to do so. The first and largest body is Cardiff Bay development corporation. That is the one which bothers me, because the Government seek to give it enhanced powers and massively to increase its resources.

The second body is the Commonwealth Development Corporation. I presume that it comes under the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Considerable reference has already been made tonight to that Department's slapdash attitude to accountability.

The third body is, rather sadly, a new one. The Laganside development corporation is the Belfast

[Mr. Morgan]

equivalent of the Cardiff Bay development corporation. At least so far it has a small budget of £6 million a year. The Comptroller and Auditor General has no duty of audit or reserve right of supplementary audit of the regularity and propriety of that body, forgetting for the moment the value-for-money audits which the Comptroller and Auditor General can initiate. Such audits are paid for by Parliament's vote, not the vote of the quango. They are not part of the annual expenses of that quango.

We expect the Financial Secretary to tell us how the sponsor Departments—the Welsh Office, the Northern Ireland Office and the Foreign Office—intend to remedy a problem which the Government have allowed to creep in, how soon they intend to do so, and in what way. Will it be done by an amendment to the statute, an exchange of letters, or what? The parliamentary accountability of the three quangos that I have mentioned has been reduced and the National Audit Office is not the primary auditor of others, although obviously it has a reserve right to audit them.

I hope that the Financial Secretary will deal with the three quangos to which I referred. He will have general support from the House if he proposes some fairly rapid-fire action to amend the statutes. I also hope that he will give an undertaking that if the Government set up any more quangos they will build into the statute provision that the Comptroller and Auditor General has either the primary or at least the reserve right of access.

The examples that I have described serve to reinforce Parliament's belief that continuous vigilance is needed to detect mis-spending by Government quangos. We still have that problem in Britain. Our voters expect us to watch out for examples of mis-spending.

My worries extend to bodies which are quangos in all but name but are not listed in "Public Bodies 1991". Unfortunately, it is up to not Parliament but the Government to decide what is a quango and what is not. For example, what is a training and enterprise council? Is it a quango? TECs use taxpayers' money and not much else, but the Government say that they are not quangos. The Government say that TECs work on contract, are private companies limited by guarantee and that the Secretary of State does not appoint the chairman or woman, so TECs are not quangos. Therefore, TECs are not listed in "Public Bodies 1991" and we cannot find out what their auditing arrangements are.

Training and enterprise councils are brand new. There are 82 of them in England and Wales and eight or nine local enterprise companies in Scotland. What are the auditing arrangements for them? How does the Comptroller and Auditor General discover potential mis-spending? How does Parliament find out about it? How do we find out whether the auditing arrangements are adequate to make the information available to the Public Accounts Committee or directly to the House?

What are the Government ashamed of? Why do not they include the TECs and LECs in "Public Bodies 1991"? Those bodies are 100 per cent. dependent on taxpayers' money so they should be in that book so that any member of the public can read it and know how much the chairman is paid, who the auditor is, and how to obtain an annual report. I could then find out how my taxpayers' money is spent on those new bodies.

NHS trusts are not listed in "Public Bodies 1991". There is a long list of NHS bodies, but the trusts are not included. We have been told through leaks in a newspaper today to expect a large wave of trust hospitals in Wales. At present we have only one trust. It is a pseudo health authority opt-out. So far in Wales, no hospital has opted out. Therefore, there is not a great problem at present, but shortly there will be.

We do not know the auditing arrangements for trust hospitals. They are obscure. The Government do not want to put trust hospitals into "Public Bodies 1991". This time their excuse is different. It is not that the Secretary of State does not appoint the chairman or woman—the excuse that the Government used for the TECs. The chairman or woman of the trust is appointed by the Secretary of State. Only last Thursday, in the debate on the health of the nation, the Secretary of State for Health was proud enough to say:

> "The trusts are unequivocally accountable to me, as Secretary of State, and there are effective mechanisms for monitoring their work."—[*Official Report*, 22 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. 595.]

If she is so proud that she appoints the chairs of all these trusts, why is she so ashamed of their structure that she does not include them in "Public Bodies 1991" or, presumably, "Public Bodies 1992"?

How are Members of Parliament and ordinary taxpayers supposed to find out information if the Government hide the new bodies from the standard work which the Cabinet Office issues every year, which is supposed to be a compendium of public information on bodies which spend the money of taxpayers and no one else? Occasionally, 2 or 3 per cent. of the budget may be from receipts, so their budgets are not all taxpayers' money, but overwhelmingly the bodies spend public money.

Are grant-maintained schools quangos? In the eyes of the Government, they are not: one will not find them in "Public Bodies 1991". There is a dangerous continuous erosion of parliamentary accountability through the audit work of the Comptroller and Auditor General and the accessibility of accounts to the Public Accounts Committee or any Member of Parliament. Something is going on, and Opposition Members are extremely worried about it. Such changes make it far more difficult for the fiddles and shenanigans that have been mentioned tonight to be detected. Some of the examples have been through the mill of the Public Accounts Committee. Some are so far merely Comptroller and Auditor General reports which will no doubt come along later.

It is always a race against time when as parliamentarians we seek to ensure that money is spent properly and that the proper backsides are kicked when we find examples of money not being spent properly. The continuing desire of the Government to privatise the responsibility to audit and distance us from it by evolving new, funny-money forms of public body to spend taxpayers' money is worrying. We nevertheless have to vote the money. We have to face our constituents and be able to say, "Yes, we are sure that the money is spent responsibly, even though sometimes we do not like the way in which it is spent." Whatever one's party, one has to face one's constituents and say that Parliament fulfils its traditional job, which goes back 1,000 years, of checking how the Executive spend the money that they raise from the taxpayer.

We shall seek promises from the Government tonight on the implementation of paragraph 161 of Command Paper 2074, which originated with the report on the departure of the chief executive of the Development Board for Rural Wales.

As the spread of new bodies which can spend taxpayers' money in ways which make it difficult for people to scrutinise continues, one could say that there is a competition between the whistle blower, the Member of Parliament, the office shredder and the desire to hide behind new technologies such as paper that cannot be photocopied and the numbered issue of photocopiers. Those are the techniques that people in public bodies, as in private industry, use to stop information being made available to the public and to prevent Members of Parliament and the Public Accounts Committee, through the National Audit Office, from obtaining the information that we need to check mis-spending.

In future, we may see an evolution. It has already occurred within the national health service, where a huge row is going on about whether whistle blowers should be able to give examples of patient care being adversely affected. The Government have sought to enshrine the right of the whistle blower to bring information to hon. Members or the chief executive of the NHS if nurses are worried about the erosion of patient care.

Members of Parliament must safeguard the position by saying that, if the Government are trying to put all that information in the shredder so that nobody can find out about it, we want copies of it before it goes in the shredder. Perhaps the National Audit Office should evolve in that direction so that, if people within an organisation think that money is being mis-spent, hon. Members should invite them to write to us or, if they do not know who their Member of Parliament is, to the Comptroller and Auditor General.

If they do not know how to do that, they should put the information in a brown envelope, drop it off in the district office of the NAO in Newcastle, Cardiff or wherever, and let the NAO deal with it. That information must be allowed out before the shredder destroys it within the organisation. I believe that we shall see a gradual evolution in that direction. I am sure that it will happen on a colossal scale in the health service as more trusts are formed. We need access to that information before it is destroyed.

Pages 25 and 26 of the 5th report, "Creating and Safeguarding Jobs in Wales", contains a mini-example of what happens when whistleblowing occurs. I am not a member of the Public Accounts Committee, but I am involved in the saga. During the Christmas recess last year, a whistleblower approached me with information to the effect that the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency had profited from a grant from the agency. One never knows when one receives whistleblowing information by telephone whether to believe it and one tries to find out whether one is being spun a line or whether the information is true.

I telephoned the House of Commons Library and asked the staff to find out who were the recipients of grants under the rural conversion grants scheme of the Welsh Development Agency three or four years ago, because the whistleblower had not given that information. The Library asked the WDA to provide it with a list, which is referred to on page 26 of the 5th report under point 23 of the schedule of questions put by my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) on 19 February to the WDA, to which the agency replied subsequently. It says:

> "The request from the House of Commons Library"—

my request—

> "mentioned in item 14 above was discussed in a telephone conversation between the Chief Executive and Mr. Derek Jones—Head of Industry Policy Division, Welsh Office on 31 December 1991."

That was about a day after I had made the request to the Library, having nothing better to do in the recess between Christmas and the new year.

Bells were now ringing within the WDA, whose worried staff thought that they had better tell the Welsh Office in case there was a problem. The report goes on to say that Mr. Jones from the industry policy division of the Welsh Office, wrote to the chief executive of the WDA on 2 January 1992 asking for information on the grant. It says:

> "The Chief Executive replied to Mr. Derek Jones in a letter dated 9 January 1992 confirming the date of the original application"—

of the conversion grant—

> "date of provisional approval, amount of grant, date of payment and the purpose of the grant".

That is referred to as being provided in annex 7, although, for various reasons of confidentiality, annex 7 is not in the report.

One of the questions asked by my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West was:

> "On what date was there an indication to Dr. Jones that a refund might be required?"

Interestingly, the report then says:

> "Dr. Jones raised the issue of change of use and clawback with the Chief Executive in November 1991."

That was a month before I made my request for information through the Library.

> "He wrote to the Chief Executive on 25 November 1991 confirming the proposed change of use of the second floor of the property to residential and requesting details of repayments that might be due to the Agency".

Again, we have not seen that letter. It is contained in annex 5, which is not attached to the report.

I now have to try to work out what was going on in the agency at that time. Is it believable that, by a strange coincidence, one month earlier than the Library asked for the information, Dr. Jones had volunteered to repay the grant? Alternatively, was it decided to backdate the request, knowing how dreadful it would be to have to admit that it was only because the whistleblower had come to me, I had gone to the Library, the Library had gone to the WDA, and the WDA had felt obliged to say that the information showed that Dr. Jones had obtained a grant from the agency while he was chairman and that therefore it had better make it look better by predating a letter saying that in November—one month before I made my request—he had initiated the procedure to repay the grant?

I could be wrong and, obviously, whether I made a fair presumption or whether there was another explanation will emerge eventually. It is extremely odd—indeed, it beggars belief—that when, on 9 January 1992, the chief executive, Mr. Phillip Head, replied to Derek Jones, the head of the industry policy division, confirming the date of the original application by Dr. Jones, the date of the original approval, the amount of grant, the date of payment and the purpose of the grant, it did not refer to the fact that, on 25 November—six weeks before—Dr. Jones had already initiated the procedure for repaying part of the grant.

[Mr. Morgan]

Surely a competent chief executive of the WDA would have pointed that out and not just stated the amount, date and purpose of the grant. He would also have mentioned the fact that the procedure for repaying the grant had already been started. It is difficult to put those two items together without seeing an element of falsifying the November date. I could be wrong because there might be other explanations, but the letter from Mr. Head to Derek Jones is baffling. That he should omit to say that Dr. Jones had, one month previously, initiated the procedure for repaying the rural conversion grant to which he was no longer entitled is odd.

I use that simply as an example of the race between Members of Parliament doing their job in terms of seeing that there is no mis-spending, the regularity and proprietary standards which taxpayers have every right to expect from us, and how the Government continually try to privatise the responsibility for spending taxpayers' money, to erode the Government's responsibility and that of parliamentarians, the PAC and the Comptroller and Auditor General to get at the information that they need to keep up standards of regularity and propriety in the spending of public money which we all have a right to expect.

8.49 pm

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): I apologise to the House for not being present at the start of the debate—I had urgent business in my constituency. I am sorry that I missed the opening speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), who was my Member of Parliament. I was born and bred in Ashton-under-Lyne, my family still live there and I have great ties with my right hon. Friend's constituency.

I wish to add my thanks to the National Audit Office and the Comptroller and Auditor General for the excellent report that they provided to the Public Accounts Committee. I have been involved in local government for 13 years and have been impressed with the reports that I received from my local authority. However, the reports received by the Public Accounts Committee are absolutely superb, and its staff and those who contribute to the compilation of the reports deserve the thanks of the House. They make my job as a new member of the Committee that much easier.

When I first became a Member, I made a vow to do the same as I had done in local government and to try to find out how the finances of central Government worked. I tried to do that 13 years ago with my local authority and I had great difficulty in keeping up with events. First, there was the revenue support grant, then there was the block grant, then grant-related expenditure assessment and then standard spending assessment.

I hope that my service on the Public Accounts Committee will help me to understand how the Government work and are financed. Since being appointed to the Committee on 9 June, the experience that I have gained has been valuable and has shown me the practical ways in which the Government work. It has also shown me how the Committee oversees Government expenditure to discover whether value for money is obtained and whether the money is spent correctly.

We are discussing a number of reports today. I shall refer to four or five of them, draw a thread through them all and reach a conclusion. The 19th annual report deals with the sale of the skills training agencies. That report highlighted the fact that in 1984 the book value of those training agencies was £100 million. When one reads the report, it is difficult to discover the sum for which the training agencies were sold. When the Financial Secretary responds to the debate, will he say how much the Government have received so far from the sale of those agencies? Because of the work of the Public Accounts Committee, a clawback clause was introduced in relation to the sales. Will the Financial Secretary say how much clawback money has accrued to the Treasury in the one year that the system has been in operation?

The House deserves an answer to another question relating to the report. A Treasury minute refers to the fact that not all the bidders for the agencies were given the full details. The Treasury states that that deficiency has been corrected, but why was that practice allowed at the time of the sales of those agencies?

The conclusion of the 20th annual report—1990-91—on financial control of employment training and youth training programmes was unacceptable. I find it alarming that, when the report was considered, the Public Accounts Committee was told that 70 per cent. of the training and enterprise councils examined had effective financial controls. One must conclude that 30 per cent. did not have effective internal financial controls. Why was that defective system allowed to continue for so long and what has been done since to remedy that problem?

One of the problems identified in the report was that the attendance records of those on the schemes were not maintained properly and were inadequately related to the appropriate Departments. As a result, incorrect payments wer made to a number of organisations. I read with astonishment that one of the reasons the Department of Employment gave for those problems was that the country was in a recession. I was amazed that the word "recession" was used in a Government publication, as we had been told that the recession was nearly over and we were merely waiting for the election of a Conservative Government on 9 April to end it.

We are still in the depths of the recession—there seems to be no end to it. What measures have been taken to remove such features from the training and enterprise councils so that they can account for the number of people placed on training courses?

Another aspect of the report requires detailed scrutiny by the Treasury. The overpayments that have been made need to be recovered. The report states that recovery procedures are under way, but the Treasury minute states that the training and enterprise councils are resisting recovery of overpayment. Will the Financial Secretary to the Treasury say whether that dilemma is being resolved by the Treasury, and how much has been recovered so far?

I have a constituency interest in the 22nd report on the Property Services Agency accounts for 1990-91. My constituency contains both Burtonwood air base and a large PSA complex situated on the other side of Burtonwood road.

I read the report with interest, because I was told that Bovis had been brought in to smarten up the management arrangements for the PSA. That struck me as strange, as I have just bought a house built by Bovis in the vicinity of

Burtonwood air base. I am sure that there is no connection between that and the role played by Bovis in trying to improve arrangements within the agency.

The report identifies the fact that the PSA was poorly prepared for privatisation—that is an understatement. The report shows that the PSA took a shambolic approach to accounting. The report said that impropriety could flourish and would be difficult to detect. The Treasury has dismissed that claim and has stated that there was no impropriety. Why is it so certain that that is true? That is a strong statement to make and should be backed up with a thorough analysis of the accounting system of the PSA.

The report also showed that the outstanding debt in 1990-91 was £56·6 million. Precisely how much of the outstanding debt has been recovered? The report also stated that the debt owed by United States' forces to the Property Services Agency had increased beyond the agency's limit. How much of that debt remains unpaid and how much has passed on to the Ministry of Defence as part of the book-keeping exercise?

I am concerned that the report into the PSA has revealed incompetency and poor management—probably as a way to depress the price of that valuable Government asset prior to privatisation. There may be a repetition of the follies that other privatisations have brought in terms of value for money for the taxpayer.

The 23rd report deals with the Department of the Environment and financial management control in the National Rivers Authority. The issue has been raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) and other hon. Members. My hon. Friend said that the contract for the relocation of the headquarters in Bristol cost £2·65 million, of which £1 million of taxpayers' money was wasted.

I come from a local government background. Had a local authority been that incompetent in managing one of its contracts, it would not have been given a £125,000 golden handshake but would have been taken to the local ombudsman and no doubt to the courts, and been surcharged for the waste of money. What has happened in the NRA is an absolute disgrace. The NRA took no notice of the guidance issued to it on competitive tendering. Any tender worth more than £2 million should have been the subject of competitive tendering. On this occasion, it was not. I want to know whether the promised revised financial memorandum has been rewritten and issued to Government quangos so that there will be no repeat of the horror stories that we have heard this evening.

Another illuminating point from the report is that, but for the work of the Comptroller and the Auditor General, this waste of public money would not have been brought to light. That raises questions about open government and about the validity of the citizens charter. It also means that the House must have powers to investigate non-governmental organisations so that we can be assured that quangos are subject to some semblance of democratic control by the House.

All these reports were considered by the PAC before I became a member of it. I am impressed by their detail, just as I have been impressed by the reports that the Committee has considered since I joined it. I now look forward to the PAC looking into the sale of PowerGen and National Power to determine whether it brought value for money to the British taxpayer. Fiddlers Ferry power station, owned by PowerGen, is in my constituency. Its decision to import 4 million tonnes of low sulphur coal through the docks at Liverpool has meant that Parkside colliery in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) has been closed. That will mean an increased trade deficit and more environmental pollution, and 800 more people will be out of work, at great cost to the Exchequer and the local taxpayer. I look forward to the investigation.

9 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I should like to begin by holding an immediate vote of confidence in the Government on a show of hands, but unfortunately the rules of the House prevent that: not a single Conservative Back Bencher being present. So instead I had better discuss the reports of the Public Accounts Committee.

The guillotined Third Reading debate on the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill took place yesterday, but that has not deterred the Welsh group of Labour Members of Parliament from seizing every parliamentary opportunity to raise matters of importance to Wales, on which I congratulate them. I also congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy), for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) and for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) on managing to discuss matters pertaining to the Scottish economy, the Scottish environment and Scottish housing.

I echo the tribute paid by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) to my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), the Chairman of the PAC. Every hon. Member who has spoken has paid similar tributes to the Chairman. I am well aware that his chairmanship is not only widely respected in all parts of the House but lends enormous authority to these reports.

As the Chairman has rightly pointed out, there are certain key themes and Departments that step forward into the limelight every year as a result of the Committee's work. Issues such as out-and-out fraud have been brought to the House's attention again today, just as they have been in previous years. Likewise, further losses to the Exchequer through the undervaluation of assets sold in the Government's privatisation programme are a recurring theme, in spite of the assurances we were given in previous years by previous Financial Secretaries in response to previous criticism by the Public Accounts Committee.

There is absolutely nothing new in the discovery of the failure properly to invest in highway construction. That costs the taxpayer much more in the medium term because of maintenance and repair costs. That point is underscored again by today's debate. Yet there is no evidence that the Government intend to stop taking a short-term view of these matters. Indeed, if they ever do take infrastructure and capital investment more seriously, that will only be because it is one of the few economic policies that they have not yet tried.

These reports highlight the affairs of the Ministry of Defence and of the Northern Ireland Office. Before dealing with those two recurring themes, however, I should like to refer to two reports that clearly require comment. The first of them is an astonishing report—the 36th, dealing with the qualification of accounts for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. It has attracted a full and thorough response from the Treasury. That is not in the least

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surprising. The Treasury official who compiled the minute responding to the report must have had mixed views about the whole sorry episode.

The PAC report refers to inadequate controls which

> "create a climate which is conducive to fraud and theft . . . the Department's problems may have heightened the risk of irregularities remaining undetected."

The Treasury boldly responds thus, in minute 13:

> "The Government has noted the Committee's comment".

The PAC further comments:

> "We are alarmed at the catalogue of accounting errors made by the Department. We cannot do other than strongly criticise the Department's accounting arrangements".

Those are tough words and, to emphasise the point, the Committee says:

> "We wish to underline the seriousness with which we view the Department's failings."

There is further criticism of the failure properly to control suspension accounts, of which 535 have been identified. The report is one of the most remarkable to be presented to the House and, as the Chairman of the Committee said in opening the debate, it is wholly exceptional.

The report reveals that the theory of Government Departments being publicly accountable for money voted to them by Parliament has been completely breached. That is an extraordinary serious matter. The report suggests a mess of incompetence and error. Nobody suggests that the mess was engineered deliberately, but all sorts of unworthy thoughts will be harboured if the matter is not put right so thoroughly and comprehensively that in future the Department will be completely beyond criticism.

I was not reassured to hear that senior civil servants from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office approach the Committee with a relaxed attitude to these matters. The Opposition do not adopt a relaxed approach to them and the issue should not be allowed to drift. In future debates, we shall seek assurances from the Executive that the matter has been brought to a conclusion that is satisfactory to the Public Accounts Committee.

On a much smaller scale, although one has the impression that it was not for the want of trying, is the subject of the 11th report which deals with the retirement of the former chief executive of the Development Board for Rural Wales. The retirement settlement was generous, but its original terms were exceeded and the qualification of the accounts for the DBRW led the Committee initially to discover that the lucky retiring chief executive had been given a payment of about £15,000 as compensation for untaken leave, and that the payment had not been authorised by the Welsh Office or the Treasury. It later transpired that there were no reliable records from which to quantify the untaken leave even if a payment had been agreed.

The PAC later discovered that the capital cost of pension enhancements for this gentleman had been £180,000; that the eventual retirement package included a consultancy assignment of up to 150 days at £200 a day; and that the precise scope of the work to be undertaken had never been defined. That is an elastic meaning of the word "retirement". Some of my constituents would be willing to undertake the work at a cheaper rate. Given the Government's belief in competition, perhaps such consultants should be put out to tender. One wonders how many similar stories, perhaps not quite as gross, are to be found in other non-departmental bodies. I hope that this case is exceptional, but I harbour the suspicion that it is not.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) who stressed the need for real powers for the auditing authorities when dealing with undemocratic and unaccountable bodies such as the wretched development corporation in Tyne and Wear and the one that I have mentioned in Wales, because they behave as if public money was a piece of property of which they alone had charge. The report gives rise to legitimate questions. Who appointed the chairman, Mr. Glyn Davies, and what responsibility for this series of events is taken by the person who appointed the chairman? How was the chairman chosen, and what are his qualities? What happens to Mr. Glyn Davies and his board when they do something like this? My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) is right to say that these events are a great sorrow. They cannot be left unaddressed.

Seven of the reports deal with the Ministry of Defence. Hon. Members who have participated in these debates in the past will know that the Ministry's affairs are a recurring theme—I am tempted to say a recurring sorrow—in the Public Accounts Committee. The 37th report, about which the Chairman of the Committee spoke, deals with fraud and irregularities. That report builds on the earlier work of the 20th report of the PAC, produced in 1987-88 and debated in the House in 1988. Worryingly, the Committee is still reporting to the House that it is concerned about the level of fraud and theft at the Ministry of Defence.

For example, some £500,000 worth of computer and office equipment was stolen in 1991 and the National Audit Office found weaknesses in each of the establishments that it visited and in the way in which establishment procedures were being applied. Despite everything that was said in 1987-88 and the reassurances of the then Financial Secretary, the House is still being told of poor supervision. Furthermore, the Committee feels that the Department has failed to ensure that lessons arising from fraud cases are properly and widely learned. That is probably as damning a report as the Committee can put in front of us.

Astonishingly, we are told that although it is the stated policy of the Ministry of Defence invariably to dismiss civilians guilty of fraud, the level of excepton to this policy is 55 per cent. How can it be an exception if over half the people found guilty of fraud are not fired? That is unacceptable to the Committee and to the Opposition. I do not know what special circumstances pertain in each and every one of these cases, but if it is supposed to be the stated policy of the Ministry of Defence invariably to dismiss civilians found guilty of fraud, 55 per cent. of such cases as exceptions is a little high and worthy of further inquiry.

I do not know what the Financial Secretary has to do to prompt such further inquiry, but I urge him to do it. In the seven years since 1984-85, the Ministry of Defence discovered 388 cases of fraud, resulting in a loss to the Exchequer of £3,338,000. That is quite a lot of money and many of us think that such resources could be better used elsewhere.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cathcart was right to express alarm, on behalf of Scotland, about the future of the water industry. He based his fears on the report about the privatisation of water in England and Wales. The shortcomings of the Government's privatisation programme are a continuing feature of these debates. In particular, the losses to the Exchequer occasioned by the underselling of assets, usually land, have been highlighted time and time again. My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall), in his excellent contribution, referred first to that point. Had he been here previously, he would have known that his fears, expressed as a new Member of Parliament, have been echoed in debates on just about every other report on privatisation.

In 1988, we discussed the privatisation of Rolls-Royce and the critical Public Accounts Committee report, which concluded:

> "Departments should ensure that tax payers' interests are protected as effectively as future shareholders' interests".

I strongly agree with that, yet we have had similar arguments over the privatisation of the royal ordnance factories, and now over the sale of the Rover Group and of the water authorities.

I strongly endorse the views expressed about the Rover Group by my hon. Friend the Member for Hodge Hill, which very much reflected my view of the matter. The key point, which emerges again and again, is that we must protect the public purse and the interest of the taxpayer when valuing the assets of public concerns that are being privatised. I also strongly support the points made by the Committee in its report on the Rover Group and I hope, as the Chairman has said, that its recommendations will become a check list for the future if the Government are to proceed with further privatisation measures.

The Committee wisely says that it is the pressure of time, the working to fixed deadlines, that puts the privatiser at a disadvantage when negotiating with potential new owners. It is clear that the Government's ideological commitment to privatisation transcends responsibility to the public purse. It is indefensible that privatisation seems always to involve a loss to the Exchequer on land values. My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) referred to the report on the water industry and described the arrangements as statutory theft. He is right.

I move on, as I am sure the Financial Secretary is anticipating me to do—everyone who has followed the debate knows that I will—to the report on the privatisation of Harland and Wolff. First, I shall refer to the privatisation itself and, secondly, to the scandalous set of circumstances that relate to the procurement and eventual debacle of AOR1. These matters are referred to in the PAC's seventh report.

We are told that the net cost to the taxpayer of the privatisation of Harland and Wolff was £625 million, including the writing off of interest-free loans of £422·5 million and the Government's shareholding, which we are told was worth £4·6 million for this valuable piece of property. The Committee states:

> "We . . . are disturbed that the close relationship between the Department"—

that is the Northern Ireland Office—

> "and the company"—

meaning Harland and Wolff—

> "and other monitoring provisions were insufficient to prevent serious weaknesses in financial management in the company."

A number of us have been making the same point since the mid-1980s. It gives me little comfort to see confirmed what many of us suspected was the position.

The report continues:

> "We have not been satisfied that the extent of the Department's abatement of their adviser's valuation of the Harland and Wolff land and buildings was justified in the interests of the taxpayer."

Again, we have the recurrent issue of property values and privatisation. It appears in the report from which I have quoted, as it does in every other PAC report that deals with privatisation. The report concludes:

> "While it can only be a matter of judgment as to whether the objectives of the privatisation were achieved at the lowest cost to the taxpayer, the changes to the terms of the Heads of Agreement which were later negotiated were, in our view, costly. It is likely that Harland and Wolff's record of poor trading performance while in public ownership not only deterred potential buyers but also influenced adversely, from the taxpayer's point of view, the amount which it was necessary for the Government to offer to achieve the sale."

That is a condemnatory report.

The PAC reports also on the scandal surrounding AOR1. It states:

> "We are pleased that the Department secured a complete break from the ongoing financial risks associated with the AOR contract but concerned that the cost of achieving this was high".

Why should there be any financial risks associated with the AOR contract? The contract was supposed to involve private competition between Swan Hunter and Harland and Wolff, which would act as if it were a private company, even though we know that it was not. Its approach to the competition was supposed to be hands-off. It was meant to be acting under the same constraints that apply in the private sector.

I declare immediately a constituency interest. The whole of Tyneside would be astonished if I did not. During the period of which I am talking, about 4,800 shipyard workers lost their jobs on Tyneside. About 2,000 were in that position as a direct result of what happened over AOR1, or HMS De Lorean as it is now known, but that is going back to the past. Ultimately, the Government placed the contract with Harland and Wolff. Before that happened, I wrote to the Prime Minister to express my fears. I stated:

> "there is widespread fear on Tyneside that like is not being compared with like, and that Harland and Wolff enjoy an unfair advantage because of the substantial state subsidy that it receives."

I went on:

> "If the type 23 frigates are to be able to play their full part in Britain's defence, it is vital that the first AOR arrives securely and on time."

Hon. Members will not be surprised to learn that I received an assurance from the then Prime Minister. On 24 April 1986 she wrote to me:

> "an undertaking was given to the Swan Hunter buy-out team before privatisation that the Harland and Wolff bid would be unsubsidised"—

unsubsidised—

> "and comprehensively costed . . . You may therefore rest assured that, in deciding to award the contract for AOR 01 to Harland and Wolff, the Secretary of State for Defence is satisfied that the terms of the undertaking have been met. I might add that he prefers the tender on grounds of design . . . and delivery, as well as cost and contract terms".

Four points are made—that the AOR1 tender is unsubsidised; that it has been comprehensively costed; that the design is preferred; that the delivery date is preferred. The design, as those who know the industry are well aware, has turned out to be one of the great disasters of the century. There is now a real chance that the Ministry of Defence will take delivery of AOR2, built on Tyneside by Swan Hunter, before AOR1 eventually limps into service. Why is the Public Accounts Committee so relieved

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that this unsubsidised and comprehensively costed contract has been escaped from, yet tells us that the cost of that escape route was so expensive?

The whole disgraceful episode is probably one of the worst piece, of procurement decision making that has ever come before the House. On such occasions, people ask whether anyone will be punished for what has happened. Yes, people are being punished for what has happened. On Tyneside, 2,000 shipyard workers have been thoroughly punished for what has happened, but they were not the guilty people who brought about this farce. They are just the people who have to pay the price.

The third report on the management of road maintenance caught my eye, not just because of the outrageous conclusion that the Public Accounts Committee has been forced to draw, but because I remember discussing all this way back in 1988, and I remember the assurances that the then Financial Secretary gave to the House.

I am sure that back in 1988 the then Financial Secretary did not tell the House that about one third of every single lane of motorway can be expected to be coned off at some time in the next five years. Nor do I recall his saying that the clearance of the backlog promised by the end of 1992-93 is now to be extended by a further five years to 1997-98. Those are points made by the Public Accounts Committee.

The Public Accounts Committee says that it is concerned about the past inadequacies of the Department's data on road condition, a point made in 1988, and notes that the national structural survey of the condition of roads had to be abandoned because the data provided by its agents were incomplete and inconsistent.

The Public Accounts Committee says that for the past six years the Department has consistently underestimated the levels of maintenance required because its traffic forecasts have been too low, and that the revised target for clearing the backlog in 1997-98 is based on the assumption that roads past the critical condition are expected to last for as much as a further eight years before requiring reconstruction. Perhaps most damaging of all, the report says:

> "In view of the Department's evidence that reconstruction is much more expensive than overlay, we are concerned that the Department's planning and management of the maintenance programme has failed to prevent a significant proportion of the road network passing the critical condition which entails expensive reconstruction."

All those points were made in the House in 1988 or, at least, similar points were made in 1988. Yet here we are again having another warning from the Public Accounts Committee, re-echoing everything that that the Government should have addressed some five years ago.

The hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), in the context of accountants and civil servants answering the Public Accounts Committee, said that it was always the successor who had to account to the Committee for the misdeeds or failings of his predecessor. The hon. Gentleman made the attractive suggestion that former civil servants responsible for previous misdemeanours should be caled before the Committee—but pointed out that they may be retired, too far away, or otherwise unavailable. I wonder whether the same might apply to a former Financial Secretary who assured the House that so many matters were under consideration. We would not have to look far for him; he has not yet retired but is the current Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Opposition are experiencing some difficulty in getting the Chancellor to appear before the House. The hon. Member for Uxbridge may have suggested a new route. However, if we start holding the Chancellor accountable for his past as well as present misdeeds, we may find ourselves in an even longer running saga than the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill.

I regret that only three Conservative Members participated in the debate, but my right hon. and hon. Friends made good use of the time available to them. I entertain the unworthy suspicion—the third tonight—that the Government are trying to undermine any debate of Treasury and economic affairs on the Floor of the House. We all understand why. I serve notice on the Financial Secretary that, if he hopes to claw back the rights of the House in his Budget and public spending round reforms, he will face what the Prime Minister would call not inconsiderable resistance.

Some of the PAC reports deal with shortcomings in public administration, and are all the more authoritative because of the all party consensus that underpins them. It is important to place them in context, and to remember that they cover the post-Thatcher era—or, more accurately, the post-Thatcher error.

A review of the economy since the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) became Prime Minister shows that it has been continually shrinking. Output has fallen 3 per cent.—some £20 billion. My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) referred to over-optimistic Conservative job forecasts. In truth, unemployment has risen from 1·62 million to 2·8 million, and the President of the Board of Trade is planning to make unemployment increase even faster.

Public sector debt has risen from 27 per cent. of gross domestic product to 40 per cent., and is rising—with the cost of the Government's mistakes being passed on to future generations. Manufacturing investment has fallen from £3·1 billion to £2·3 billion, construction orders are down 25 per cent., and property transactions have fallen 20 per cent.—with 70,000 fewer transactions per quarter than when the right hon. Member for Huntingdon became Prime Minister.

Is it any wonder that some Conservative Members pine for the return of their former leader? At least they knew where they stood with her. Time after time in PAC debates, I have heard the Committee's Chairman make the point that the nation is living off its capital, and that inevitably a price will have to be paid for that. The Government's response has been a failure to invest in our decaying public sector infrastructure and to hold back public sector pay—unfairly punishing public sector workers for the Government's own errors and artificially restraining the economy.

The Government have not even achieved their overall objective of cutting public spending. This year's extra 4 per cent. is almost entirely due to the public expenditure costs —mostly state benefits—incurred by the Conservative Government's recession. Does the Financial Secretary still believe that the Government will balance the budget over the cycle?

The last time that I asked the hon. Gentleman that question, he said that he stood by the Red Book—the source of the Government's growth forecast of 2 per cent.

for 1992-93. The City's consensus is that the economy will shrink by three quarters of 1 per cent. The Government promised the electorate growth of 3·25 per cent. in 1993-94, but the optimistic City view is growth of 1·75 per cent.

The point made by the Chairman of the PAC about our failure as a nation to invest in our future has never been more important and valid. We need a growth strategy; we needed a growth strategy two years ago. Now, and for years to come, the British people must pay the price of the Government's recent errors.

9.29 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): Not the least of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's achievements seems to have been to turn the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) into a Thatcherite. *[Interruption.]* With due deference to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes), I am not sure that I would have predicted such a consequence when my right hon. Friend became Prime Minister.

I join my hon. Friends, and one or two Opposition Members, in paying tribute to former members of the PAC. I particularly mention Michael Latham, who was my parliamentary neighbour in Leicestershire and a good friend to me, especially during my early years in the House; Michael Shaw, who was well known to all my hon. Friends as a stalwart Conservative; and Ian Stewart, who was not only a stalwart of our Back Benches but a distinguished Treasury Minister. I am sure that the PAC will be the poorer for the departure of all three.

The Chairman of the PAC, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), pointed out that PAC debates are often low key. Although he implied that he might have preferred a better attendance for today's debate—a theme picked up by one or two other speakers—he also rightly observed that, in a sense, it was a sign of success that the debate had not elicited enormous excitement. If there had been a deep-seated problem of fraud or dishonesty in the public service, there would have been much more interest in the PAC reports and the parliamentary debate about them. It is a tribute not only to the PAC's work but to the honesty and quality of the vast majority of our public servants that the PAC carries out its task, and reports to the House, in a relatively low-key fashion and in an atmosphere that is not charged with great political electricity. We all welcome that, although we might like some of the detailed work that goes into the report to be paraded to a slightly fuller House.

Let me also pay tribute to the work of the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne. Earlier some hon. Members taunted me, saying that my predecessors had promised this or avoided that and had passed on quickly enough to leave me to pick up the tab. One of my most distinguished predecessors, however, acts as my chief torturer in his role as Chairman of the PAC, and sits on the Opposition Benches. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne gets through a tremendous work load, and it is a tribute to his chairmanship that the PAC continues to work as successfully and smoothly as it does.

The history of the PAC and the effectiveness of its current operations act as a real discipline in Whitehall. The threat of PAC examination is ever present in the minds of civil servants contemplating particular actions and the evolution of policy. Several hon. Members have today pointed out that, when the PAC examines a witness, it is often examining the witness who has followed into office the person responsible for the very misdemeanour that the Committee is examining. That, however, is to miss the main point of the benefit that the PAC brings, as a quality check within the public service: effective deterrence. There can be few more eloquent witnesses to the effectiveness of the deterrence theory than the work of the PAC and the feeling—which pervades the senior ranks of the civil service and, indeed, ministerial ranks—that it is worth taking considerable care to avoid appearing to give an account of oneself to the PAC in hostile circumstances.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) drew attention to the estimate that the Public Accounts Committee delivers considerable savings of £200 million a year in public expenditure. That is a further measure of its success, and I am happy to give credit for the substantial contribution that it and the Comptroller and Auditor General make.

I should like to say a few words about the role of the Treasury. There is an overriding need to ensure regularity and propriety in public expenditure. Parliament has traditionally looked to the Treasury to play a leading role in ensuring that money is spent only in ways that are approved by Parliament and properly accounted for. That was the basis of many of the speeches that we heard in the debate. Individual transactions are the responsibility of the Departments concerned, but the Treasury continues to play a key role in keeping the rules of Government accounting up to date and in ensuring that new instructions are issued where they are warranted. I shall refer to one or two of those rules later.

Another essential Treasury role is to promote the importance of value for money. That role is often misunderstood, but I regard it as being one of the most important functions of Treasury Ministers. Mr. Gladstone commented on the appointment of one of my predecessors as Financial Secretary in 1877 by saying of him—he had something that I do not have—

> "Stanley is clever, but can an heir to the Earldom of Derby descend to the saving of candle-ends, which is very much the measure of a good Secretary to the Treasury?"

That was the first time that the phrase that has become famous and associated with the mandarins of Great George street—the saving of candle ends—appeared. The Treasury is no longer concerned solely with candle ends.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: What about light bulbs?

Mr. Dorrell: Perhaps the up-to-date version is ensuring that light bulbs perform to the end of their natural life. Where possible, we buy the long-life version that is preferred by the Department of the Environment.

The Treasury maintains strict control over public expenditure aggregates but has increasingly delegated responsibility for individual items of expenditure to Departments and, through them, to other public bodies.

In the 1990s, our task is to carry the process further, building on financial management, next steps and citizens charter initiatives to develop what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer described as more strategic forms of control by delegating responsibility, as far as possible, to the point of service delivery. By that means, we can best assure the taxpayer of high-quality expenditure, good value for money, conventional financial disciplines and the securing of propriety in public service.

[Mr. Dorrell]

The aim of the strategic management approach is to secure a sustained improvement in the quality of public services in terms of value for money per pound spent throughout the public sector within available resources, for the benefit of taxpayers, customers and staff.

Our approach recognises that, in promoting value for money, it is not for the Treasury to do Departments' jobs for them. In some cases, it may be appropriate to provide uniform general guidance across Government, but ensuring that taxpayers' money is well spent is the responsibility of every public servant, and we must create a culture where that is clearly understood to be part of the core responsibility of every public servant rather than something that is imposed from outside and from Great George street.

The Government are determined to secure a sustained improvement in the quality of public services and to maintain our objective of reducing the share of national income that is taken by the public sector. In 1989, when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was Chief Secretary to the Treasury, he said that value for money was not an arcane fetish of Treasury Ministers and officials but an absolute obligation that public service managers owed to the taxpayers whose money was compulsorily extracted for spending on public programmes. My right hon. Friend was right; that is the core responsibility of the Treasury.

I shall pick up a theme developed by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne and my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith)—the importance, in the evolving strategic approach to the management of the public sector, of fixing targets and management accountability systems which define objectives in both output terms and financial terms, and then holding the executive to account for the delivery unit by unit of those targets and objectives.

It has been accepted for a generation that that is the key to good management in the private sector and we seek to introduce that discipline into the public sector. The key to good management is setting targets and setting milestones along the road to the achievement of those targets.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne referred to the importance of setting those performance targets, improving management systems and developing corporate planning systems. For the reasons which I have already given, I am keen to see those factors developed. With regard to the next steps agencies and the non-departmental public bodies—which I shall call quangos, because that is easier—we have made it clear that we expect key targets covering financial performance, efficiency and quality of service to be agreed and announced in advance of the period that they are intended to cover.

Treasury guidance on the preparation of agency reports and accounts requires that the extent to which the key performance targets have been met are set out in a body's annual report. The importance of annual reports has been mentioned during the debate, both because they set out objectives for the future and because they report on the extent to which the reporting body in question has been able to meet its objectives in the past. That is an objective which we have clearly in our sights, and I regard it as an essential discipline of good management.

Dr. Howells: Like many right hon. and hon. Members, I am glad to hear that statement, but will the Minister tell us what resources will be allocated to policing those directives and instructions? We have heard about such directives before, but they have not been backed up with any real resources.

Mr. Dorrell: In a real sense, I regard the answer to the question, "What level of resources will be bound up in the new, better-managed public services from 1993-94?" as, "£245 billion a year." I regard the process not as an extra, but as something at the core of public sector management. Public sector management without those disciplines is bad, out-of-date management. Setting those objectives and holding the public sector to account to deliver them are at the core of what public sector management is about.

Mr. Hall: With regard to the annual report on the National Rivers Authority, the note from the Treasury says that the information provided is not sufficient to reveal the extent of the mismanagement over the contract for the relocation at Bristol. Will the Minister deal with that question?

Mr. Dorrell: Of course it is true that any manager in any organisation, whether in the public or the private sector, needs to ensure that he has the management information necessary to deliver efficient management of the unit for which he is responsible. That is why I have stressed that good management in the public as well as the private sector involves setting targets and holding managers to account for delivering them—insisting that the manager of the unit is accountable for the delivery of measured targets and measured milestones along the road to those targets.

Mr. Alan Williams: Does the Financial Secretary accept that one of the absurdities of the rivers authority case is that the man who was in charge was an ex-Cabinet Minister who had himself set the targets in Wales but, as soon as he was in charge of the quango, he wasted £1 million by ignoring them?

Mr. Dorrell: Of course it is important that the targets that are set for every Government organisation serve the wider public purpose and the interests of those to whom that organisation is accountable. The important thing is to ensure that the targets are set and are clear and that there is an accountability mechanism to test whether the unit delivers those targets. That is the objective, and it is the test that I invite the PAC to apply, because it is at the core of good management.

Mr. Terry Davis: But who will do what if the PAC finds that the accounting officer has not set targets?

Mr. Dorrell: I am conscious of the fact that there is a series of specific reports on managements that have not delivered against their objectives and I am anxious to deal with them.

Mr. Davis: The Minister has missed the point, which is that we often find that accounting officers have not set targets at all. Who will do what if they do not set targets?

Mr. Dorrell: I have set out what seems to me to be a proper standard to apply in the management of the public sector. If the PAC examines a unit and finds that, against that standard, targets should have been set but were not, that is a legitimate subject of criticism. I do not see how the management of any organisation can be effectively delivered if the managers do not know the objectives to which their organisation is supposed to be directed.

The decisions on appropriate performance targets for agencies and non-departmental public bodies should normally be taken in the context of the corporate planning cycle. The Treasury is encouraging Departments, agencies and the NDPBs to develop their planning process as a management tool. We recognise, however, that strategic and corporate plans should reflect the needs of the organisation and that no single model is suitable for application to every public body.

Reference has been made more than once during the debate to the proper control of money spent by NDPBs. The bodies are set up, usually by statute, with the deliberate intention that they should operate at arm's length from Government. That does not mean, however, that the standards of control over their use of public money should be any less rigorous. The key point is that the responsibilities and the authority of all managers should be clearly set out, and the Treasury is working to ensure that that happens.

That clearly did not happen to the extent that we would all have wished in the case which has perhaps detained the House most—that of the Development Board for Rural Wales. The amounts of money involved were relatively small in the wider public expenditure context but, by any definition, that was a sorry tale of mismanagement, which was recognised as such by the relevant Department. Action has been taken to ensure that the lapses that were revealed by the PAC's work are being addressed. The Treasury has recently written to departmental accounting officers drawing their attention to the need for strict compliance with the terms and conditions under which grant-in-aid payments are made.

There is also the question of the responsibility of board members of the NDPBs. About a quarter of the total of nearly 1,500 NDPBs have a board of equivalent responsible organisation. The responsibilities of those boards vary greatly, so it falls to the sponsoring Department to issue definitive guidance to each NDPB within its sphere of responsibility. In the context of the Welsh board, the Welsh Office has already written to its NDPBs ensuring that that definitive guidance is available to them.

Mr. Tim Smith: On that point, which arose during our inquiry into the Development Board for Rural Wales, is my hon. Friend satisfied that, every time some one is appointed as a board member of one of those quangos, his full responsibilities are explained to him?

Mr. Dorrell: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend that it should be part of good discipline to ensure that that happens. I have given the figures to the House. There are 1,500 of those bodies. I cannot personally undertake the training of every new member of a board. However, I agree with my hon. Friend that, when they join the board, new board members should be told the responsibilities and the purpose that they are taking on.

Mr. Barry Jones: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Dorrell: I shall give way once more, but I should then proceed, as I have been asked several questions.

Mr. Jones: Is the same chairman of the development board still in office?

Mr. Dorrell: The answer is yes. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Because my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales believes that, despite that lapse which the chairman concerned has recognised, he is the best man to carry out that responsibility.

Mr. Shersby: Will my hon. Friend tell the House why the permanent secretary of the Welsh Office is still in office?

Mr. Dorrell: Although I have acknowledged that that tale is a very sorry saga of mismanagement, it is also important to be clear about the extent of the ultimate financial cost, because the—*[Interruption.]* I make absolutely no apology for the mismanagement that took place, but the impropriety—that is to say, the payment which was not cleared through the appropriate channels, as the Committee's report makes clear—was the £15,000-odd payment for holiday back pay. There were a series of other inadequacies in the arrangements, but I do not believe—this is clearly the judgment that has also been reached by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on the appointment of the chairman—that that mismanagement, that lapse, was by itself a reason for a change of personnel at the top.

I now refer to the points that the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne made about fraud in defence establishments. He was absolutely right to stress the importance of rooting out fraud in order to maintain our traditional high standards of honesty within the public service. He described that as not taking the majority of the Committee's time but being perhaps the most important individual element of the Committee's work. The right hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East stressed the obvious absurdity of asserting that there is an invariable policy of dismissing employees found guilty of fraud and then, when asking how many have actually been dismissed, being told that it is 45 per cent., which means that the exceptions constitute the majority of actual cases.

The right hon. Gentleman asked me what has happened to follow up that report and revelation. I am advised that, following the PAC's criticism of the Ministry of Defence for the high proportion of cases involving civilians in which the policy of invariable dismissal was not enforced, the Department has issued fresh internal instructions. They restate the policy of dismissal and identify factors which in future will not be accepted in mitigation, the implication being that in the past they have been accepted in circumstances where in future they will not be. Such circumstances are listed as ignorance of regulations, the claim or plea that it is custom and practice, the suggestion that the amount involved was relatively low, and previous long and good service. Those claims have been made in the past to justify continuance in office. We have made it clear that that is no longer acceptable.

Mr. Sheldon: That is obviously a very important matter. Once custom and practice is allowed as a reason for not dismissing a person, of course that tendency can spread. Before one knows where one is, one is in a South American situation.

Mr. Dorrell: That is precisely why custom and practice is listed as a reason for dismissing. We shall not allow it as

[Mr. Dorrell]

the basis of a plea of mitigation. I entirely agree with my distinguished predecessor, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne.

There was a clear failure in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1989-90. Several hon. Members stressed that the report on that failure was perhaps the most serious of the batch of reports in terms of its effect on the morale and prestige of the Department. They said that it was the most threatening report of the batch. While I stress that the breakdown revealed in the PAC report on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was extremely serious, it is important that the House should know the ultimate outcome of the final reconciliation of the accounts of the Foreign Office.

Once all the figures had been traced to the satisfaction of the Comptroller and Auditor General, it emerged that, far from money going astray—as it undoubtedly could have done as a result of inadequate control—the books were finally made to balance with a remaining balancing item of £149,000 credit rather than debit. So the public have the assurance that, although the disciplines were not as they should have been on that occasion, there was no evidence on the surface of a major cost to public funds.

More importantly, the managers involved learned the lessons of the failures of financial discipline which were revealed. That is why there has been a substantial tightening up of project management in the Foreign Office. It now gives us the undertaking that it uses the preferred systems recommended by the CCTA, to which several hon. Members referred. Management control has been strengthened by the appointment of an additional assistant head of the finance department to supervise accounts work.

Several hon. Members, including the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, stressed that continuity had been improved by replacing mobile diplomatic staff with home civil servants when diplomatic staff are posted overseas. That programme has been reinforced following the recent relocation of accounts work from central London to Hounslow Park. The Foreign Office recognises, as indeed the Treasury and the Government recognise, that the lapse in the accounts was extremely regrettable and must under no circumstances be allowed to happen again.

In the time available, I shall take the case of Rover as an example to illustrate a more general principle. I was asked several times during the debate to ensure that we learned the lessons of previous privatisation experience. I entirely agree with the proposition that the Government and, indeed, the House must learn the lessons of previous privatisation experience. Let us remember all the lessons, not just a selection of them.

Let us remember that, in the Rover case, privatisation delivered the public sector from a £1·6 billion contingent liability. In the three years after privatisation, Rover returned consistent profits, exports increased from 29 per cent. of its output to 50 per cent. and productivity increased from 18 cars per employee to 35 cars. That is all part of the lessons of privatisation. I am strongly in favour of learning lessons, but I am in favour of learning all lessons, not simply a selection of them.

There are other procedural lessons from earlier privatisations. One lesson is the need for maximum competition when we sell undertakings. The Government have always taken the view, and they continue to take the view wherever it is practical and consistent with sound objectives, that full and open competition maximises the value for the taxpayer. That remains our policy for both trade sales and flotations, but the Government do not rule out proceeding with sales where there is limited competition or where the balance of interests suggests that the Government's objectives will best be served by a more limited negotiation. The purpose of privatisation is twofold: first and foremost, to secure an improvement in performance; and secondly, as part of securing improved performance, to ensure that we deliver the best value to taxpayers on the sale of the assets.

I commend the PAC for its work. It has once again revealed lapses which we need to remedy and its continued work is a continued guarantee to the taxpayer both of value for money and financial probity in the public services.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the 36th to 43rd Reports of the Committee of Public Accounts of Session 1990-91, of the 1st to 24th Reports of Session 1991-92, of the 1st to 11th Reports of Session 1992-93, and of the Treasury Minutes and Northern Ireland Department of Finance and Personnel Memoranda on those Reports (Cm. 1725, 1784, 1798, 1819, 1865, 1856, 1949, 1998 and 2074), with particular reference to the following Reports:

Session 1990-91
- Thirty-sixth, Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Qualification of accounts, 1989-90;
- Thirty-seventh, Fraud and irregularities at defence establishments;

Session 1991-92
- First, Sale of Rover Group to British Aerospace plc;
- Third Management of road maintenance;
- Twenty-second, PSA Services accounts 1990-91;

Session 1992-93
- Seventh, Sale of the water authorities in England and Wales.

PETITIONS

Great Northern and East Lincolnshire Railway plc

10 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I beg leave to present a humble petition from the members and supporters of the Great Northern and East Lincolnshire Railway plc and the Grimsby-Louth Railway Society in the counties of Humberside and Lincolnshire. It is a petition against the Peakes parkway scheme to convert disused railway into a road. The petition showeth:

> An Acquisition of Land Act 1981 public notice appeared in our local Grimsby *Evening Telegraph* dated August 6th 1992. It empowered Humberside county council to compulsorily purchase land in order to construct a new railway . . . (Peakes Parkway). In schedule 1, section 10 of the above notice, 600 square metres—part of grassed area adjacent to existing footway in Recreation Ground between disused railway land—formally known as "The East Lincs Main Line" and Doughty Road is to be compulsorily purchased from Grimsby Borough Council by Humberside County Council.
>
> The said plot is 'open space' land for which the Council propose not to give land in exchange, as required by section 19 of the Acquisition of Land Act 1981.
>
> We, the supporters and members of the Railway Company and Railway Society, who, due to the imminent construction of the above-mentioned road . . . are deeply concerned about our future environment, strongly object to this further encroachment on land.
>
> Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will urge the Humberside County Council not to proceed with the said compulsory purchase order and so preserve this open space land to be safely enjoyed by both present and future generations.

The petition is signed by Christopher Leonard Birchmore, Douglas Chapman and 31 others.

To lie upon the Table.

Pit Closures

10.2 pm

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of thousands of my constituents. It states:

> To the honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland assembled.
>
> The humble petition of the inhabitants of the Jarrow constituency sheweth that the present plans of British Coal to close 31 pits with 31,000 job losses, in particular Westoe colliery which will, if closed, throw 1,200 miners on the industrial scrap heap. This short-term policy will be to the long-term detriment of Jarrow constituency and the nation.

If Westoe colliery closes—it is the fourth largest colliery in south Tyneside—the male unemployment rate in south Tyneside will be more than 25 per cent. One third of those people will have been out of work for more than 12 months. The petition concludes with the words:

> Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will take measures to stop those plans going ahead, resulting in so much social and economic hardship for thousands of families.
>
> And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

10.3 pm

Mr. Bill Olner (Nuneaton): I beg leave to present a petition. It states:

> To the honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.
>
> The humble petition is in the name of M. Tandy and 4,817 of my constituents. It
>
> sheweth that the present plans of British Coal to close 31 pits with 31,000 job losses will be to the detriment of the Warwickshire Coalfield and the nation.

The signatures were collected during a few hours at Nuneaton town centre last Saturday and they show the depth of feeling of those people and many others of my constituents. The petition concludes:

> Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will take measures to stop those plans going ahead, which will result in so much social and economic hardship for thousands of families.
>
> And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

10.4 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I present a petition signed by thousands of my constituents who oppose the Government's proposals to close 31 pits with the loss of 31,000 jobs, particularly Westoe colliery in my constituency. Those who have signed the petition regard the proposals to write off our coal reserves and obtain future energy supplies from imported coal and gas as short-sighted, foolish and economically incompetent.

The petitioners are particularly worried about plans to close Westoe colliery in South Shields, with the loss of 1,200 jobs. They are alarmed at the effect of the closure on the local economy, especially as the unemployment rate in South Tyneside is the highest in Great Britain and is currently in excess of 18 per cent.

The petition concludes:

> Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourabe House will take measures to stop these plans going ahead which will result in so much social and economic hardship for thousands of families.

To lie upon the Table.

10.5 pm

Mr. Bill Etherington (Sunderland, North): I wish to present a petition on behalf of my constituents. It states:

> To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.
>
> The Humble Petition of the residents of the City of Sunderland and surrounding areas
>
> Sheweth
>
> That the recent announcement of pit closures has filled the people of the City of Sunderland with deep concern because of the consequential loss of employment for miners. They are also concerned because of the possible effect on ancillary industries.
>
> Eight thousand, four hundred and forty two of these people have expressed their concern by signing this petition.

I am proud to present the petition on behalf of my constituents, and fully support what they say. Wearmouth is under threat in a district where there is already male unemployment of 21·7 per cent.

The petition continues:

> Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House carefully consider the case for the recently announced pit closures. We also ask that the closures should not proceed unless and until they have been shown to be economically and socially justified. And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Land Travel

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

10.6 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I wish to describe an appalling incident—the collapse of Land Travel, which was Bath-based and one of the biggest coach tour operators in the country. It left debts of millions of pounds, 2,500 people stranded on coach tours, and 40,000 people with lost deposits. The incident affects many hon. Members. In Grimsby, a party of 20 men, women and children from Dunlop Oil Marine who were travelling to Paris and Eurodisney had their tour cancelled hours before departure. They lost £2,000, the money that they paid for a trip down the Seine, and the money paid for their entrance to Eurodisney.

This appalling failure is an example of the Government's do-nothing regulation. They fail to regulate holiday travel and the company sector. They fail to intervene to protect the consumer. The Government believe in a hands-off approach unless they want to ram-raid the coal industry, when they suddenly take a hands-on approach. The Government intervened in the Land Travel affair only when the chairman of Boston Conservative club complained about the terms of the trip on which his members were being sent.

Opposition Members have been asking for more than a decade for the proper regulation of the holiday market. We have been asking for the protection of investors' funds and holidaymakers' funds, and for bonding to insure against failure. Only now, after all those years of pushing for proper bonding and protection, have the Government been prompted into action by a European Community directive. It is disgraceful that the Government took so long to do so. Even now they are providing only the minimum, with a scheme which has no central licensing, no proper control and no proactive intervention and which will not provide effective protection.

On the issue of the protection of holidaymakers I have two questions for the Minister. What took so long? Can the Minister guarantee that the new system will prevent people from losing money in future as they did in the Land Travel incident? Will it provide protection in all circumstances? The travel trade is in for a rough time. Things will be extremely difficult and there will be more company failures and problems.

This brings me to company regulations and the sector generally. In the case of Land Travel, all the warning signs of disaster were present. The travel trade expected imminent collapse. The company had been run irresponsibly and had been facing chronic problems since 1983. It was not paying its bills. It had been prosecuted by trading standards officers. My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) supplied the Government with a list of 18 warning signs that something was going drastically wrong. That was well before the collapse, but the Minister and the Department did nothing.

I should like to pick out just two areas of failure. First, the accounts of Land Travel were persistently late. They were late in 1983, 1984, 1987 and 1988, and in 1989 and 1990 they were illegally late—and the Government still did nothing. Accountancy research shows a close correlation between the lateness of accounts and companies collapsing. It is a warning sign that something is going disastrously wrong, yet the Government do nothing and feel no responsibility even to enforce reporting requirements. Why was nothing done while it was becoming the company's habit to put in late accounts?

The second major area of failure concerns the continual qualification of the accounts by the company's auditors. In 1986, 1987 and 1988, Shaw and Company expressed serious reservations. As for the 1990 accounts, Price Waterhouse reported debts of £2·1 million, of which £1·5 million was not recoverable. It refused to approve the accounts and was of the opinion that the company was not a going concern. If Price Waterhouse had taken a full-page advertisement in *Accountancy Age* and screamed the news from the top of one of the minarets of BCCI it could not have done more to draw attention to the imminent failure of this company.

Why did the Government take no notice when all this evidence was pouring in? What are qualifications on accounts for? Who is supposed to act on them; who is supposed to invigilate them? Why does nothing happen when accounts are qualified in this way?

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): As the hon. Gentleman will know, Land Travel's headquarters were in my constituency. Many hon. Members will know that many people in my constituency have suffered because of the collapse of the company—not only customers but employees of Land Travel.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman shares my pleasure at the fact that a number of former employees of Land Travel who were in no way implicated in the collapse have formed a new company, Tours Direct, which I hope will provide a good service. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman shares my considerable concern at the fact that the former managing director of Land Travel, Mr. Valere Tjolle, made no attempt to answer creditors at the creditors' meeting or subsequently. Although we welcome the inquiry that Baroness Denton has set up, because of the possibility that it will find the Government culpable and hence make possible compensation for those who lost out, there should also be a detailed inquiry into the company's trading practices so that lessons can be learned which will benefit other similar companies and prevent similar collapses. I assure the hon. Gentleman of my full support for his remarks.

Mr. Mitchell: I agree with what the hon. Gentleman says about an inquiry. The one that we have is pathetic and inadequate; it should be more substantial and more effective.

As for former employees—whom are company accounts for? Employees cannot rely on them, consumers cannot rely on them, so whom are they intended to inform? Why does no one see to it that action follows when accounts are seriously amiss?

If the Government claim that people should have known from the accounts that something was wrong, why do not they require travel companies to display their latest profit and loss accounts and most recent bank statements in the office, just as banks are required to display them, and have been since 1879? During proceedings on the Companies Act 1989, we pressed for severe fines for late accounts. Nothing was done; the Government turned down the idea and refused to do anything about it. I have pressed in articles and in parliamentary questions to the

Minister that the DTI should examine samples of accounts, that he should look at accounts qualified by the auditors and ensure some sort of enforcement procedure so that companies legislation requirements are complied with at Companies house. The answer was always no. The Government do not want to know or to do anything.

Alarm bells should have rung at the Department. Bills were unpaid, the company was trading insolvent, it had a series of fines under trades description legislation and massive debts. But the Government turned a Nelsonian eye to all that, and no one else was responsible for doing anything about it. Why was the company left in that situation?

We need a new Companies Act to provide for proper regulation in this area. There is no point in relying on the requirements for directors, because directors can be crooks. I do not say that that was the case in this instance, but it is curious that a director paid himself £463,000 in four months just before the company went bankrupt. There is something funny there.

Why did not the Government put in DTI inspectors and stop this company trading before all those people lost so much money? The Minister has the powers and can act on substantial information, and the state of the accounts was that substantial information. He should have acted. He had been continuously warned and all the symptoms of disaster were there.

I conclude with two questions to the Minister. Why, after all that time and all the warnings, did he or the Department not act; and, having failed in a pathetic, inadequate fashion, why does he argue that he does not now owe compensation to the people who have lost money? He does.

10.16 pm

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): I shall concentrate on one aspect of the matter, the role of the insurance company, General Accident.

This whole affair is a story of fraud and deception in which thousands of people, including many of my constituents, had their holiday dreams shattered. People such as Mr. and Mrs. Dalby of Carleton Road in Colne lost £500 of their hard-earned money. They were conned into believing that the holidays that they were buying were comprehensively insured and underwritten by one of the insurance giants, General Accident. The price of the holiday specifically included insurance cover, but we now know that the policies were not worth the paper on which they were written.

The travel insurance document, which had the General Accident logo prominent on the cover, gave the appearance of solidity and reliability. Nowhere in the small print did it even suggest the possibility of the company folding. That was not listed in the scheme of general exclusions which included war, invasion, rebellion and so on.

Land Travel required that all its customers be comprehensively insured

"for their own benefit and to avoid expense and disappointment".

However, 24 hours before the collapse of Land Travel became public knowledge, General Accident, in a nifty piece of footwork, withdrew all its insurance cover. One of my local papers, the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph*, was told by General Accident four days ago that it withdrew following a lengthy dispute with Land Travel and not because of any prior knowledge that the firm would collapse. If General Accident expects us to believe that, it must think that we all have pointed heads.

I have several questions for General Accident. What is its responsibility to the thousands of people who paid Land Travel in good faith and on the strength of the General Accident connection? Is that insurance company prepared to underwrite any old fly-by-night operator? What checks did General Accident run on Land Travel? Did it check at Companies house? Does it still underwrite holidays from firms that are trading outside the ABTA umbrella? When did the company first realise that Land Travel was going down the tube, and does it take any responsibility for the misery that has been caused to so many of my constituents?

To date, the silence of General Accident has been deafening. I want a statement from that major insurance company; and, what is more to the point, I want my constituents to get their money back.

10.19 pm

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): It is our contention that the previous Minister with responsibility for consumer affairs, the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), failed, in 1991, properly to investigate a grave complaint about Land Travel. His failure permitted the company to continue to trade when it was, in effect, insolvent until its collapse a year later robbed 40,000 people of their holidays and holiday payments.

On 14 August 1991, the then Minister received a letter from the Boston Conservative club. It had examined Land Travel's books, which revealed many adverse financial factors about the company, including £560,000 of debts, an illegal failure to file accounts and the fact that it was not a member of ABTA and therefore held no insurance to protect its customers in the event of collapse.

The hon. Gentleman made only the most superficial check, confirmed that the accounts had not been filed within the legal time scale and took no further action. In fact, his Department then lost that letter. If the then Minister had only used his powers, and had the inspectors spent only a few hours investigating the company's accounts, they would have found all the warning signs. Serious reservations were expressed by the auditors from 1983 onwards, and the latest accounts showed the company to have £1·5 million worth of irrecoverable debt. There was a whole host of other adverse financial factors. Had the Minister acted then, inspectors would have wound up the company.

The then Minister's inaction had devastating consequences on 40,000 people, including church groups, school parties, social clubs and many families and individuals who had booked holidays with a near-bankrupt company that the Minister failed to investigate.

Some 101 Members have signed early-day motion 562, which calls for an inquiry into the Government's handling of this matter, not just into the loss of that letter—the inquiry mentioned by the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster)—and to consider compensation. The only person involved in this sorry saga who did not lose is the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle, yet he has not had the courtesy to come here tonight to explain his inaction. He should resign without delay, and his successor

[Mr. Nigel Griffiths]

should ensure that there is an independent investigation into this fiasco. If not, the Opposition will continue to press for justice for the victims of this company's collapse.

10.22 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Neil Hamilton): I shall beguile the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) by informing him that this is the first time that I have spoken from the Dispatch Box, and the first time that I have made a speech in the Chamber since June 1990, when I pointed out the circumstances in which the exchange rate mechanism would collapse. I am not sure that I shall carry him much further with the speech that I shall now make.

I recognise that many hon. Members are greatly concerned about the collapse of Land Travel and I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing this Adjournment debate. In the nine years that I have been in the House, I have never been successful in securing such a debate, but I am sure that, when I return to the Back Benches in due course, I will have more success.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby has raised an important and topical subject, and if I do not agree with all that he has said, I still congratulate him on the force with which he has, as usual, made his case. I also congratulate the other hon. Members who have participated in the debate. I shall begin by speaking about the general issue of regulation of the travel industry and then deal with the specific issue of Land Travel.

The package travel industry is unusual in that it commonly requires payment in advance—usually some weeks in advance—of the full cost of the package that the customer has purchased. The customer is accordingly more than usually dependent upon the skill, the honesty and, above all, the solvency of his supplier. At the same time, there is vigorous competition in the package travel industry. That is not a bad thing. As the Minister responsible for competition, I think that it is a good thing. It means that the customer is getting a good deal.

We should not lose sight of the fact that package holidays in the United Kingdom offer value for money as good as any in the world. However, the keenness of competition in the industry means that firms must work to narrow margins. This inevitably increases the risk of companies finding that they have over-committed themselves and cannot continue.

If a company becomes insolvent in the middle of the holiday season, customers who have paid for their holidays but have not received them are likely to lose their money. The sums of money involved are likely to be substantial, at least to the individuals concerned. People may save all year for their holiday, and if they lose their money they may be in no position to buy another. So I fully accept the importance of the issue that has been raised.

The need to protect consumers in this situation has long been recognised, and was tackled by a combination of both Government regulation and private sector initiative. On the Government side, there came into being the air travel organisers licence system, under which all purchasers of air charter seats are protected by the operators being required to take out a compulsory bond for which, if the bonding level proves inadequate, there is the air travel trust fund in reserve.

For the private sector, a number of trade associations from the travel industry, notably the Association of British Travel Agents, set up their own customer protection schemes. The ABTA scheme was particularly comprehensive, in that not only did ABTA give an undertaking that no customer should suffer loss as a result of failure of a member, but, because for overseas travel ABTA operators are permitted to sell only through ABTA retailers and vice versa, the coverage of that membership has become extremely wide. It now encompasses the great majority of travel agents and operators who sell through travel agents.

But its coverage is not complete. In particular, it does not embrace all the many small—and some not so small—operators that deal directly with the public. Some of these operators are covered by other voluntary schemes. But I fully accept that many are not, and, as we have seen in the recent unfortunate case of Land Travel, this can mean substantial numbers of people being left without compensation in the event of an insolvency.

This is a clearly an unsatisfactory situation. The problem of the solvency of package tour operators is not of course unique to the United Kingdom and the Commission of the European Communities for which I know the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) harbours warm feelings, took the lead in preparing and submitting to the Council of Ministers the draft directive on package travel. The United Kingdom Government fully supported the broad thrust of the package travel directive, and it was adopted unanimously by the Council of Ministers in June 1990. It is required to be adopted in the law of member states by the end of this year. The draft directive throws its net very wide. It includes, for example, business packages, packages organised on a voluntary basis, and packages which do not involve travel. It requires member states to have measures requiring sufficient evidence of security for the refund of moneys paid over for a package.

The package travel directive does, however, do much more than require organisers or retailers of packages to have security for pre-payments. It requires them, for example, to have in place arrangements for repatriation should this prove necessary. It regulates the content of brochures and specific information that must be given to the customer before he enters into a contract.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hamilton: I do not have time to give way. It is important that we place the example that hon. Members have raised and our concerns about it in the context of both the legislation that is about to supervene and the present situation.

The directive regulates the contents of brochures and specific information that must be given to the customer before he enters into a contract. It regulates the content of the contract, and requires that the customer be given a copy. It restricts the extent to which operators may impose surcharges after the contract has been concluded. It lays down requirements regarding the performance of the contract, notably in requiring that the operator accepts strict liability for its performance.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman knows that there is a limited time for me to reply. I wish to respond to the issues that have been raised by hon. Members in the——

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. What does the Minister's reply have to do with the 40,000 people who have lost their money?

Madam Speaker: The Minister is responsible for what he is saying.

Mr. Hamilton: I remind the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) that the debate is about regulation of the travel industry and Land Travel. I am referring to the regulation of the travel industry, which includes Land Travel. I shall take up the instant case that the hon. Gentleman and others are concerned about.

The package travel directive regulates the content of the contract, and requires that the customer be given a copy. It restricts the extent to which operators may impose surcharges after the contract has been concluded. It provides protections which have not been available in the past but which will be available in future to prevent situations arising in which, in some circumstances in the past, customers have lost money. In future, it will provide some protection for them.

It means that the operator will no longer be able to blame, for example, an hotel if a promised swimming pool does not materialise. Many of the requirements—for example, the giving of accurate information and proper performance of the contract—are already part of United Kingdom law, but others go further. The creation of a body of regulation aimed specifically at the package travel industry will, I am sure, do much to raise the standards of all operators towards those that are already observed by the best.

Implementation of the package travel directive has been thoroughly discussed——

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hamilton: I apologise. I shall not be able to answer the specific points on Land Travel if I continue to give way to hon. Members—*[Interruption.]*—or if I am forced to do so on points of order.

The position is that the consultation period ended last week, and we will now go ahead and finalise the implementing regulations which we hope to lay before Parliament in time for them to be debated before the Christmas recess.

I shall not attempt to describe here the many points of controvery that have arisen during the discussions on the implementation of the directive. We have listened, I hope with an open mind, to a wide variety of views. Inevitably, the decisions that we have taken have not pleased everybody. Some wanted us to go further in implementing regulations than the strict requirements of the directive. Except in the important area of surcharges, we have generally resisted that pressure. Others sought exemption from the requirements of the directive altogether, and we have had to explain that that is not within our power.

There is, however, one important issue which I would like to deal with specifically—the question whether the requirements of the directive regarding protection against insolvency should be enforced by the setting up of a compulsory licensing authority, to which the hon. Member for Great Grimsby referred. That was urged upon us by both consumer interests and the main trade associations involved in the industry. They pointed to the successful example of the ATOL system in the case of travel by air charter, and suggested that it be duplicated by a parallel authority for non-air charter packages.

After a great deal of thought, we rejected that solution because, though we recognised that there were arguments in its favour, it would have meant the creation of a body which would have been both expensive and bureaucratic. The parallel with the ATOL system is misleading. ATOL holders are a fairly small group of companies of broadly common structure and purpose, though they do of course vary greatly in size. The number and variety of those that would have been embraced by a licensing system for packages not covered by the ATOL system would have been very much greater. The average size of operators would also have been very much smaller.

We concluded that the expense and burden of a licensing system would far outweigh any advantages that it might bring, bearing in mind that, ultimately, the bearers of the expense would be the purchasers of the package holiday. That remains our view. It needs to be remembered that the entire cost of a licensing body would necessarily have fallen on those regulated by it, and that the cost would have to be met before, and in addition to, the cost of providing security for pre-payments.

The Government's aim is to reduce the burdens upon industry, not to increase them. We aim to encourage consumer choice, not to restrict it. We aim to encourage enterprise, not to block it with bureaucratic hurdles. For all those reasons, we reject the hon. Gentleman's licensing solution, though we recognise and respect the genuinely held views of those who have argued otherwise.

That brings me finally to the case of Land Travel. Land Travel was not a member of ABTA or of any other trade association. It had no security for the payments made to it and, when it became insolvent, many customers lost their money. I recognise that it is small consolation to those who lost money as a result of Land Travel's collapse that the package travel directive to be implemented shortly should reduce such instances in future.

The hon. Gentleman argued that, because the Department of Trade and Industry had in its possession certain information regarding Land Travel, it is in some way responsible for Land Travel's collapse and should therefore pay compensation to those who lost money. I must make it clear that, much though the Government regret the loss that many people have suffered, and we all have constituents in that position, they do not consider that there would be any justification for paying compensation from public funds.

The hon. Gentleman's argument betrays—if I may say so for such an expert in company law—a misunderstanding of the role and responsibilities of my Department towards the corporate sector. In the first place, whatever we may do, it is not in our power to prevent companies from becoming insolvent. The Department of Trade and Industry has in any event no general monitoring role in relation to companies. We do have certain powers of investigation to which the hon. Gentleman referred, when we have good reason—for example, evidence of fraud or misconduct—but the availability of those powers cannot prevent insolvencies occuring and is not intended to.

In view of the allegations made by the hon. Gentleman I propose to set out the facts in some detail. In August 1991, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for

[Mr. Hamilton]

Technology, the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) had forwarded to him a letter from the Boston Conservative club. The letter drew attention ot the fact that the company's 1988 accounts showed that the company had an excess of liabilities over assets and complained that more recent accounts ought to have been filed. Land Travel's 1988 accounts were not qualified by the company's auditors. The letter was referred to Companies house to answer as a late filing complaint, and Companies house said in reply that the accounts up to March 1990 had been filed and placed on the public record.

It is a requirement of the law that company accounts should be filed with Companies house within the prescribed period, but Companies house is not responsible for scrutinising accounts beyond ensuring that they meet the main statutory requirements—such as including a profit and loss account, balance sheet, reports by directors and auditors, and so on.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby asked whom the accounts are intended to inform. The purpose of filing accounts is to inform the shareholders and the general public of the company's financial position. In recent months, we introduced a system of fines for failure to satisfy the obligation in the Companies Act 1989 to file accounts within 10 months from the end of the company's financial year. The responsibilities of Companies house are limited to ensuring that accounts are filed in a form that appears to comply with statutory requirements and that they are filed in due time.

Companies house has neither the means nor the power to examine company accounts and thus perform the functions that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby invites. If we were to impose that obligation, Companies house would have a large compliance burden, which would prejudice the proper performance of all the functions it has performed hitherto.

Companies house can and does take action against companies that fail to meet statutory requirements, but that is all. It is for company shareholders and creditors to take such action as they may see fit, on the basis of information contained in the accounts.

I regret very much the loss suffered by many who could ill afford that loss as a result of Land Travel's collapse. The Government are addressing the gap in consumer protection that the collapse highlighted, and we hope that the regulations that we shall shortly lay before Parliament to implement the package travel directive will serve to prevent a repetition of that regrettable occurrence. However, the Government cannot——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-four minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 29 October 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (GREEN PARK) BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 5 November.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Cross-border Security

1. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on cross-border security co-operation between the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Michael Mates): The Irish Government share our determination that terrorism will not prevail and we work closely with them to ensure that co-operation on the ground is close. Much has been achieved, but more needs to be done and will be done. Both Governments are committed to securing improvements wherever possible.

Mr. Townsend: I thank my hon. Friend for his encouraging reply. Bearing in mind the increased importance of the intelligence services in London in the fight against the IRA, has co-operation with the south been improved as a result? Can he confirm to the House that intelligence from the Irish Republic has helped with the recent finds of explosives in London?

Mr. Mates: It is obviously difficult for me to share intelligence matters with the House and my hon. Friend, but I can tell him that co-operation between the intelligence services of the republic and ourselves has never been as good as it is now and that it is getting better all the time. That is reflected in the major finds that have been made in the republic of some of the arms and explosives that went there from Libya. Most notable of all is the increase in the information that we are getting in Northern Ireland and Great Britain from the public, who are as fed up as we are with this mindless terrorism.

Mr. Molyneaux: Have the Irish Government given any undertakings to introduce legislation to control those of their citizens who illegally reopen closed frontier crossings, particularly on the north Monaghan-south Tyrone terrorist supply route into the United Kingdom?

Mr. Mates: We continue to have to face that problem. As far as I know, the Irish Government have no intention of legislating on it, but together we are trying to find ways of getting rid of that nuisance.

Mr. Wilkinson: Will my hon. and gallant Friend consider having talks with his counterparts in the Home Office in London about the desirability of requiring all British citizens of the United Kingdom to carry identity cards and citizens of the Republic of Ireland to carry passports when they come to this country?

Mr. Mates: I can tell my hon. Friend with some relief that both those matters are for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, not for my Department.

Mr. Madden: But the Minister must have a view on that important matter. Will he confirm that Her Majesty's Government are seeking to amend the common travel area agreement between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom? What effect will that have on those travelling between those two countries? Are there any plans to increase frontier controls between the republic and the north after the advent of the single market next year?

Mr. Mates: I do not believe that there are any plans to change the present common travel area arrangements. To do so would be an immensely complex task, given the large number of Irish citizens who live in this country and who come and go between here and the republic, as they always have. There will be no change to border controls once the single market comes into effect. Such controls as we have are for security reasons, not for trade reasons. We shall be able to continue those in the same way as we do now.

Higher Education

2. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many students are entering higher education in Northern Ireland this year.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): It is estimated that around 14,400 new students will enter higher education in Northern Ireland institutions this year and 4,000 Northern Ireland students will enter higher education institutions in Great Britain.

Mr. Marshall: I thank my hon. Friend for his answer, which demonstrates that the doom-laden forecasts about the impact of student loans were completely inaccurate. Is the percentage of students entering higher education in Northern Ireland greater than in the United Kingdom as a whole?

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend is right. The total amount of money now available to students is 40 per cent. greater than in 1989-90, before student loans were introduced. The participation rate in Northern Ireland is extremely high: some 32 per cent. of those who are eligible for higher education take it up, as opposed to only 23 per cent. in Great Britain.

Mr. Beggs: Will the Minister confirm that £4 million per annum of United Kingdom public expenditure is provided to pay for tuition grants for students from the Republic of Ireland to attend United Kingdom universities? Will he confirm that there is no reciprocal arrangement with the Irish Republic? What steps are being taken to remove that anomaly? Does that expenditure reduce the amount of money that is available for education expenditure in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman raises an important point. It is true that, in the forthcoming year, almost 2,400 students from the republic will be educated in Northern Ireland's higher education establishments. Under European Community regulations, we offer mandatory grants to allow anybody who comes to Northern Ireland to enjoy higher education. The republic does not offer mandatory grants and therefore does not have the same obligation to pay students. Understandably, many fewer students from Northern Ireland take up higher education in the south. We in Northern Ireland uphold our obligations, and are proud to do so. I assure the hon. Gentleman that there is no shortage of higher education places in Northern Ireland because of the attendance of students from elsewhere in the European Community. As our participation rate is higher, the number of people who participate is much higher than in other parts of Great Britain. I am pleased to tell the hon. Gentleman that student numbers are being maintained and that we shall continue our obligations.

Mr. McGrady: Is the Minister aware that many students who enter secondary education come from families who can ill afford the extra necessities that that prolonged education requires? It is rumoured that the education and maintenance allowance, which the Minister knows is means-tested, is to be withdrawn. Will he confirm that that is not true and that the allowance will continue to enable students to benefit from further and higher education?

Mr. Hanley: Although next year's funding arrangements have yet to be decided, I do not imagine that maintenance grants will be removed entirely. Indeed, that benefit for students is an important part of education in Northern Ireland. We shall continue with our obligations.

United States

3. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he has taken to reduce the support received by terrorists from citizens of the United States.

Mr. Mates: Our posts in the United States have made great efforts to reduce financial support for the IRA. The signs are that financial support to terrorist groups has declined, but our efforts continue. On the other hand, United States' contributions to bodies such as the International Fund for Ireland continue to make a major impact for good, particularly in disadvantaged areas.

Dr. Spink: I welcome those positive statistics. Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating the security forces on their recent success in the east end of London? What efforts is my hon. Friend taking to ensure that terrorists' sources of financial support, wherever they may be, are cut off?

Mr. Mates: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for mentioning the explosives finds, which will have brought much relief to those who feared more bombing on the mainland. Let us hope that we have put an end to that for the moment. My hon. Friend rightly said that it is vital that we cut off the terrorists' sources of finance. A special unit in the Northern Ireland Office is devoted to doing just that and the fraud squad, special branch and the Royal Ulster Constabulary are working as hard as they can to stop not only the inward flow of funds but some of the rackets and illegal activities that are taking place in Northern Ireland, by which terrorists finance their campaigns.

Mr. Trimble: I am sure that the Minister will agree that the anti-racketeering squad of the RUC has had significant successes in reducing the flow of funds—to such an extent, we are led to believe, that the IRA is now having difficulty in financing its terrorist operations in this part of the United Kingdom. Does he agree that, in the light of that fact, it is especially important that effective action is taken in the United States, especially by United States Government agencies? In that context, does the Minister further agree that it is regrettable that there is a Republican candidate in the election who openly backs terrorist organisations?

Mr. Mates: I agree with everything in the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question. As to what is taking place in the United States, we certainly must, and we will, continue our campaign to persuade United States citizens that what some of them believe is aid for humanitarian causes is nothing of the sort, but is aid to terrorists. Through our posts there, through visits by Ministers and by a general climate of persuading the United States to understand the problem in Northern Ireland, we seek to reduce that source of funds and eventually to eliminate it.

Sir James Kilfedder: Part of Main street in Bangor, in the heart of my constituency, was blasted by an IRA car bomb last week. Fortunately, no one was killed. Will my hon. Friend confirm that many of the victims of IRA terrorism over the past 20 years—people who have been killed or maimed—have suffered as a result of money contributed to the IRA cause by American supporters? As my hon. Friend suggested earlier, perhaps he will tell people in America that the best way to help the people of Northern Ireland is to contribute to organisations that do good and which bring peace to those people.

Mr. Mates: I entirely agree. We have made great strides in persuading our friends in the United States that the money must be properly directed to organisations such as the International Fund for Ireland, which I have already mentioned. My hon. Friend is right to say that without funds the terrorists would not be able to wreak their havoc. That is why we shall continue to make it a top priority to cut them off from funds, from whichever source those funds come.

Bill of Rights

4. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on progress towards a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew): The safeguarding of human rights in Northern Ireland is a matter for consideration within the current political talks. The Government believe that substantial protection for human rights is already in place, but we are of course willing to consider proposals for further strengthening.

Mr. Barnes: There is wide support in Northern Ireland for a Bill of Rights, and it seems sensible that provisions that give firm protection to individual rights, rather than limited and restricted measures which could be considered Mickey Mouse measures, should be written in almost as part of a constitution. Such measures—for example, access to solicitors for defendants—would give a solid defence to both Protestant and Catholic citizens in Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman and I agree that what matters is the reality of human rights—their substance and their enforceability. We believe that those tests are already well fulfilled in Northern Ireland. There are interesting controversies about written constitutions and written Bills of Rights. The hon. Gentleman and I know that some of the worst dictatorships have been in countries with written constitutions. What matters is the reality. The Government have an entirely open mind, and would certainly not wish to brush aside any seriously argued proposal for improvements in the human rights already established in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: Is the Secretary of State aware that the Ulster Unionist party has supported the introduction of a Bill of Rights since 1975? Does he agree that, if such a Bill were introduced, it should cover the whole of the United Kingdom, so that all Government Departments, no matter which part of the United Kingdom they served, were covered by it?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Yes, I am aware of the attitude and policy of the hon. Gentleman and of his party. I note that their desire is that there should be as little distinction as possible between legislation affecting Northern Ireland and that affecting the rest of the United Kingdom, for reasons that I entirely understand. There are certain arguments about a Bill of Rights which go in the other direction and they have been ventilated in the House in recent debates. I fully understand what the hon. Gentleman says. He knows that his viewpoint is represented in the present talks.

Constitutional Talks

6. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the talks with the political parties in Northern Ireland.

10. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the latest developments concerning the constitutional talks on the future of Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I shall continue to do all I can to achieve a positive outcome for the talks, which all the participants, under the distinguished guidance of Sir Ninian Stephen, have been and are still working hard to secure progress. The Government remain determined to find a widely acceptable basis for effecting a significant transfer of power and authority to locally accountable institutions within a framework of relationships that are stable within Northern Ireland, in the island of Ireland and between the people of these islands.

Mr. Winnick: If the talks do not succeed—if that is the case, no blame will be attached to the Secretary of State—does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that it will be even more important to have the closest links between the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic, including on matters involving Northern Ireland? Should not those links have been there from the beginning? Now that they have been established, they should remain, for obvious reasons.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's opening remark. I have been concentrating my attention, as has everyone taking part in the talks, on their succeeding. I have not spent very much time contemplating the possibility of their failing. If we do not reach heads of agreement within the short time remaining, that will be regarded by all as merely the arrival of another intermission in a process which has had a number of intermissions. I hope and believe that we shall take up the process thereafter, starting a good way further down the road than many believed possible.

I agree that close links with the Republic of Ireland are desirable. We have friendly relationships with the Government of Ireland and we are in close co-operation with them on many aspects. That is very much to be encouraged.

Mr. Riddick: But now that a deadline looms, does my right hon. and learned Friend believe that it will be possible to reach heads of agreement by 16 November?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing attention to that date. It is the date of the next intergovernmental conference under the Anglo-Irish Agreement. As my hon. Friend knows, it has always been the understanding that the political talks should take place during a gap or intermission. The previous conference was on 27 April, since when there have been two further postponements. Accordingly, the two Heads of Government, the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach, agreed that the final extension should end on 16 November. I believe that it is practically possible for us to reach heads of agreement within that time and everyone concerned is working hard to achieve that. I will not tell my hon. Friend whether I think it probable or not. The main point is that everyone is working towards that and I believe that it is a practical possibility.

Mr. Maginnis: Does the Secretary of State accept that it is becoming virtually impossible, irrespective of the total commitment of the Government and of the Ulster Unionist party, for any delegation to negotiate meaningfully with an Irish Government who are so acrimoniously divided by in-fighting and who are so obviously split on both political and ethical issues?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman is taking an uncharacteristically pessimistic view. While not adopting or, I hope, appearing to adopt the language he used, I reiterate that I believe that it is entirely practicable for all parties, with the assistance of his own, to reach a successful conclusion within the time available.

Mr. Hunter: Now that the constitutional talks have reached such a sensitive position, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that those of us who care deeply for the island of Ireland can usefully employ our time urging party leaders to reach positive conclusions and to remember that failure to do so could well result in the furthering of the cause of men of violence on both sides of the sectarian divide?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who takes a close interest in the affairs of the Province, and who was there only the other day. I believe that those who lead the parties involved are well aware of the strength of public opinion. Those who have longer experience in these matters than I do tell me that there is something quite new about the strength of public opinion demanding that the politicians get something better together. That is entirely encouraging, and I believe that it is well known to those who lead the parties.

I entirely agree with my hon. Friend about the potentially harmful consequences if the process came to an end.

Mr. Mallon: As one who has spent the past three years involved in the talks process—right from the time at which it was initiated by the previous Secretary of State—I think that it is time that we knew the British Government's mind on a fundamental question: can we ever settle the problem on the basis of partition? I should like to hear the Secretary of State's view on that. Does it accord with the view of the situation in Cyprus given by his right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary yesterday at column 1008 of *Hansard:*

"I do not agree partition can be the basis"——

Madam Speaker: Order. I cannot allow quotations during Question Time, but I am sure that the Secretary of State has got the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Mallon: The Foreign Secretary made it clear that he did not believe that partition could be the basis for a settlement in Cyprus and that only in the context of rule by one sovereign Government could a lasting solution be found. Is that the Government's view in relation to the other place that they partitioned—the place where I live—or does not the Secretary of State share the view of the Foreign Secretary?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman has, indeed, been engaged in the talks for a very long time and, with each succeeding month, he has become more ingenious in asking questions.

For my part, I am entirely satisfied that it is possible for us to reach a successful conclusion to the talks within the time available and within the constitutional guarantee set out in the House by my predecessor on 26 March 1991. That statement was the product of diligent consultation and discussion in which the hon. Gentleman and his party played a part.

It was well understood by all that that constitutional guarantee would be the basis upon which the British Government entered the talks. It follows from that that, of course, we think now—as we thought then—that it is possible to bring the talks to a successful conclusion within the terms and continuity of that guarantee. That is the proper answer for me to give the hon. Gentleman, and it certainly represents my sincere belief.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, in other parts of the United Kingdom, although we wish the talks well and hope that Northern Ireland will eventually have local government similar to that in the rest of the United Kingdom, we feel that anything beyond that could have constitutional implications of great magnitude, particularly in Scotland?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I understand my hon. Friend's point. At the moment, however, I am responsible for the affairs of Northern Ireland. I was surprised enough to find myself in that position, and I do not propose to enlarge upon that jurisdiction for the time being.

Mr. McNamara: The Secretary of State will be aware that the whole House hopes that the talks will end on a positive note. It is for that reason that the House has exercised a self-denying ordinance over the past 18 months in quizzing successive Secretaries of State on the progress of the talks. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman now undertake to make a statement to the House when the current series of talks concludes? Will he couple that statement with the publication of a statement of what appear to be the agreed positions of the parties—including, if necessary, a note of heads of agreement—to be counterbalanced by a list of areas of contention? In each case, will he state Her Majesty's Government's attitude to the problems? Finally, will he try to arrange with his right hon. Friend the Leader of the House for an opportunity for us to debate the current state of the talks before Christmas?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I acknowledge what the hon. Gentleman said and that the House has been very understanding on all sides about the need for reticence and the confidentiality which the parties to the talks have said should apply. I think that the House would be entitled to a statement from me at the conclusion of the talks—whether for good or ill. I therefore undertake to make such a statement.

The hon. Gentleman then became rather more particular about the contents of such a statement. I believe that it will be sensible for the parties to agree what kind of public statement shall be made when the talks conclude—whether successfully or unsuccessfully. Therefore, I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the undertaking for which he asks about the particularity of the statement. However, the House is certainly entitled to a sensible account of where we are, how we got there, what has happened and, within reason, why.

Lady Olga Maitland: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that great tribute should be paid to those who have taken part in the talks? It has not been easy for some, but the talks have continued and I wish for the best in future. However, we should bear it in mind that the talks have the great support of the communities outside which wish them well. A successful outcome will guarantee economic success for Northern Ireland and attract inward investment if there is a settled future.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. She takes a close interest in these matters and she was in the Province the other day with three Opposition Members. I was glad to see them all.

I am grateful for the tribute that my hon. Friend paid to those who have taken part in the talks. Their diligence, courage and imagination reflect the desire of ordinary people in the Province—and more widely—that they should come to a successful conclusion. They will not succeed if everybody thinks that, individually, they must get the best and absolutely everything that they are looking for. They will succeed if there is a process of give and take and I believe that that is on the cards.

Republic of Ireland (Constitution)

7. **Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he requested the Government of the Republic of Ireland to agree changes to articles 2 and 3 of the southern Irish constitution.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The Government's view on articles 2 and 3 is well known to the Irish Government and to the House. I do not wish to break the agreed confidentiality of the talks process. I can, however, refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Rev. Martin Smyth) on Friday 3 July.

Mr. Taylor: Does the Secretary of State recognise that most independent observers agree that articles 2 and 3 represent one of the main obstacles to real co-operation within the island of Ireland? Is he not surprised that even at this late stage, the Dublin Government have failed to make any positive contribution to removing an obstacle which could, if it were removed, have brought about better co-operation?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Anybody who follows the published accounts and commentaries on the talks process will have seen that considerable importance is attached to the subject that the right hon. Gentleman raises. However, I am going to resist his invitation to comment on the position of the Irish Government or, indeed, on the position of anyone else in the talks process. It is far better that we should use the short time available to negotiate privately and quietly in the way that is happening at the moment instead of making comments in public. Therefore, I am afraid that I must conclude my reply on that note.

Rev. William McCrea: Does the Secretary of State agree that the vast majority of the people of Northern Ireland desire to remain part of the United Kingdom? Therefore, for good neighbourly relationships between the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic, it is essential to remove the offending articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution. Have the Dublin authorities shown willingness to have them removed and indicated that accordingly?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman will recall that some considerable time ago the Taoiseach made it clear that articles 2 and 3 were on the table, along with any other constitutional matter, in the talks process. Accordingly, I am glad about that, as was my predecessor. The hon. Gentleman can be quite satisfied that full advantage is being taken in the talks of the ability to discuss all matters of constitutional issue including the one that concerns the hon. Gentleman now.

Mr. Mallon: Possibly the Secretary of State should confirm that, over a long period, four Cabinet Ministers from the Government of the Republic of Ireland were sitting in the talks with himself and the rest of us trying to get agreement to help solve the problem. While we were doing that, other people were sitting out sniping in the wings, and one of the most prominent snipers was the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor), who tabled this question.

Tourism

8. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the level of tourism to Northern Ireland.

12. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action is being taken to improve training in tourist-related services.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Robert Atkins): In 1991, 1·18 million visitors came to Northern Ireland, which was a 3 per cent. increase on the 1990 level. Figures for 1992 are not yet available, but it is estimated that there could be a similar percentage increase. The Training and Employment Agency is actively encouraging training in tourism and related services throughout the industry, together with the newly established Tourism and Hospitality training council, which is an industry-led body.

Mr. Bruce: I thank my hon. Friend for that excellent answer about an expansion in tourism, despite the market in the United Kingdom being rather flat this year. What additional measures can the Northern Ireland Office take to encourage people to enjoy the wonderful scenery, good food and very warm welcome of which they can be assured if they visit the Province?

Mr. Atkins: One of the contributory factors to ensuring that people come to Northern Ireland is the comment by my hon. Friend for which I and many people in Northern Ireland are very grateful. We have determined that tourism is a sector of great potential growth and that more people will visit this year than last year. If I have a message for the House, it is that the people of Northern Ireland would like to see as many hon. Members as possible take their holidays there. They would be very welcome and they would learn even more about Northern Ireland than they do from Northern Ireland Question Time.

Mr. Jenkin: Does my hon. Friend agree that training the work force is as important for the tourist industry as it is for any other industry? Are the Government laying enough emphasis on training?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend is entirely right. It is essential that we realise that those involved in tourism have to offer a high-quality service so that people who come for a holiday are so impressed by the quality of service, the style with which that service is offered and the professionalism of those who are responsible for the various buildings, hotels and attractions, will come again. Therefore, the training that the Training and Employment Agency is encouraging is absolutely vital.

Mr. William Ross: The hon. Gentleman will understand that the provision of a tourism infrastructure is a costly business. Will he ensure therefore that next year, when we have the chance to look for more EC structural funds, he will get the maximum amount and see to it that those funds are fully expended by being taken up by the various responsible bodies in Northern Ireland, rather than leaving a large part of them unexpended, as is the case this year?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman will not be surprised to learn that we are always interested in getting whatever extra money we can to help tourism or anything else within the Province. Clearly, however, it is not as easy as he and I would like it to be. Of course I can assure him that if there is any spare money coming from Europe which could be put to good use in Northern Ireland, I shall be more than happy to take hold of it.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Forty million Americans believe that they have Irish or Ulster ancestors. Will my hon. Friend encourage them to obtain passports and to visit Rathlin island to go to the lakes of Fermanagh, stand on the ancient hill fort of Navan looking to the twin cathedrals of Armagh, have a good holiday and contribute to peace, prosperity and justice in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend is such a distinguished predecessor of mine in this job that he was invited in his own right to Rathlin island to see for himself the new electricity development there. My hon. Friend is quite right. We need to attract as many people as we possibly can in the United States and in various other parts of the world. The Northern Ireland tourist board, together with my ministerial colleagues, spend as much time as they possibly can on that task.

Mr. McGrady: Does the Minister agree that the tourist industry has the greatest potential for growth and development? In that light, will he give an assurance that he will take another look at the operations of the Northern Ireland tourist board to streamline and hasten its decisions, as it is the custodian not only of its own property but of the International Fund for Ireland? Will he further consider examining the planning regulations in Northern Ireland and revising rural planning to enable the enhancement of tourist facilities in the rural community?

Mr. Atkins: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising the point about rural matters. Clearly, we shall be keen to encourage the use of rural houses—*[Interruption.]* in Bolsover as well as Northern Ireland. I have asked the chairman of the tourist board to consider how best we can encourage visitors to use some of the derelict or semi-derelict cottages in the rural areas of Northern Ireland, for example in the constituency of the hon. Members for South Down (Mr. McGrady). Such houses could be put to attractive and good use by those whom we wish to encourage to visit the Province.

Mr. Elletson: Will my hon. Friend also consider levels of tourism from Northern Ireland? Will he take the opportunity to make it clear to the many thousands of people from Northern Ireland who visit Blackpool every year that they continue to be assured of a warm welcome in Britain's incontestably premier tourist resort?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend, who is a neighbour of mine in Lancashire, speaks glowingly of Blackpool which many of us have visited for differing reasons. If we can encourage people to visit Northern Ireland in the same numbers as they currently visit Blackpool, we shall provide an enormous number of jobs and a great deal of attraction. However, perhaps Northern Ireland ought not to be so glitzy as Blackpool. I suspect that the green and clean image of Northern Ireland and its environmental attractions are as important as anything else.

Mr. William O'Brien: I welcome the Minister's reply on the encouragement of tourism and training because the tourist industry will have a great impact on the economy of Northern Ireland. Will the Minister explain what action his Department is taking to encourage tourism from the republic into Northern Ireland and from Northern Ireland into the republic?

Mr. Atkins: The tourist board talks regularly with Bord Failte—the tourist board in the south of Ireland—with a view to encouraging joint presentations especially in the United States to encourage people to come to the island of Ireland and perhaps see both parts of the island. The more that I can do to encourage cross-border tourist activity and many other economic and industrial activities, the better it will be for both sides of the border.

Women's Groups

9. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had with women's groups on peacekeeping in local communities.

Mr. Hanley: I am pleased to have had recent meetings in Northern Ireland with representatives of the Women's Education Project, the Workers Education Association and the Women's Support Network, where a wide range of topics, but not specifically the subject of peacekeeping, were constructively discussed.

Mrs. Fyfe: I thank the Minister for his answer. Does he agree that it is difficult for women's views to be heard in Northern Ireland, especially as only three women have ever been elected to any parliamentary seat in Northern Ireland? Women's groups are generally kept short of public funding which would assist them in making their views heard. Will the Minister and his colleagues follow the welcome initiative of the previous Secretary of State in hosting a reception for women at Hillsborough castle? It was the first initiative of its kind and was very welcome. I hope that progress will be made from it.

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Lady is absolutely right about the contribution to peacekeeping of women's groups in Northern Ireland. I was pleased to attend the reception that she described at Hillsborough castle. Women's groups in Northern Ireland make a constructive contribution but so do women in political life. There are many women local and district councillors throughout the Province. Their contribution to the talks process was extremely constructive. I for one would not be sorry to see women represent Northern Ireland in Parliament. It is just a matter of time.

Investment

11. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will list the number of new jobs that have been created in Northern Ireland as a result of outside investment in the last three years.

Mr. Atkins: During the past three years a total of 34 inward investment projects have been attracted to Northern Ireland, offering the prospect of 3,700 new jobs. Typically, employment builds up over a period of several years, and by the end of March this year, more than 1,200 of those new jobs were in existence.

Mr. Trimble: Does the Minister agree that unfortunately there are signs that inward investment is being deterred as a result of the considerable administrative and other burdens imposed on firms in Northern Ireland by the fair employment industry? Many firms leave the United States to escape the problem of quotas for virtually everything, and they do not want to receive the same sort of hassle in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: It is fair to say that a number of companies with American origins are involved in Northern Ireland industry, as the hon. Gentleman knows. They are very welcome and they are the best advertisement to their fellows back home of just how fair our fair employment legislation is. We have the toughest legislation anywhere in the western world, which gives the lie to suggestions made in certain parts of the United States that the so-called MacBride principles are in any way helpful to the interests of Northern Ireland—the creation of new jobs by inward investment from companies in the United States and elsewhere.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 29 October.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. O'Brien: Can the Prime Minister confirm that the chairman of British Coal told the Select Committee on Trade and Industry yesterday that the 31 pits due to close are only the beginning, and that seven more are due to close in due course, making a total of 38 pits, which will be devastating to the mining industry and to mining communities? What is the Prime Minister going to do? Is he going to come clean on that issue?

The Prime Minister: What I believe the chairman of the coal industry actually said, although I have not yet read his evidence in detail and I must make that clear to the hon. Gentleman, was that British Coal could close more than 31 pits and have a viable industry. That is a quite separate proposition from saying that that is likely to happen, and my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has made it perfectly clear that he is reviewing the situation.

Mr. Waterson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the London business school survey, which showed that there would be greater reductions in air fares in Europe if there were more liberalisation, would equally apply to air fares between here and the United States of America, where there is a greater need for liberalisation?

The Prime Minister: Yes I do agree with my hon. Friend about that. We have sought greater liberalisation in air fares for some time. We are confident that they would produce both a better service and cheaper air fares. We think that that is a prize well worth seeking.

Mr. John Smith: Does not the publication of the Foreign Office's assessment of the Danish proposals confirm that the Prime Minister cannot possibly discharge the undertaking that he gave to the House on 24 September before the Edinburgh summit at the earliest?

The Prime Minister: No, I must say to the right hon. and learned Gentleman that I do not believe that that is the case. The British presidency has the responsibility of seeking to negotiate Denmark into a position where it can ratify the treaty. We hope to be able to reach a framework upon that by December. What is clear is that the Danes have now set out how they propose to proceed, and it is also clear from the Birmingham declaration that we shall have positive decisions on subsidiarity at Edinburgh.

Mr. John Smith: But does the Prime Minister not recollect saying in precise and specific terms in the House on 24 September that there would have to be a basis for the Danes to have a second referendum and that subsidiarity would have to be set in place? How can it be set in place before the Edinburgh summit?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is wriggling because he knows that he is trying to move away from the European policy that he has always had. I say to the right hon. and learned Gentleman that if he cannot keep his principles in opposition, he will stay in opposition.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister not appreciate that it is a bit rich to be accused of a U-turn by a Prime Minister who has done a U-turn on devaluation and the exchange rate mechanism, a U-turn on pit closures, a U-turn on economic policy and a U-turn on his undertakings to the House?

The Prime Minister: I think the right hon. and learned Gentleman has been touched upon a sore spot. He knows that his party has had seven changes of policy on Europe already. Even Salome ran out of veils at seven. He has shed seven veils and what is revealed is less attractive than Salome.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that nothing would help more to restore economic recovery all round the world than a settlement in the GATT round? Will he continue to do everything that he can to bring about such a settlement?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I can certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance and I and a number of my right hon. Friends have been in touch with the key negotiators again over the last 24 hours. I hope very much that there will be yet more negotiations over this weekened and that there will be an early settlement. It is a very great prize and I hope and believe that it will be there for the taking.

Official Visit, Newham

Q2. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Prime Minister if he has any plans to pay an official visit to the London borough of Newham.

The Prime Minister: I am making plans for a series of visits to all parts of the country. Newham is not yet included, but I am happy to consider it.

Mr. Banks: That is very good news. I will organise a riotous welcome for the Prime Minister when he comes, but I must tell him with great respect that he is about as popular in the east end as anthrax. If he were to come to my advice surgery on Friday, he would find that 60 per cent. of my cases are housing problems and that is true of all inner city hon. Members. In 1979 my borough was spending £50,000 a year on bed-and-breakfast accommodation and this year we are spending £7 million on it. We have only 1·4 per cent. of our properties vacant.

If the Prime Minister wants to do something about homelessness and to boost the economy, will he allow local authorities to spend the £5·1 billion of accumulated capital receipts? That would do something about homelessness and jobs, or is he only interested in his own job and his own homes?

The Prime Minister: I must say that that is a bit rich from the hon. Gentleman. Newham borough council's rent arrears now amount to 21 per cent. of its rent roll and it has 1,000 empty properties. Newham has the lowest collection of community charge almost anywhere in the country and as far as its collection record is concerned, perhaps some explanation of that is that seven of the Labour councillors refuse to pay their community charge.

Engagements

Q3. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 29 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Atkinson: If Parliament does not ratify the Maastricht treaty, can my right hon. Friend point out precisely what the alternatives would be for Britain and the consequences which would undoubtedly be encouraged if the Labour party were to abandon all principle by failing to support the Prime Minister on Wednesday night?

The Prime Minister: On that last point, I believe that they have already announced that they have no principles, so everybody is aware of that. I believe that it would be damaging for Britain if we were unable to ratify the Maastricht treaty. We would lose influence in Europe, we would lose the opportunity to lead it in the direction that we want away from centralism into a free market towards an enlarged community and towards a decentralised community. But more than that, I think we would be sending a signal to investors in America, Japan and elsewhere that they could not rely on our commitment to Europe and I dare say that people who work in Sony factories in Wales, Nissan factories in the north and many other investments throughout the United Kingdom would not regard that as a sensible policy.

Q4. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 29 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Alton: As the Prime Minister has rightly just reminded the House whether the Maastricht treaty is ratified next week is a matter of great principle, and given the confusion that there has been during the past week or so, can the right hon. Gentleman clarify whether he will personally regard next Wednesday's vote as a matter of confidence in himself and his Government?

The Prime Minister: We will put down our motion before the end of this week. I can say to the hon. Gentleman that it will be a substantive motion and we shall invite support for it on its merits.

Mr. Richards: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the recent raid on an IRA bomb factory was the product of painstaking and diligent work by the Metropolitan police and others, and will he congratulate all of them on that success?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to do that. As my hon. Friend will know, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on specific police operations, but they have undoubtedly been very successful in their work against terrorism and have faced particular difficulties with the large number of bombs that have been placed, particularly in the city of London, in recent weeks. I know that they will continue that work.

Q.5 **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 29 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Battle: As the Department of Social Security has confirmed that the Prime Minister intends to tax invalidity benefit, I challenge the Prime Minister to tell us exactly where that plan to tax the sick is to be found in his election manifesto. Tell us. Which page is it on?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman should stop scrabbling among newspapers and wait for the details of the autumn statement in due course. When it comes, he might also comment on the substantial real-terms reductions in many social benefits under the last Labour Government.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my right hon. Friend agree that his success in beating inflation, now down to 2 per cent. annualised over the last six months, provides the firmest foundation for low interest rates, and that it is his policies, rather than the muddled policies of the Opposition, which will ensure that this country, as a great trading nation, gains the greatest success from the GATT talks?

The Prime Minister: Yes, my hon. Friend is entirely right about the importance of low inflation. It is noticeable that even today the official Opposition are apt to disregard inflation as the important ingredient in economic well being. It is the fact that we now have low inflation, together with the increased competitiveness that increasingly is there, which will provide the basis for recovery.

Q6. **Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 29 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Dafis: Notwithstanding the rhetoric of the Welsh Office, as economic conditions in Wales certainly justify granting to Wales objective 1 status under the EC structural fund, will the Prime Minister support the granting of that status to Wales?

The Prime Minister: I think that that is a matter upon which my right hon. Friend will wish to comment.

Q7. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 29 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Lady Olga Maitland: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming a reduction in the number of house repossession actions? Is that not a demonstration of our policies to facilitate house owners so that they do not have to leave their homes at a time of financial crisis? Finally, I extend to my right hon. Friend a warm welcome to my constituency of Sutton and, in particular, to his birthplace, St. Helier's, which is a NHS trust.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that invitation. I am pleased that the number of repossession actions in the last quarter were a third down and that is welcome. That is in part due to two particular factors—the package of measures on repossessions announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor last December and the significant fall in interest rates over the past two years.

Q8. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 29 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hanson: Yesterday afternoon I spent two hours with miners from the Point of Ayr colliery in my constituency, one of the 21 on the moratorium list—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. This is Question Time. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would now come in right away with his question.

Mr. Hanson: They told me of run down investment in pits, job losses and everything else. Will the Prime Minister give me and my hon. Friends an assurance that there will be no run down in investment in pits on the list during the term of that moratorium?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has made all those matters clear. The hon. Gentleman is well aware of what is happening during the moratorium period.

Q9. **Mr. Ward:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 29 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ward: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the foundations of recovery is to maintain capital expenditure, particularly where it affects the construction industry.

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend about that matter, as I set out in my remarks in some interviews a few days ago. As I said to the House at Question Time last week, economic circumstances outside the United Kingdom have materially changed, but in many ways that gives us new opportunities to develop our strategy for recovery. I cannot anticipate today the outcome of the public expenditure round but it is right to recognise the importance of capital projects and I know that that is very much in the mind of my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the Leader of the House give us the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 2 NOVEMBER—Second Reading of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill.

TUESDAY 3 NOVEMBER—Second Reading of the Housing and Urban Development Bill.

WEDNESDAY 4 NOVEMBER—Motion relating to the European Communities (Amendment) Bill

THURSDAY 5 NOVEMBER—Second Reading of the Civil Service (Management Functions) Bill *[Lords]*.

FRIDAY 6 NOVEMBER—Debate on the Bingham report on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 9 NOVEMBER—Second Reading of the Education Bill.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee B will meet on Wednesday 4 November at 10.30 am further to consider European Community Document No. 4327/92 relating to cultural goods.

Mrs. Beckett: I thank the Leader of the House for that statement.

As the Prime Minister claims that the Maastricht treaty is the cornerstone of his foreign policy, is it not a further indication of the Government's lack of direction that they are still dithering about the wording of the motion which they propose to put before the House next Wednesday? Can the Leader of the House explain why, after an extended Cabinet meeting, they still do not know the proposition that they will put before us? Can he tell us anything further about when we shall know the wording of the motion?

May I also press the Government for an early debate on the future of the Rosyth naval dockyard in the light of the widespread publicity in Scotland today about its rumoured closure, with the loss of some 15,000 jobs—directly or indirectly—at stake?

Finally, will the Leader of the House arrange for the earliest possible publication of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council report on emphysema and bronchitis, particularly among coal miners? We are told that the report has been available since the end of August. Is he aware that the entire House will be outraged at the revelation that publication of that document has been deliberately held up so that the cost to public funds can be reduced as those who might benefit from its recommendations die off one by one?

Mr. Newton: On the motion, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made the position clear in his answer to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton). I have nothing to add to that.

On Rosyth, I am not in a position to comment on speculative reports. However, I can repeat the assurance given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement that no decisions have yet been made concerning the future arrangements for dockyard management. All relevent considerations will be taken into account and all interested parties consulted when making such a decision. The Government hope to be in a position to make an announcement by the end of the year.

On the industrial injuries matter, I understand that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security will make an announcement about publication shortly. I know well from experience that the report's recommendations will be considered with the appropriate care.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): On Wednesday's debate, will my right hon. Friend make sure that the motion draws attention to the virtually unanimous findings of the CBI that the job losses consequent on our not ratifying the Maastricht treaty depend not only on the fact that foreign investment would be reluctant to come here but that large numbers of British multinational companies would move their manufacturing abroad, with the resulting loss of thousands of jobs, not least in my constituency?

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's request to include a certain point in the motion. That point is very much in the Government's mind when they consider their approach to these matters.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the Leader of the House accept that the announcement by his right hon. Friend that next Wednesday's motion will be a substantive, not a procedural, one will be welcomed by all in this House who are seriously interested in the issue of our future in Europe and by those in the country who want to know whether we are giving Europe the green light or the red light? Many of us, like the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), believe that it should be the green light.

When will we have an opportunity to debate overseas aid? The right hon. Gentleman said last week that he would think about it. Will we have a debate before the autumn statement?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I have been rather more tolerant than usual. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) asked two questions and the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) asked quite a few. In future hon. Members must ask only one question, and then we will all get through as many as possible.

Mr. Newton: I note with appropriate gratitude the first part of the hon. Gentleman's comments and those of the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) on other occasions.

As for overseas aid, I cannot add to what I said on this point on a number of occasions last week; nor can I predict the outcome of the current public expenditure discussions. I apologise, Madam Speaker, for giving a rather long answer, but I have made it clear that, unusually, the autumn statement will be debated shortly after it is made.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Referring to next Wednesday's debate, which many of us are happy to refer to, will my right hon. Friend confirm one point? Am I not right in thinking that the reason we are having it has nothing to do with the bravado of the Prime Minister but is a response to the request of the then Leader of the Opposition before the House rose for the summer recess? Is it not therefore a bit rich for the hon. Member for

Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) to start complaining about the terms of the motion when she and her colleagues have decided not to support it before they have even seen it?

Mr. Newton: The only possible answer to my hon. Friend's question is yes.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Bearing in mind that in the north of England we have the brick industry, the glass industry, the steel industry and goodness knows what else, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the time has come to hold a debate on the construction industry so that we can begin to put the country back to work instead of wasting so much and so many talents?

Mr. Newton: I shall bear in mind the hon. Gentleman's request, but I refer him to what my right hon. Friend said in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) in respect of the autumn statement. The debate on that is likely to provide an opportunity relevant to the hon. Gentleman's request.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Will there be a statement on the progress of the vital GATT negotiations? Does not their importance emphasise the need for involvement in the European Community and how vital it is that Britain be at the heart of it, not standing idly on the side?

Mr. Newton: The answer to the latter part of my hon. Friend's question is yes, but I cannot promise a statement at a particular time. My hon. Friend well knows the efforts of the Prime Minister to get further talks under way.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): Will the Leader of the House consider next week or at the very least the week after that a debate in Government time on the shambles that is the disability living allowance? I understand that in Blackpool there are 30,000 unopened letters, and that, even when they are opened, there are no staff to process the claims of these most deserving of our citizens. It is scandalous that that has not been dealt with by the Government so far, and time should be allowed for a full debate in the House on this scandal.

Mr. Newton: I would not wish to be taken as endorsing the terms in which the hon. Gentleman phrased his question, but I can fairly make the point that the Department of Social Security will be answering oral questions on Monday.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): My right hon. Friend will remember that he and I heard references by the Prime Minister during the Conservative party conference to considerable help for small businesses through red tape being stripped away. We also heard some colourful metaphors by our right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. Would it be possible for my right hon. Friend very soon to bring the President of the Board of Trade to the Dispatch Box to make some announcements for which many small businesses are waiting?

Mr. Newton: As it happens, I do not need to bring my right hon. Friend to the Dispatch Box in the way that has been suggested, because he is due to be here on Wednesday for questions.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to the concern of my right hon. and hon. Friends about the limited amount of Northern Ireland legislation in the pipeline? We have been waiting for two or three years for equivalents to Acts. In the light of that, will he look again at the current legislation and apply it immediately to Northern Ireland, rather than have us hanging around waiting for years for equivalent legislation?

Mr. Newton: I was unable to be here earlier for Northern Ireland questions and am not sure whether that matter arose then. Perhaps I could treat this as an extension of Northern Ireland questions and promise to draw the matter to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will my right hon. Friend provide an early opportunity to debate early-day motion 668?

[That this House notes with concern reports that the Government is considering closing one of the two remaining naval dockyards at Rosyth and Devonport; notes that the closure of either dockyard would mean the loss of several thousand jobs in the defence industry and supporting businesses; notes that both dockyards have been successful in diversifying into other commercial activities whilst improving efficiency in their core defence business; and therefore calls on the Government to consider all possible means, including, if necessary, a single combined management, by which a way can be found to keep both dockyards open and preserve at least some of the jobs dependent on them.]

A debate would give an opportunity to discuss the economic significance to Scotland of Rosyth and the political difficulties that would be faced if we were to maintain the Trident force in the Clyde but removed the jobs at Rosyth for the maintenance of those submarines.

Mr. Newton: I genuinely note what my hon. Friend says, but he will recall that the point arose at the start of business questions. I am not able to add to what I said then.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Could the Leader of the House find time for an early debate on the condition of the fabric of the pits that are marked for closure and are subject to care and maintenance? A debate would allow the House to test the worth and value of the Prime Minister's reassurance that all pits would remain viable for work. It would also allow hon. Members to tell the Prime Minister and the Government that face convergence in many of those pits is fast making the faces unworkable and unviable. If the Prime Minister's reassurances have any validity, coaling must start again at Trentham colliery in Stoke-on-Trent, and in the pits in the constituencies of many of my hon. Friends which are suffering severely.

Mr. Newton: I understand that British Coal will maintain the fabric of the 10 collieries during the consultation period precisely so that coaling can be restarted if closure does not finally take place.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Will my right hon. Friend consider making time for a debate next week on the conduct of banks, especially the Royal Bank of Scotland? That issue is of considerable importance to a small business in my constituency employing six people who received a letter on 14 October stating:

[Mr. Michael Bates]

> "we find that all of our major competitors have been sharply increasing their"—

Madam Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will quickly rethink his question. Questions must relate to next week's business and the hon. Gentleman cannot pursue his present line of questioning.

Mr. Bates: May we have a debate next week on the subject and conduct of banks, including the Royal Bank of Scotland? Reducing interest rates is the progressive and courageous policy of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Interest rates are coming down but that bank decided to use this opportunity to increase its profits. Before replying to such a debate, the Chancellor should call in the banks and make it impeccably clear to them that the purpose of reducing interest rates is to protect small businesses and jobs and not to line the pockets of the banks.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend's question demonstrates how lucky the electors of Langbaurgh are to have him here to defend their interests. My safe course is to say that I will draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. With a bit of ingenuity, my hon. Friend might be able to put that question to the President of the Board of Trade on Wednesday.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): When can we have a debate on the report by the Select Committee on Members' Interests about declaration and registration?

Mr. Newton: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a definite date now, but I have every incentive to try to find one, as he will obviously ask me the same question every week until I do.

Mr. John Ward (Poole): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate enabling us to compare this country's record with those of our European partners in carrying out EC regulations to which we have signed up?

Mr. Newton: I have little doubt that that point will be adverted to in the course of debate next week.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement to be made about the current discussions on the review of the common fisheries policy? The northern fisheries have been closed, and 25 per cent. of my constituents who are totally dependent on the fishing industry for their livelihood have no prospect of employment for the rest of the year.

This is a matter of serious importance to us. The implications are on the same level as the implications of pit closures for the hon. Members who have spoken so effectively on behalf of the mining communities that they represent. May we be given the same consideration?

Mr. Newton: I recognise that the matter is of considerable importance to the hon. Lady's constituents. I shall of course draw her remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): I am rather buoyed up by what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said today about capital investments. Will there be time next week for an early announcement about the Jubilee line extension? Many of my constituents would benefit greatly from an early and positive announcement of what is to happen.

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise a statement about that next week, but I note what my hon. Friend has said.

Ms. Rachel Squire (Dunfermline, West): May I join my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) and the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) in urging the Leader of the House to arrange a debate next week on early-day motion 668? Such a debate is surely vital, given the report in today's Scottish *Daily Record*, which implies that Scottish Conservatives have been told that Rosyth dockyard will close. It is vital that the Secretary of State for Defence be called to the Dispatch Box to make a clear statement to all of us.

Mr. Newton: I am aware of the importance that the hon. Lady—like my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker)—understandably attaches to the matter; but it was raised by her hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), very reasonably, and I cannot add to the answer that I gave then.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): When my right hon. Friend frames Wednesday's motion, will he include a reference to the Opposition's startling U-turn so that the British people can clearly see that all that Labour said at the time of the election was a total sham? Labour is completely without principle, and its commitment to Europe is completely hollow.

Mr. Newton: I do not want to find myself drafting the detail of the motion on the Floor of the House in answer to a business question, but I nevertheless feel that my hon. Friend has made an important point.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): In addition to a debate about the various reports produced by the Select Committee on Members' Interests—including that concerning the tightening of the registration of commercial lobbying interests—are we to have a Select Committee on Members' Interests, or have the Government abandoned the idea?

As the Leader of the House know, there is a Standing Order about the Select Committee in relation to our debates and the declaration of interests. Is not the right hon. Gentleman concerned about the fact that many Tory Back Benchers are lining themselves up according to the "Members of Parliament for hire" syndrome, and lining their pockets with the fruits of outside business interests while we and the public have no idea what is going on?

Mr. Newton: I might find it possible to give the hon. Gentleman a more sympathetic response if he did not use business questions to make that point in the way he did.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): Has my right hon. Friend's attention been drawn to a letter sent recently by the secretary of British Coal to various people on a list instructing them that

> "there must be no contact with Members of Parliament other than through your Group Director or Managing Director."?

Apart from the question of the constitutional propriety of such a request, will my right hon. Friend consider the implications for the independence of some of the advice that the review must be given if those most closely involved cannot raise the matter through their Members of Parliament? Will he arrange a debate on the subject, or else urge British Coal to withdraw that instruction?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will understand that I cannot promise a debate on the matter. However, I can certainly promise to reflect on what he has said and on the request that he has made and to make sure that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade does so also.

Mr. Jimmy Boyce (Rotherham): I have pressing business affecting my consti[illegible]nts that needs [illegible] be referred to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration Select Committee. Will the Leader of the House be in a position to tell us next week when that Committee is to be set up?

Mr. Newton: I shall do my best to put myself in a position to give the hon. Gentleman an answer, but I cannot do so at this moment.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Will my right hon. Friend provide time for a debate on our continued policy of nuclear deterrence, the future of which is so important to the future of Rosyth dockyard?

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise quite the debate for which my hon. Friend asked me—nor, to my regret in some ways, can I add to what I have already said to three or four hon. Members. However, I well understand why my hon. Friend raised the point.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): May we have a debate about Companies house? We could then examine why the President of the Board of Trade has an entry in the Companies house register regarding the Haymarket publishing companies and trusts. That entry does not feature in the old Register of Members' Interests. I do not know about the new one—when we get it. Is it not important that the President of the Board of Trade, who is conducting reviews of other industries, should sort out his own financial affairs before he starts to review what he should do about pit closures? It is about time that this Maxwell-type cobweb of financial trusts—*[Interruption.]*—was sorted out before the President of the Board of Trade sorts out the livelihood of 31,000 miners.

Mr. Newton: In the interests of keeping the temperature down, Madam Speaker, in which I am sure both you and I have an interest, I shall merely refer once again to the fact that the President of the Board of Trade will be at the Dispatch Box next week.

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): Will the Leader of the House find time for a debate or for a Government statement on the responsibilities of Ministers? An unprecedented situation has arisen under which a civil servant has been blamed for the pit closures. Ministers were previously guided by a code of conduct in these matters. What has happened reflects poorly upon us and everyone else. The respect of the public for us is the lowest it has ever been. Has there been a change? Ministers used to resign if they made mistakes. Now they do not do so; they sack their staff.

Mr. Newton: If I understand aright what the hon. Gentleman refers to, the position is that new appointments have been made that are intended to give effect to the Government's commitment to examine afresh the future of the coal industry and related matters.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Next Wednesday, at the start of busi[illegible] we shall, as on every day, pray that this country be godly and quietly governed. In the light of that, will my right hon. Friend reconsider the question of the motion to be put on the debate later in the day and have it, on the Adjournment of the House, on the subject of the situation in the European Communities? Otherwise, I fear that there will be an unholy and wholly unnecessary row?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend, whose views I recognise, will have heard what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said about that matter. I am obviously not in a position to add anything further.

Ms. Ann Coffey (Stockport): Will the Leader of the House make time available next week for a debate on the British aerospace industry? As he will be aware, a large number of people from all parts of the country have joined a lobby today because they are desperately worried about the future of their industry. They wish positive action to be taken to ensure that British Aerospace has a prosperous future and that manufacturing industry as a whole has a prosperous future. Such a debate would, I suggest, give the Government an opportunity to tell us about their manufacturing and economic strategy.

Mr. Newton: The Government's policies, including the recent further cuts in interest rates, are aimed at helping the whole of British industry, manufacturing and otherwise, including aerospace. We shall continue with policies to achieve that, but I cannot promise a debate next week in the terms that the hon. Lady seeks.

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough): May we have a debate on why Members of Parliament who work at 7 Old Palace Yard were not consulted about the proposed move, at an estimated cost of £3 million?

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise a debate, but no doubt my hon. Friend will have drawn his views to the attention of the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Select Committee.

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Does the Leader of the House plan to table changes to local authority superannuation regulations? Under those changes, if a local authority service were privatised, its workers would not be able to keep their local authority pension. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman recognises that the matter is of much concern to thousands of local authority workers, especially the hundreds of workers in South Yorkshire Transport. Does he plan to table the regulations next week?

Mr. Newton: I will bring the hon. Gentleman's remarks, and his implicit criticism of any such thought, to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): May I urge my right hon. Friend to arrange an early debate on the crisis in the tourism industry in the west country in general and in Teignbridge in particular? Is he aware that hotels and guest houses are particularly hard pressed? Does he agree

[Mr. Patrick Nicholls]

that a debate would enable us to discuss measures that might be included in the Budget to help that hard-pressed sector?

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise my hon. Friend a debate, but I advert to remarks that I made in response to earlier questions about economic policy in general. The debate following the autumn statement might provide an opportunity for him to speak.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): May we have a statement next week on the situation in Bosnia, which would allow the Government to tell us what they and the United Nations will do to airlift food supplies to the thousands upon thousands of Bosnians who are facing an extremely harsh winter on the mountains? It would further allow us to persuade Ministers that the only way to stop the partition of Bosnia between Serbia and Croatia is military intervention.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary and other Ministers have commented extensively on this in various ways in the past few weeks, and I cannot promise a statement next week.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Will my right hon. Friend give the House a commitment that, following the Department of Trade and Industry's announcement on the areas that will achieve assisted area status, hon. Members will have an opportunity to debate the issue in the House? He will know that many applications have been made, including by my own constituency, and that the future of many jobs depends on those applications. It would be helpful if he would give that undertaking.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will be aware that we are a little way short of concluding that review. Some advance signs have been given about the possibility of difficulties in some of the mining areas. It is a little premature to consider my hon. Friend's specific request, but I shall ensure that it is borne in mind.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Does not the Leader of the House understand that, however many assurances the Prime Minister and the President of the Board of Trade have given that the 31 pits will be reprieved, as was referred to at Question Time, the reality is that, if coal production ceases at Trentham, the pit is liable to close? Why will not he arrange a full debate next week to enable hon. Members to air their concerns about all 31 pits before it is too late and before the men have been bribed with redundancy payments?

Mr. Newton: Again, I understand why the hon. Lady has raised that subject, but I cannot add to what I said on a related matter a few questions ago.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a review and an urgent statement from the President of the Board of Trade on what is happening at Coventry pit, which British Coal has said will be capped in the next few days? Capping will endanger the livelihoods of all the men who work at Daw Mill, who depend on having access to the south Warwickshire coalfield through the air shaft of Coventry pit. Does not that decision by British Coal cast into a rather odd light the commitment by the President of the Board of Trade to review overall energy policy, and not to take any action that could prejudice the future of the coal industry?

Mr. Newton: As with previous comments that have been made, I shall bring those remarks to my right hon. Friend's attention. I am sure that he would take appropriate action if he felt that there were a conflict such as that suggested by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Is the Leader of the House aware that last Friday British Coal ended coal mining at Parkside colliery in my constituency, and that so far not one word of consultation has taken place? Is he further aware that this morning a mining inspection at Parkside colliery under section 123 of the Mines and Quarries Act unanimously recommended that, unless coal was cut immediately on one face, the chances are that that face will be lost for ever? Will he arrange for a debate so that hon. Members from coal mining communities can test whether the statements made by Cabinet Ministers about genuine consultations, and about Coal Board directors protecting the fabric of the mines, were economical with the truth?

Mr. Newton: I certainly do not accept any suggestion that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade or any of my other colleagues were, as the hon. Gentleman puts it, economical with the truth. Once again, I shall bring the hon. Gentleman's remarks to my right hon. Friend's attention, and I am sure he will give them serious consideration.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): As thousands of people in the northern region are still awaiting the outcome of the public inquiry into the incineration of toxic waste, I ask my right hon. Friend to urge the Department of the Environment to make a statement as soon as possible on the future of toxic waste incineration on Tyneside and Teesside. That would be of great interest to thousands of people and to industry in the region.

Mr. Newton: I shall bring that request, too, to the attention of the appropriate Minister—my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Will the Leader of the House consider initiating an early debate on the National Audit Office report on accident and emergency departments in national health service hospitals? That is a matter of great concern to the people of Liverpool, who now face the disgraceful suggestion that the accident and emergency unit at Broadgreen hospital should be closed. That hospital is close to the M62, an important motorway, and it is also the hospital which services Liverpool airport whenever there is an alert.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that we had a debate on health only a week ago today, and I am not in a position to promise another in the immediate future.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Will the Leader of the House consider a debate on opencast coal mining? The closure of the deep mines presages the ripping apart of our countryside. My constituents in Buckley wait apprehensively for decisions by the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Newton: I understand that concern expressed by the hon. Gentleman on behalf of his constituents, but in view of the other exchanges which have taken place today, I also have a feeling that in our present circumstances any debate on coal mining [illegible] more likely to concentrate on deep mining than on opencast mining.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): Will the Leader of the House use his good offices to arrange for a Minister to make a statement early next week on the crisis in the motor car manufacturing industry? That is particularly necessary in view of the fact that Ford, our leading car manufacturer, announced a halt to all car and van manufacture at two plants—including Dagenham, a plant which affects both my constituency and that of the Leader of the House. That announcement has wide implications for the whole economy of east London and Essex, and it will cause great anxiety in homes and small businesses in and around the Dagenham area—in Thurrock, in Basildon and, no doubt, in Braintree, the constituency of the Leader of the House.

Will the Leader of the House ensure that a Minister is brought to the House? There is a great fear that we are about to lose one Ford plant in the United Kingdom unless there is a halt and an intervention—morning, afternoon, or evening—by the President of the Board of Trade.

Mr. Newton: I have said in response to many questions this afternoon that the President of the Board of Trade is due to answer questions next Wednesday. I hope that the hon. Gentleman in turn will at least acknowledge that United Kingdom car production has increased by 1·9 per cent. in the first nine months of this year compared with the figure for the similar period of 1991. The increased production, including the increased production for export, in one or two recent months has been some sign of encouragement.

Ms. Liz Lynne (Rochdale): Will the Leader of the House make time for a debate on the human rights violations happening daily in Indian-held Kashmir?

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise an early debate on the matter. However, I am sure that my right hon. Friends at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have noted the hon. Lady's concern.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The normal procedure after Second Reading is for a Bill to move into Committee. Although we have had the Second Reading of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill—the Maastricht Bill—it has yet to move into Committee. What is the constitutional position? What is the reason for a debate on a motion next Wednesday? What is the reason other than to try to bolster the Prime Minister?

Mr. Newton: The reason, in shorthand terms, is that there were substantial requests for a debate, including one from the previous Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock).

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Does the Leader of the House think that it would be helpful for our discussion on Monday on the continuing disgrace of the disability living allowance and the disability working allowance if the Government published in the *Official Report* the answers that hon. Members receive from the chief executive of the Benefits Agency? I had several letters from Mr. Bichard this morning. When will the Leader of the House publish those in the *Official Report* as he recently promised in a written reply? What will the arrangements be? Will the replies be published daily or weekly, and how prompt will publication be?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for acknowledging the fact that I have recently announced a move in precisely the direction he had urged. I will try to give him further details as soon as possible.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Do I understand that the hon. Gentleman heard the business statement? I understood that he was not in his place for the statement. I can call only hon. Members who have been in place for the statement.

Mr. Anderson: My excuse is that I was listening behind your Chair, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I must take the hon. Gentleman at his word. That being the case, I will call him.

Mr. Anderson: I am the soul of honour, Madam Speaker.

Does the Leader of the House agree that now is the right time to examine the employment effect on the regions of the Government's privatisation policies for Government agencies? In my constituency, for example, we have already lost jobs as a result from the vehicle inspectorate and from the driver information technology centre. Now we have the ultimate madness. It is envisaged that the Driver Vehicle Licensing Agency, which was put in for regional employment reasons, will be closed as a result of contractorisation with the loss of 3,000 jobs in an area of high unemployment. When will the madness stop? Why cannot we now have a debate on the effects on the regions of the Government's agency proposals?

Mr. Newton: The Government are obviously concerned to look carefully at all the implications of their proposals. I will bring the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): Unfortunately, I find myself in the same position as my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson). I was at the back of your Chair, Madam Speaker, when business questions started.

Madam Speaker: I said to the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) that I had not seen him in his place and he agreed that he was not listening to the statement in his place. I have to take hon. Members at their word and I have to honour what they say. That being the case, I call the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall).

Mr. McFall: Is the Leader of the House aware that the European Commission is in the process of repealing document 170/83 and establishing a new system for the conservation and management of fish stocks? Given that that must be in place by the end of December, and that white fish fishermen, particularly in the north of Scotland, have reached their quotas and face a bleak two months, will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that a debate ensues on the new regulations, which as yet have not even been discussed in the press, never mind in the House?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman said that he had been present earlier, and I have no reason to doubt that. I assume, therefore, that he heard what I said to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), who asked me about the same matter.

NHS Trusts (Wales)

4.9 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement on what I consider to be a significant development for the national health service in Wales, which I believe will bring long-term benefits not only for patients but also for staff and local communities.

NHS trusts are now seen as the natural organisational model for delivering health care. The pace of change in Wales matches that in the rest of the United Kingdom. I look forward to Welsh trusts taking full advantage of the opportunities available to them to gear their services to the needs of their patients and to deal with the issues raised by the application process and during public consultation.

My announcement is confirmation that doctors, nurses, other professional groups and managers increasingly recognise that Government policy towards the NHS benefits patients by allowing for the provision and management of services locally. NHS trusts will remain firmly within the national health service; to suggest otherwise is a grave distortion. Accordingly, I have today signed orders to establish a further 13 NHS trusts in Wales on 16 November. The orders also provide that the trusts will commence formal operation on 1 April 1993. By that date, and taking account of the Pembrokeshire NHS trust, some 65 per cent. of acute health services, and 60 per cent. of community health services in Wales, will be based on NHS trusts.

Let me make it clear that my decision to establish further NHS trusts was reached by Ministers only after the most careful consideration of each representation received on the individual applications, all of which were subject to an extensive and wide-ranging consultative exercise lasting three months. Hon. Members from Wales were invited to comment on applications relating to their constituencies. In addition to community health councils, health authorities, family health services authorities, GP practices, local voluntary organisations, and, of course, staff at the health units and ambulance services were among the important range of interests that had the opportunity to make known their views on the proposals contained in the applications.

The views expressed during consultation have received close attention, alongside the individual merits of each application, and I have maintained my undertaking that I would not approve any application unless I was personally convinced that patients would benefit from the move to NHS trust status. My decisions reflect that commitment.

I shall shortly be announcing details on the chairmen and non-executive directors for the trusts that are to be established, and I make it clear to the House that my guiding principle is that individuals will be selected for the personal contribution that they can make to a trust.

I now refer to the application from the east unit of West Glamorgan health authority, which includes the plan for a new hospital for Neath and Port Talbot. I remain determined that there will be a new hospital on that site and I expect that the health authority will shortly let the contract for the next stage of infrastructure. Indeed, I am looking to further improvements in services in the area beyond the provision of a hospital and I am therefore inviting the authority, in consultation with the adjoining authorities of East Dyfed and Mid Glamorgan, to review the appropriate balance between primary and secondary care into the next century, taking into account the remarkable advances being seen in medical technology and medical practice.

I will be looking to the authority to take independent advice and to have the review substantially completed and to report back to me by the end of March 1993. Because of the importance of awaiting the outcome of the review, I feel it prudent to defer the application for NHS trust status. I know that that will come as a disappointment, but I stress that the application is only deferred.

Turning now to the expressions of interest which have been submitted, the fact that I have invited 14 applications carries no commitment that subsequently I will approve any application or, indeed, that any application has to be submitted. The position remains that the decision whether formally to apply to become a NHS trust is a matter for local determination. There is not, and will not be, any pressure from Ministers in the Welsh Office.

My decisions on whether to invite further applications from three of the health units in South Glamorgan is dependent upon the outcome of the authority's review of unit management structure and services. When that has been agreed in discussion with the prospective applicants, I look forward to receiving updated proposals for implementation as soon as is practicable.

The applications will need to be submitted formally in the early summer of next year and, as was the case this year, every submission will be subjected to a consultation exercise, normally for three months. No decisions will be reached until I have had the opportunity to consider the representations received, alongside the specific proposals for trust status. I would expect to announce the outcome on the applications in the autumn of next year.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Despite what the Secretary of State for Wales has said, the statement is a further step down the route towards the American health care system in this country. Everyone in Wales knows exactly what that means. Conservative Members may shake their heads and claim that that will not happen. However, they do not recognise that a growing number of Tory Members support a private insurance system of care in the United Kingdom. In the meantime, what do the Government do for the national health service? They cut public spending, with further cuts ahead. They underfund and privatise community care. They commercialise and privatise the NHS. Where there should be more care and better care, the Government offer us competition. Where there should be service, we have the internal market, the GP fund holder, a two-tier health service and nurses out of a job.

The trusts are run like private sector companies. Although it is true that they are not in the private sector now, they have the potential to be lifted into it at the whim of a Minister. It will not be long before hip replacements are advertised in the medical appliance section of *Exchange and Mart*.

The statement is a further nail in the aspirations of our national health service, which is still the envy of the world despite all the Government's attempts to destroy the vision and inspiration of Aneurin Bevan.

The Secretary of State for Wales is now trying to persuade the Welsh people that the trusts, which are not accountable to local people, are for their benefit. From England, we hear reports of throat-cutting commercialisation and cuts in services and staff, but not in waiting lists. The experiences of some of my hon. Friends are not happy experiences. These are the newspaper headings that are only too commonplace in their experience of trusts:

> "NHS Trust mishandled injured baby case"—

not the *Morning Star*—

> "Heart patients wait as budget runs out one month early"—

not the *Morning Star*, and

> "Four heart patients die for lack of money".

The North Middlesex hospital NHS trust recently announced cuts of £1·7 million and told its patients that, instead of two meals a day, they would get one meal and a snack and, after 6.30 pm, no evening drink. Is that what we must expect of our more caring, more efficient, health service as trusts become the order of day, or is it simply yet another example of trusts putting financial savings before patient care?

Why must Wales always be a post office for the Department of Health? That was a finding that we made when I was a member of the Royal Commission on the national health service, the only true look into the national health service since it started. Why must we always ape England in the provision of health services? Why does the Secretary of State not deal instead with the many hospitals in Wales at which no waiting list surgery is being done, leaving patients in pain and discomfort?

My hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger), who has vigorously opposed the trust in his area, has taken up the very pertinent matter of NHS trust executive directors' salary packages. Will the Secretary of State assure us that the details of salaries and other payments to senior managers and executive directors of trusts in Wales will be published in future? Certainly, the Pembrokeshire NHS trust seems to be very good for those with a passion for German sports cars but not so good for the patients in Pembrokeshire.

All who care about the NHS in Wales—that is, all my hon. Friends—will be anxious about the service that will be provided in future. We all know about purchasing and providing, but who does the strategic planning? The only strategy that the trusts seem to have is how to make money, not how to provide for the needs of the community.

The Government believe in governing by leak, just like their leaks on the pit closures. First of all, they leaked their plans to the *Western Mail*. The *Western Mail* had all the details about the trusts yesterday. That is another discourtesy to the House. Why does the *Western Mail* seem to have a list of the hospitals that are to be new trusts? The list in the *Western Mail* includes the Royal Gwent, Newport, Singleton, Swansea, West Wales, Carmarthen and the Princess of Wales hospital in Bridgend. Perhaps the Secretary of State for Wales will provide us with the list and tell us the number.

The Government are not really concerned about discussing. Opposition Members greet with a wry smile the Secretary of State's declarations on discussion. We cannot believe that he believes in proper consultation and providing for the health needs of Wales. After all, we should not be too surprised at that because the Secretary of State for Wales, the right hon. Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt), with an English constituency, simply fails to

[Mrs. Ann Clwyd]

understand the passion and the feeling with which we who represent the majority of the people of Wales defend our national health service.

The Secretary of State must understand that we will continue to campaign to prevent the creeping commercialisation of our national health service. We will continue to win the support of the people of Wales because they believe that health is safe in our hands. We created the national health service and we will fight to protect it.

Mr. Hunt: That was a quite disgraceful response. To attempt to be taken seriously on the national health service but to talk about throat-cutting commercialisation is to trivialise the very important issues involved.

The hon. Lady may want to go back to all the arguments that we rehearsed during the last general election when we had much misinformation about the national health service. Indeed, the Labour party thought that it would win the United Kingdom election on that misinformation. It did not win the election because its lies were exposed. The idea that the national health service was being privatised when we were talking about non-profit-making national health service trusts was seen by the public as the nonsense that it undoubtedly was. The hon. Lady should consult some of her hon. Friends. Some Labour Members work closely with national health service trusts in England. I am aware of them in my own area. I find that the trusts put the interests of patients first and improve patient care.

The 13 units are: Clwyd acute north unit, which is at Llanllwyd hospital; Clwyd acute south unit, which is at Wrexham Maelor hospital; Clwyd community and mental health unit; Powys health unit; south Gwent acute unit; Gwent community and mental health unit; Llandough hospital health unit; Ogwr health unit; west unit, which is, of course, Singleton hospital in Swansea; Llanelli/Dinefwr health unit; Carmarthen Dinefwr health unit; Ceredigion health unit; and the Gwent, Powys and South Glamorgan joint proposal for the ambulance service. The hon. Lady will see from that list that the list that she saw in the *Western Mail* was incomplete.

The hon. Lady said that it would be possible for hospitals to transfer out of the national health service into the private sector. That is not possible under the law of this land. I make that absolutely clear. The hon. Lady also mentioned Pembrokeshire. Pembrokeshire has done extremely well. Its NHS treated 6 per cent. more in-patients and 25 per cent. more out-patients in the first four months of operation. That is the truth.

The hon. Lady referred to strategic planning. The national health service in Wales is proud to have not only the finest people working in the service but the finest executive of any service. It has published a strategic intent which I believe is the envy of many other parts of the United Kingdom, Europe—*[Interruption.]*—I was asked about the strategic intent—and the world. I recently met representatives of the World Health Organisation which complimented me—I was proud to receive the compliment as Secretary of State—on the way in which the health service in Wales applied itself to the strategic intent of putting the service in Wales on course to be on a par with the best in Europe and to go into the 21st century, adding years to life and quality life to years. We were the first part of the United Kingdom to have that strategic intent.

I remember the hon. Lady being involved with the Royal Commission on the national health service. That royal commission reported in 1979 after many years of a Labour Government. What did the hon. Lady and her colleagues on the royal commission say about funding? On 25 October 1989, she said:

> "The Royal Commission reported that we had a good and comprehensive health service but that it was grossly underfunded".—*[Official Report, Welsh Grand Committee*, 25 October 1989; c. 88.]

That was thanks to the Labour Government. What has happened since then?

The picture is different now. At that time, my predecessor pointed out to the hon. Lady that in cash terms the funding of the national health service in Wales had trebled. I am happy to tell the House now that funding has quadrupled. We have had to put right the inequities of those years of Labour government. In 1979, less than £500 million was spent on the national health service in Wales; we now spend £1,946 million. That is a fourfold cash increase. The increase in real terms is 67 per cent.

I shall explain that in simple terms. In 1979, the national health service in Wales spent £171 for every man, woman and child. We have now increased that figure to £675. We have remedied the underfunding of the national health service to which the hon. Lady drew attention.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, in some of the consultations, the responses that he has received—even from those people who may not have been convinced by some of the applications—have not shown the hostility to NHS trusts that we have heard from the Opposition Benches? Will he confirm that in the Powys area—a large part of which I represent—there is much support for what Powys health authority has done for health promotion and there is much trust in that NHS trust application?

Mr. Hunt: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend and I am grateful to him for putting the record straight. One of the key criteria for becoming an NHS trust is that the application must demonstrate realistic and achievable measures to improve patient care. That is what is going to happen.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Does the Secretary of State recognise that there will be anger in rural mid-Wales at the dismemberment of the Powys ambulance service into some enormous centralised and independent organisation? Does he accept that he has a long way to go to persuade staff in Welsh hospitals that what he has decided for Powys health authority will benefit the patients? Will he give an undertaking that the Welsh Office will advertise for chairmen and non-executive directors of trusts, so that the selection can be made from a cross-section and is not confined largely to members of his party?

Mr. Hunt: That was a cheap point. The best possible people will have to run the NHS trusts. That is why I have been receiving suggested names from Opposition Members, and why I am considering them carefully. Everyone in Wales knows that we are looking for the best possible people. If Opposition Members think that any people are not being considered, I want to hear from them immediately.

Mr. Carlile: What about the ambulance service?

Mr. Hunt: I am just coming to that, but I must deal with the hon. and learned Gentleman's cheap point. I am determined that the best possible people will be involved in NHS trusts. Approved NHS trusts are committed to improving the ambulance service. That is one of the key points in the applications before me. The NHS trusts are at the forefront of health service reforms, to make the service directly responsive to patients' needs. That is what the trusts will put at the forefront of their objectives.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend recognise that the splendid decision that he announced today will be welcomed by everyone in Clwyd —*[Interruption.]*—by everyone who is sensible and wants the quality of the NHS to improve?

Mr. Hunt: I sometimes wonder why the clear evidence that my hon. Friend has laid before the House is not appreciated on both sides. I shall give some further statistics. In Wales, we are treating 500,000 in-patients, which is an increase of 38 per cent. during the years that we have been in Government, or another 132,750 in-patients, and the number of out-patients has risen by 29 per cent., which is another 122,700. Day cases have increased by 227 per cent. Those are excellent figures and a tribute to the quality of people working in the health service in Wales.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): When the Secretary of State says, "Let's put the record straight", is he aware of what has been going on in the Pembrokeshire NHS trust during the past seven months? He does not refer to that. He says that he assumes that the staff will welcome his announcement because of the benefits that it will bring.

Is he aware that, seven months after the beginning of the trust in Pembrokeshire, not one trade union has been recognised; that the Royal College of Nursing is in dispute with the management of the trust over the application, without consultation, of a local pay spine; that the United States naval facility has entered into a contract with the trust for private ante-natal care; and that the German army has entered into a private contract with the trust for dental care? After seven months of operation, when I receive a letter from the chairman of the Pembrokeshire NHS trust, in reply to my letter concerning the car leasing agreement, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) referred——

Madam Speaker: Order. I regret the fact that questions on the statement are becoming a debate. I remind hon. Members, as well as the Secretary of State, that we want to have questions and answers. That is what statements are all about. We are not in debate. May I have a question from the hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Ainger: May I have the Secretary of State's reaction to the statement by the chairman of the Pembrokeshire NHS trust, in response to my question about the car leasing agreement and salary structures of the executive directors, that that was quite common commercial practice in relation to car leasing deals?

Mr. Hunt: The purpose of the reforms is to take decision-making closer to the people and to have decisions taken locally. I am not going to try to second-guess the national health trust in Pembrokeshire. I do not judge anyone on his or her property or on the car that he or she drives; I judge people on what they are going to do for the national health service in Wales. The Pembrokeshire NHS trust has treated 6 per cent. more in-patients and 25 per cent. more out-patients. That is a pretty good record.

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): Will my right hon. Friend accept congratulations from the Vale of Glamorgan on the tremendous strides that have been made in health care in the past 13 years? Will he acknowledge that we have a particular interest in the future of Llandough hospital and that we look for further improvement in that already great hospital as and when trust status is acquired?

Mr. Hunt: I am glad that my hon. Friend referred to Llandough, because that is one of the applications that I approved today. If I may reiterate a point that fits in very neatly with the points which my hon. Friends are making, approved NHS trusts are committed to attacking waiting times and waiting lists, improving the ambulance service, providing local mental illness and mental handicap services, improving local hospitals, improving individual community care programmes and increasing day care facilities.

We look forward with great optimism to their achieving many of those targets in the years ahead.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): I welcome the Secretary of State's determination to have a new hospital at Neath and Port Talbot, a determination which I have long shared.

Will he expand on his cryptic Whitehallese when he referred to a further improvement over a wider area? Will the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that those are plus words and not minus words and that they mean something beyond the provision of a hospital—not a diminution in capital, the time scale or any specialty at Port Talbot or intended there? Why was Port Talbot singled out? Does this mean a cut at Port Talbot or not?

Mr. Hunt: No, it means exactly what it says. I should like to make some points to the right hon. and learned Gentleman, who was a distinguished predecessor. There is no community hospital programme in West Glamorgan —that is an important point. Elsewhere in Wales, progress is being seen in community care. That is evident. There is a significant move towards day care provision: the twofold increase in West Glamorgan compares with a fivefold increase in Mid Glamorgan and a fourfold increase in East Dyfed. So my statement means exactly what I said: I want to look at further improvements in provision of services in the area beyond the hospital provision, and that is why I have asked for this review.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), who leads for the Opposition, in responding to this statement this afternoon——

Madam Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State is not responsible for what the hon. Lady says. The statement should be questioned.

Mr. Hawkins: Thank you for your guidance, Madam Speaker. May I rephrase the question in this way? Does my right hon. Friend agree that we have heard a great deal this afternoon which has attempted to blacken the work of the NHS trusts in England and which has been used as examples?

[Mr. Hawkins]

Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the experience of the trusts in England has been that waiting lists have been cut dramatically and that "commercial management", which the Opposition think are dirty words, is bringing efficiency to the NHS? The Opposition are concerned about restricted practices and preserving the jobs of those in the Confederation of Health Service Employees and the National Union of Public Employees, not about improving medical standards for patients.

Mr. Hunt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making the point about NHS trusts in England, where throughput has increased, waiting lists have been cut, new equipment has been introduced early and capital expenditure is ahead of schedule. That has been a great success story and we in Wales are determined to share in that success.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): The Minister says that he wants to take decision-making closer to the people. Will he explain how 13 unaccountable quangos, packed with Welsh Office placemen, take decision-making closer to the people? If he is concerned about decision-making and the people, why, in a parliamentary answer to me last week, did he say that of 90 representations that he has received in relation to the Singleton trust, only 19 were in favour?

Mr. Hunt: I read through all the representations and I take them into account before I reach a decision. The whole purpose of creating NHS trusts is to make them more accountable and to take decision-making closer to the people. We shall see the results and the benefits as the NHS trust movement in Wales evolves.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): On the subject of accountability and bringing decision-making closer to the people, will the Secretary of State give an assurance that the chairmen and non-executive directors of the trusts will live in the areas that their trusts service?

Mr. Hunt: As I have said on many occasions previously, I shall take great care in selecting the people who will be involved. I shall not rule anybody out, because that would be wrong. The right hon. Gentleman's point is valid, but the important thing is to have the best possible people.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): The Secretary of State will be aware that, every time the Conservative party has laid its plans for hospital trusts before the people of Wales, they have been decisively rejected, both at by-elections which Conservatives lost during the last Parliament and during the general election. If the right hon. Gentleman and his right hon. and hon. Friends believe that the people of Wales want trusts, why does not he put it to the test and call for a ballot in each of the areas so that the people of Wales have the final decision on the trusts?

Mr. Hunt: Neither I as Secretary of State nor my right hon. and hon. Friends are prepared to walk away from the need to make decisions in these areas. The key decision which we have made is to increase funding substantially for the NHS. I have already made it clear that, since we took office in 1979, cash for the NHS in Wales has been increased fourfold, and that is 67 per cent. more in real terms. We are determined to ensure that every penny and every pound of that money is spent to the best possible effect.

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): The Secretary of State knows that my constituency is serviced by Ysbyty Glan Clwyd and Ysbyty Wrexham Maelor. First, bearing in mind the likely public sector cuts thanks to the Government's handling of the economy, can he guarantee to my constituents that there will be funding for the new hospital trust that he has created from those two hospitals? Will he guarantee that neither hospital will have more private beds after trust status than before? Thirdly, as staff morale in Wrexham is poor, will he ensure that it faces no more ward closures or staff cuts?

Mr. Hunt: I remind the hon. Gentleman that it is thanks to the Government that we have Wrexham Maelor hospital. It was built under this Government. I cannot preview the outcome of the public expenditure survey, but the hon. Gentleman can judge us by results. To quadruple in cash terms the funding for the NHS in Wales is a good advertisement. On the hon. Gentleman's remaining points, the whole point of NHS trusts is to take decision-making on such issues closer to the people. That is down to the NHS trust itself.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that, in Clwyd, there is no popular backing for trust status at the great hospitals at Wrexham and Glan Clwyd at Rhyl? Is not the right hon. Gentleman proposing a high-risk policy for which there is no backing from the people of Wales? Is it not a dark day in the history of his office that he should now be proposing this wretched measure, coming as it does after water privatisation and the poll tax?

Mr. Hunt: I have always had a lot of time and respect for the hon. Gentleman, but he has gone a bit over the top. We are proud of our record in the NHS in Wales. Wrexham Maelor hospital was built thanks to this Government providing the necessary funding—there has been a number of such examples under the Government. We have increased funding to record levels and we now want to introduce the right reforms to take management closer to the people to ensure that every penny and every pound is spent to the benefit of patients. That is the key to the reforms.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Is the Secretary of State aware that, in the West Glamorgan area, there is widespread fear that the new Neath and Port Talbot hospital will be a victim of the Government's capital spending cuts? Will he give us an absolute assurance that he is committed to a capital programme during the next few years which involves ring-fencing the sum of £80 million, with the specialties provided as part of the plan also being protected? Will he also confirm that, as part of his review, he intends to establish a new ambulance service trust for Dyfed and west Glamorgan, a proposal which, if carried through, will be bitterly resented by local people?

Mr. Hunt: On the first point, I remind the hon. Gentleman that the representations that I received in Neath were very much to the effect that the hospital should not be built on the site, because it was felt at the time that the hospital should be in Neath rather than in Port Talbot.

Mr. Hain: They wanted a new hospital.

Mr. Hunt: They did want a new hospital, but do not let us rewrite history. As I said in my statement, I remain determined that there will be a new hospital on this site. I have made that clear. But against the background of the changing health picture in Wales, it is right to have a review, which I have asked to report to me by next spring so that I can consider the overall situation. Any future applications are a matter for the applicants.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): Has the Secretary of State a policy for whole district applications for opt-out?

Mr. Hunt: My policy is to look at each application on its merits.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): First, if any of the trusts gets into financial difficulty and is in debt, will the Secretary of State pick up the tab for that debt? Secondly, as the Secretary of State knows, Wales has one of the highest incidences of cardiac disease of any country in the western world. Will his announcement today affect in any way the possibility that a second cardiac surgical unit will be built in south Wales, providing 400 adult open heart operations a year?

Mr. Hunt: The need for a second cardiac centre is continuing to be reviewed for us by consultants. We are talking about units and trusts within the NHS, which will be funded in the time-honoured way through the NHS. People cannot criticise the Government for underfunding, in the way that the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) criticised the Labour Government in the 1970s for underfunding, because we have substantially increased funding. We are determined to ensure that the money is spent in the best possible way for the patients.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Will the alien governor-general for Wales tell us, the elected representatives of the people of Wales, a little more about the most careful consideration that he gave to the representations that he received? On the three trusts for Gwent, how many people supported the ideas and how many were opposed?

Mr. Hunt: I do not recognise the description, but I shall still answer the question. I gave very careful attention to all the representations that I received.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): Will the Secretary of State tell us the number of representations supporting the trust status application for Carmarthen hospital and the number opposing it? My experience over many years has been that thousands of people have queued up to sign petitions that we have organised about the trust application. The overwhelming feeling of the public is total opposition to those trusts.

Mr. Hunt: I shall supply the individual figures. We asked for responses from 5,000 organisations and individuals and received about 400. I assure the House again that I carefully considered all the responses that I received.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): The Secretary of State will be aware that the Ogwr health unit undertook eight public meetings in my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) and that the consensus was against the establishment of a trust. In the trust document and in those public meetings, two points of view were put forward by the management for the trust: first, that it would improve local accountability; and, secondly, that it would ensure that phase 2 of the Princess of Wales hospital would be started. That information was contained in the trust document. In my response through the Bridgend constituency Labour party, I asked whether, if the trust was to be appointed, a guarantee would be given that that capital programme would be carried out. Will the Secretary of State give us that assurance?

On local accountability, will he assure us that the people chosen to be non-executive directors will have a proven track record of interest in the health service? Will he publish the names of all those people before he makes his decisions?

Mr. Hunt: A number of questions are coming in my direction, and, if I am to deal with them all, that will take a considerable time. On representations, we sent out our request for consultation to 5,000 organisations and recipients. We received 416 responses, 192 of which opposed the proposals. I recognise that that is a majority. However, applications for national health service trust status raise complex issues and it is important for representations received to be considered by the Secretary of State, alongside the individual merits of the application document. In the main, representations focused on the general principle of national health service reform and the trusts themselves, rather than on specific issues raised in the applications.

On the specific issue that the hon. Gentleman raises, I can give no guarantees, because the exact amount available next year for capital and income is not yet known to me. I shall make my announcements in the usual way, and people in Wales will have to judge the Welsh Office and the Government on their results. The results are that we now have record funding for the national health service in cash and real terms.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): As the Government's justification for trust status is that it would introduce competition into the health service, why was trust status now been given to Llandough hospital in South Glamorgan but denied to the Cardiff royal infirmary? It cannot be because of the financial difficulties of the CRI, because, although it is in difficulty with spending at 1·7 per cent. over budget, Llandough is 1·2 per cent. over budget. If there is to be competition for health care, why are some hospitals not allowed to compete? We know that the plan is to close the CRI, and it is not having a chance to compete with other hospitals.

Mr. Hunt: May I make it clear that I can deal only with applications for national health service trust status which are received by me and meet the criteria? I received an application for Llandough which met the criteria. I have not received an application that meets the criteria from the CRI. We must take into account, in the context of the review that I have explained, future health care in South Glamorgan.

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): Will the Secretary of State accept from me the fact that there is dismay in Clwyd at the announcement of his decision today? Will he publish for me the consultation replies of Glanclwyd and Wrexham so that we can see how many supported it and how many were against? Why is he so coy in naming chairmen today, bearing in mind that it is well known in Clwyd—I have heard from the individual himself—that

[Mr. David Hanson]

one individual has already told everybody that he is to be chairman of the new Glanclwyd trust? Why does not the Secretary of State name him today?

Mr. Hunt: Because I have not yet decided who should be chairman. With the qualification that I must be careful to check that individuals were aware that their responses would be published, I shall do my best to meet the hon. Gentleman's request about representations.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Will the Secretary of State consider the nomination of Sir Anthony Meyer, Baronet, who, for some reason, is the only former Tory Welsh Member of Parliament not to have been given a quango post? As the Secretary of State will know, the proposed Morriston hospital trust will include the new burns and plastic unit transferred from Chepstow. In that new regime of purchaser and provider, will the Secretary of State give a clear undertaking that he will protect the integrity of that new unit for the first years?

Mr. Hunt: I am happy to give the assurance that there will be special provision for the first two years for regional units.

I have always felt very close to Anthony Meyer. I have a great deal of respect for him, and the hon. Gentleman's move to propose him for a post is welcome. I promise to give it careful consideration.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the Secretary of State accept from those of us who represent Welsh constituencies and whose constituents go to those hospitals the fact that we shall watch carefully, during the five months until those trusts are formed, to see that there is no further squeeze on the finances of those hospitals? The abolition of all waiting list surgery, for example, at Llandough, Prince of Wales and Cardiff royal infirmary should not continue until 1 April so that the national health service trusts look artifically good next year and are able to say, "We are re-starting operations which we have not seen for eight months at Llandough and for six months at Cardiff royal infirmary." I am sure that the same thing will happen elsewhere in Wales regarding waiting list work.

Before the Secretary of State announces his decision on the 1994 trusts—the so-called third wave—on which he asks for an expression of interest today, will he carry out an independent evaluation on whether those hospitals are performing better than the hospitals that have already been put into the trust status framework by today's announcement? Parliament will then be able to make a proper comparison between trust and non-trust hospitals to see which perform better, before the right hon. Gentleman finally makes a commitment to put other hospitals in the third wave before April 1994.

Will the right hon. Gentleman also tell us a little more about the appointing procedure, following the point made by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile)? We are anxious to see that the procedure for the choice of chairman or chairwoman and the non-executive directors is made regardless of race, creed, sex and political persuasion. Will he give us guarantees about how that will be achieved?

On the confusing situation in South Glamorgan in particular, where the right hon. Gentleman has declared that the Llandough trust can have the go-ahead, there is a messy situation in the other major hospital groups and in the ambulance trust, where, apart from the Llandough hospital, no proper unit managers are in post. The ambulance trust manager is on extended sick leave. The Whitchurch hospital has an acting unit manager. The Cardiff royal infirmary has an acting unit manager, as does Heath hospital. Until this management chaos is put right, will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that no further moves are made to set up trusts?

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the figures he has given on funding of the health service in Wales wholly contradict those given to me by the former Member for Pembroke, Mr. Nicholas Bennett, just before the last election? It was like drawing teeth, but Mr. Bennett reluctantly gave us the figures for the period of the last Labour Government. After allowing for the health service inflation rate, the rate of increase in real resources going into the NHS in Wales rose by 2·8 per cent. a year under Labour. Since the Government came to office, it has risen by 2·3 per cent. a year. So the real purchasing power of the NHS, on behalf of patients, rose 20 per cent. faster under Labour than under the Conservatives.

Finally, will the right hon. Gentleman give us more details about the representations that he has received? Every time he has been asked this afternoon by hon. Members on behalf of their constituents what representations he has received and whether they were in favour of or against the formation of trusts, he has suddenly been struck dumb. Why? How many people were in favour and how many were against the formation of trusts? We who represent the people of Wales know that, apart from the accountants and managers who will do well out of this, not to mention the German sports car salesmen, who will do extremely well out of it, the overwhelming majority do not support the formation of any more trusts than the pathetic one that we already have in Wales.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman said that he was going to watch me carefully. I thought that he was doing that already. I am not paranoid, but I sometimes look over my shoulder when I am strolling along the road to see whether he is following me. His scrutiny is remarkably assiduous, and I pay tribute to it: he is a good parliamentarian. I sometimes think that he is listening to almost every meeting that I take part in. He is always so well informed —except that on this occasion he has got it wrong.

The hon. Gentleman ought to have a word with his hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley before he claims that the Labour Government did not grossly underfund the national health service.

Mr. Win Griffiths: He did not say that.

Mr. Hunt: I am so sorry. The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) appears to be telling me that his hon. Friend did say that the Labour Government grossly underfunded the national health service. The two of them had better go out and get their act together, because that is what the hon. Member for Cynon Valley said.

I will pay careful attention to every aspect of the applications that may be made in 1994. Of course I will look at the performance of all the hospitals in Wales when reaching a decision. I have made it clear that these trusts remain fully part of the national health service and part of the strategic intent of the health service in Wales. They are introducing new management arrangements into the family of the NHS, but they are still part of it. I am responsible for the health service in Wales, so I will pay careful attention to all these aspects.

We will make sure that we appoint the best possible people, as I have said before. No decisions will be taken on applications until there has been wide public consultation for three months and until I have been able to consider the results.

The applications have demonstrated to me—I refer to the ones that I am allowing today—that they will benefit patients and that those who made them are committed to improving services. Only time will tell whether they are able to live up to expectations. Today I am giving the trusts the opportunity to show us that NHS trusts can be as successful in Wales as they have been in England and that we can maintain our strategic intent to put the NHS in Wales on course to be on a par with the best in Europe as we enter the 21st century. That is a good objective. With all the good people whom we have working in the NHS in Wales, I am determined to attain that objective and proudly boast it to the rest of the world.

Railways

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Madam Speaker: We now come to the debate on the White Paper "New Opportunities for the Railways". I must remind hon. Members that between 7 pm and 9pm this evening speeches must be limited to 10 minutes. Will Members speaking outside that period please exercise voluntary restraint? The interest in this debate is considerable and commendable.

5.4 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John MacGregor): I am very pleased that we have this opportunity to debate the White Paper "New Opportunities for the Railways". The White Paper proposals are designed to make further substantial improvements in the way that Britain's railways meet the modern needs of customers, both passenger and freight. They are as significant a turning point as the nationalisation of the railways in 1948.

The Second Reading of the Bill will provide the occasion to start looking at the proposals in detail. Today I think that it would be more useful if I described the background and the thinking behind the policy, set it in the broader context of transport policy, and touched on the details of some of the more important aspects.

First let me say something about the timetable. I discussed this with the Select Committee when I gave evidence to it yesterday, but it would be right to inform the whole House.

I want to make two points clear. First, there has been growing interest among many people inside and outside the House. My hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport and I have been addressing a number of well-attended conferences. One of the problems is that this can lead to too great an expectation of when things will begin to happen. Because people are interested in franchises they believe that franchises will come about almost immediately and they want to know all the details right now. So it is important to be clear about the timetable.

We will introduce the primary legislation towards the end of next month or thereabouts, depending on the parliamentary timetable. I do not want to be too specific about the date at this stage. Thereafter, the Bill will go through both Houses, and subject to the will of both Houses I hope that we will be able to achieve Royal Assent some time during the summer of 1993.

It will then be necessary to set up the authorities that will be established under the Bill. They are referred to in the White Paper. Then the franchising authority, in the case of passenger franchises, can start the tendering process to obtain responses on franchises. That means that it will be the spring of 1994 before the first operations begin. Those who are trying hard to know everything about every detail at this stage should bear this timetable in mind.

Secondly, I am determined to ensure that we have policies which achieve our objectives but are workable and get the best response from the market place. Anything to do with British Rail, as we know, is complex. We are doing a huge amount of work, but it is important that it be carried out in consultation with British Rail, the private

[Mr. John MacGregor]

sector and consumer interests. It is important that we get the practical details right, so over the months ahead we will provide a series of consultation documents which will carry forward our thinking and obtain responses from interested parties.

For the benefit of the House, I will list some of these documents. The document on passenger franchising is already published. There will soon, I hope, be a consultation document setting out how we intend to proceed in detail with the British transport police. Next month, I hope, there will be a document on leasing in the new era. Then, before the end of the year, we will release a document on precisely how we intend to proceed on consumer consultation. We have had a number of responses already from bodies interested in that.

At the end of the year, I intend to publish an important document on access and charging. Then, around the turn of the year, there will be a document on pensions. Early in the new year, I hope that we will have a document on safety, based largely on the report of the Health and Safety Executive. In February or March, we intend to have a document on restructuring the freight business. All these documents will inform the debate as the Bill goes through the House.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Since the White Paper was published, there has been a major change, in that the Government propose to close 31 pits. What advice did the right hon. Gentleman give the Government and the President of the Board of Trade on the likely financial effect on British Rail of the loss of those 31 pits? What will be the effect on manpower and on the prospects for the current proposals generally?

Mr. MacGregor: At this stage it is not possible to say, because, as the hon. Gentleman knows, a review is being carried out. We must await the outcome of that review which will be examined by British Rail in detail because it has many aspects.

Our proposals for the privatisation and liberalisation of the railways fit well into the developing process of transport policies over the years. As the White Paper makes clear:

> "Our objective is to improve the quality of railway services by creating many new opportunities for private sector involvement. This will mean more competition, greater efficiency and a wider choice of services more closely tailored to what customers want."

The proposals are driven by that and not by any consideration of getting receipts for the Exchequer. We have made it clear that

> "there will not be substantial proceeds for the Exchequer."

Our proposals can be best understood by standing back and looking at long term trends in transport policy, of which they are a natural and logical outcome.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. MacGregor: No, because I must make some progress. Many hon. Members wish to speak.

Against the background that I have outlined, the House will see that there is greater common ground than is sometimes suggested. The 1945 Labour Government extended state control and ownership to a peacetime peak. Almost all transport infrastructure—roads, railways, ports, airports and canals—was owned by the state or by local authorities. Apart from private cars, which at that time were still in short supply, most transport operations were also owned by the public sector. That included buses, trains, trams, aircraft, ferries, and even many heavy lorries. There was also extensive state control by regulation and licensing.

The bulk of those restrictions were aimed not at safety but at economic control, including preventing the entry of new operators to the market. State control and central planning of that kind did not work. Its keynote was artificial protection of certain operators, and it put the interests of the incumbent producer above those of the consumer. It could not hold a candle to the market and competition as the best ways of showing what the travelling public and freight customers want, and enabling transport operators to respond accordingly. Over the years, more and more people have come to accept this analysis. However, I am not sure about the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), whose enthusiasm for central planning sometimes harks back to such a past.

As a result of the acceptance of that analysis, since the early 1950s and especially since 1979, the whole thrust of transport policy has been to dismantle state ownership and control and replace it with a market-led transport system. The move to a market system has been achieved in a variety of ways, principally by privatisation and deregulation. We have transferred to private ownership vital transport infrastructures such as ports and airports and coach stations, and most transport operations including airlines, road haulage, shipping and most buses. We have also removed economic controls. There is a free market in freight. Controls over the quantity of freight which road hauliers may carry have long since been swept away.

The same principles of deregulation have been applied to passenger transport. Bus operators outside London may now provide any service they choose. We lead the way in Community initiatives to liberalise all modes of transport. Our policy is also to extend the involvement of the private sector, even where privatisation is not possible. For example, support services for activities remaining in the public sector should be contracted out to the private sector wherever that offers value for money. Only the market can show where the best value for money lies, so there should be competitive testing of the market. I believe that all Conservative Members subscribe to these principles of transport policy, and I suspect that in their heart of hearts, so do many Opposition Members.

I shall now look in more detail at how these policies for the extension of market disciplines have been applied to railways and deal first with privatisation. The non-core activities of the railway have been gradually sold to the private sector. For example, all BR's ships and hotels were sold in the early 1980s. Various smaller BR support services, including station catering and advertising, have also been sold. I recently authorised BR to go ahead with the early sale of Red Star, its premium parcels business. I take it that no one now argues that the public sector can run ships, hotels or parcels services better than the private sector. If Opposition Members can agree on that, we really shall have established the common ground on which to build agreement on our White Paper proposals.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): The right hon. Gentleman should look behind him.

Mr. MacGregor: I am quite sure that my hon. Friends do not think that it makes sense to transfer back to the public sector hotels, ships and so on. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, because he has demonstrated my point.

The role of the private sector has been extended in other ways, and a good example is in the freight business. Nearly 40 per cent. of all freight wagons are owned by the private sector, some locomotives have been purchased by freight customers and BR makes extensive use of the private sector in property development. It does not risk its own money, but uses private sector property companies to do this. Thus we are already involving private capital in the railways, and there can be no doubt that it is best for the private sector to take on as many as possible of these activities.

The railways have also been deregulated. As in most countries, railways in the United Kingdom were historically subject to extensive regulation. Now BR has been freed from, for example, common carrier obligations and from the straitjacket of fixed charges. All this is entirely right, because BR is in competition and should have the commercial freedoms which go with that. But BR provides public services which would not survive in a purely commercial environment: hence the continuation of socially necessary lines and considerable subsidies. In the interests of getting better value for money BR has, with the strong support of the Government, provided those services more efficiently by adopting an increasingly commercial approach. Therefore, BR looks to the market for as much of its income as possible, because the willingness of the customer to pay for a service such as that is an excellent indication of its value. The railway should not become overdependent on subsidy.

British Rail has also adopted a more businesslike structure based on the railway's markets. It is split into three passenger businesses, two freight businesses and a parcels business, each of which is responsible for its own assets, including the track of which it is the principal user. Each of these internal businesses is measured by its own profit and loss account.

That means that there has already been some privatisation, some extension of the role of the private sector, deregulation, and an increasingly commercial approach. This more market-led policy has meant an improved BR. It is still a very large transport undertaking, but it has become a more specialised business. BR has fewer assets, but they are used much more intensively. Its financial performance, by the standards of continental public sector railways, is good. It has concentrated more and more on what it can do best, especially InterCity services, commuting and heavy freight, and no doubt there will be more opportunities to be exploited, especially with the advent of the channel tunnel.

The benefits of this move towards the market have been substantial, and have gone with the grain of the rest of transport policy. That poses the questions: why not complete the process and privatise the railways, and can and should privatisation be accompanied by liberalisation? The benefits of privatisation and liberalisation in other industries have been immense. The key test is whether we believe that turning the clock back would improve efficiency and services for the customer. Does anyone seriously believe that British Airways would perform better as a nationalised industry? One can apply that in other areas. The answers are obvious. Privatisation and liberalisation have brought such benefits elsewhere in transport that the onus of proof should rest with the opponents of railway privatisation.

British Rail passenger and freight businesses have been run as public sector monopolies since 1947. Despite all the improvements, they still have all the hallmarks of such nationalised industries. They are correctly constrained in their investment plans because public borrowing must be controlled, they are producer-led in their planning and are, inevitably, less responsive to the specific needs and demands of their customers, and management and staff have no direct equity ownership incentive to improve their performance.

These disadvantages manifest themselves in uneven performance and in the dissatisfaction of many customers. Many steps have been taken to improve performance, including now the passengers charter, but we need to solve the problems with more radical reforms.

Railways have been at the back of the privatisation queue because of their very weak financial performance. We cannot simply sell BR as a single entity—complete with its social obligations—because at the moment BR as a single entity is not financially viable. For that reason, railway privatisation is less straightforward than other privatisations. Our task has been to find other ways in which to maximise the amount of outright privatisation, and—short of that—to maximise the involvement of the private sector in a competitive framework.

As BR cannot to sold as a single entity, we must first ask which parts can and should be sold—on top of those that have been sold already. The obvious answer is the rail freight and parcels businesses. They operate in truly competitive markets. They have long had commercial remits within BR, but they have not prospered within the confines of BR ownership and public finance. Indeed, the record has been one of relentless decline. The best prospect for them, in an increasingly competitive market, is under the fresh disciplines of the market and private ownership.

In the many discussions that I have had with BR's ex-freight customers, its current freight customers and those who I hope are its potential freight customers, the same point has been made: that rail freight needs to be more commercial in its approach, more customer-oriented and more responsive. In other words, it should act like a private-sector business. Now it will have the chance.

A major study is in hand to recommend the best way in which the rail freight business should be reorganised and offered for sale. The study, and our eventual conclusions, will take full account of what is likely to best meet customer demand. The most likely outcome is competitive trade sales in 1994. It is our intention that BR will withdraw from all involvement in rail freight operations, so there will be no question of a conflict of interest with privately owned freight operations. Freight operators will not have exclusive rights. New entrants will be welcomed and encouraged. I recognise that the key question will be the terms on which freight operators will have access to the track. As I said earlier, we will bring forward proposals for changes probably around the end of the year.

We cannot create an entirely privatised and competitive structure for the passenger railway. Many services do not at present—some, perhaps, cannot ever—stand on their own financial feet, but they have to be provided for wider social reasons. However, franchising gives us a way

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forward. Its two main attractions are, first, that it allows the private sector to take management and financial responsibility for services—this includes, where necessary, providing the subsidy directly to the private sector operator. Secondly, it creates some competition within the market, including competition for the right to provide the franchised services, both when they are offered initially and then at the point of renewal.

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): If we are to improve passenger services, we shall presumably need improved levels of investment. According to the Secretary of State's proposals, one body will be responsible for the track, while another body—or a number of bodies—will be responsible for the rolling stock. How, in those circumstances, will we be able to achieve a rational approach to investment decisions?

Let me give an example. The midland main line to Sheffield is in need of improvement: faster trains are needed to travel to Sheffield and other cities along the route. A rational approach would be to compare two options—improving the alignment of the track to enable traditional trains to run more quickly, and introducing on the existing track the tilting trains that are now in operation in Italy and Sweden, and under consideration in Germany.

Some organisation would have to evaluate those two investment alternatives. How can that be done if different bodies are responsible for the track and the rolling stock?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not want to go into too much detail, because it would take too long. Briefly, investment in the track will be the responsibility of Railtrack. Railtrack's income will basically come from charges, but —as paragraph 43 of the White Paper makes clear—there is a possibility of grants.

There will be a variety of ways in which an operator will be able to acquire rolling stock. My hon. Friend the Minister will describe them in more detail later, but we hope that the creation of a leasing market will help.

The precise relationship between the two bodies will lie in the contracts that Railtrack makes with the franchisee. That will be done through the franchising authority. We shall be happy to spell out the position in much greater detail in due course.

Let me make one thing clear, however. As the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) knows, although British Rail at present enjoys record levels of investment, there will always inevitably be constraints on investment in the public sector. An important part of our proposals will be to attract increasing levels of private investment over the years to come.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): The White Paper talks of creating a second-hand market, which is very exciting for all of us. There is, however, a problem in connection with new technology. Is my right hon. Friend seriously suggesting that private companies will invest in new technology to try to drag our railways into the 21st century, when the trains are still running on tracks that were built in the 19th? Who will find the huge sums involved?

Mr. MacGregor: We are finding considerable sums already, as my hon. Friend knows. I have been looking into railways in other countries, and I note that they—knowing the size of the public-sector burden that they currently bear—are increasingly looking to privatisation as a solution. That, of course, is not true of all of them.

The entire structure of the railways must be tailored to customer demand. I know of my hon. Friend's passion for the railways, and of his expertise—his books are excellent —but he must not allow nostalgia about the past to cloud his thinking about the future. Pouring more and more public money into the system will not necessarily provide a railway service that meets modern customer requirements, given the many other competing demands for that money.

A Labour Government would find the same. Before the general election, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East tried to suggest that Labour would invest a great deal more in the railways, but was rapidly cut down to size by his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), who now leads his party.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): When did he say that?

Mr. MacGregor: We kept asking where the increase in funding would occur, but at no point could the hon. Gentleman give us a specific answer. There was a constant conflict between his hints about what a Labour Government would spend and the tax proposals of his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East. It became obvious that large increases in public spending could not be entertained, because Labour had not the tax policies to enable that—and because the tax policies that it had were rejected by the electorate.

Mr. Prescott: The Secretary of State lost his way as soon as he began his challenge. The issue, clearly, was whether we could use leasing for a publicly owned industry. I note that the Secretary of State is about to talk about leasing. Many publicly owned European railways have adopted it, and we propose to do the same.

The Secretary of State said that our proposal was rejected by my right hon. and learned Friend the present leader of the Opposition, when he was shadow Chancellor. Will he now tell us exactly what my right hon. and learned Friend said, and when he said it, or else withdraw his remark?

Mr. MacGregor: We costed the programmes that the Labour party presented, and Labour kept rejecting our figures. It then became very clear that the then shadow Chancellor was sitting on those public expenditure programmes, knowing very well that they could not be entertained.

Moreover, the hon. Gentleman's suggestion of leasing through the private sector for a publicly owned undertaking has one extreme disadvantage. Inevitably, that leasing must be guaranteed by the public sector—by the Government. At that point, it scores as public expenditure. It was clear from the exchanges that took place before the election that Labour had to accept that. It was said very clearly in exchanges on housing. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East has never been able to get over that point.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): To follow up the point made by the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) about funding, I met the director of ScotRail during the summer and put to him the case for the investment of £750 million in the west coast line from London to Glasgow, something that has been demanded by the public in Scotland for many years. I asked him, "What is the future for that line?" He said, "I can't answer, in the light of the White Paper. I have only a one-year horizon."

If British Rail and ScotRail have only a one-year horizon and no plans to upgrade that line, under what mechanism will private investors come along and invest? As for the social desirability of retaining lines north of Glasgow, most of which are unprofitable, what guarantee can the Secretary of State give Scottish commuters that the lines will be retained? That is a burning question in Scotland.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall deal with the socially necessary lines later in my speech. We have already made our position clear on that issue. We cannot give a guarantee for all time about any particular line. That has never been done. If there is no demand for a service, due to changes in market demand, the service eventually has to close. That has happened frequently since the nationalisation of the railways. However, we have given a clear guarantee that we intend to maintain the national network and to maintain the subsidies for socially necessary lines. The subsidies, through the public service obligation grants, are quite extensive. In the current year they amount to about £1 billion. We intend to continue those subsidies, either through franchisees bidding for them or through British Rail, where there are no franchisees, continuing to receive them.

Another great advantage of franchising is that it will identify the costs of providing individual services or groups of services and direct subsidy accordingly. I make no apology for that. An important advantage—one of the many advantages of our proposals—is that the subsidies going to individual franchisees will become much more transparent. Parliament and the public should know more precisely how their money, as taxpayers, is being spent.

I intend to make a few more points about our franchising proposals, for a great deal of interest has already been expressed in them. As the House will know, I have recently published a consultation document on franchising. It is being reprinted at the moment because of the very heavy demand for it. About 50 companies have already expressed an interest in taking up the franchising opportunity.

The consultation document has two main purposes: first, to give more details of the principles and broad framework of the franchising system and, secondly, to test the market to see what services the private sector would be interested in operating under franchising arrangements and how it thinks the franchising process could best be carried out. Unlike some other countries—for example, Japan and the United States where there are franchised operations—we do not have any private sector passenger operators, apart from a few in very specialised areas. Therefore, we have to build up the private sector supply side and shape franchises and the franchising process so that they take into account market concerns.

We have deliberately not prescribed a universal blueprint for franchises. They can vary considerably in size, length and the amount of risk transferred to the private sector. We intend that as much risk as possible, including revenue risk, should be transferred to the private sector. *[Interruption.]* I do not know why Opposition Members laugh about that. There is great advantage in having flexibility in the franchises so that they can respond to what the marketplace and customers want. We need to design franchises to match private sector interests in order to generate a proper and competitive response.

Effective competition for franchises will help to ensure that private sector bids reflect value for money. We shall not let franchises if bids do not represent value for money. That is why it is so important for us to consult widely with potential franchisees to ensure that the franchising system is responsive to the demands of the market and that it is sufficiently flexible to embrace the new ideas and fresh thinking that the private sector will bring to the running of passenger train services.

I hope to select the first pilot services—I emphasise the word "pilot"—for franchising early in the new year to enable British Rail to go ahead with all the necessary restructuring, not least of its accounts, so that some services will be ready to let in 1994. Preparations will need to be painstaking and thorough. British Rail will have to restructure its activities so that the franchised services constitute free-standing businesses that can readily be transferred to the private sector. It will also establish a track record. It does not necessarily follow that the selection of those services means that they will be the first franchised services. That will depend upon applications. However, the selection of those services will enable British Rail to start to rearrange the system so that it can respond to franchise requirements.

That is not the end of the consultative process. The franchising of passenger services will be undertaken progressively. The new franchising authority will maintain a dialogue with existing and potential franchisees to ensure that their views are taken into account in subsequent franchise competitions. That will ensure that the franchising system remains responsive to the marketplace.

Most franchisees will require subsidy to operate franchised services. We shall make sufficient funds available to the franchising authority to ensure that quality of service is maintained. The quality of service required will be specified in individual franchise contracts.

The principal way of introducing competition into the passenger market is through competition for franchises. As with freight, we also intend to provide a regime that will allow independent operators—this is an additional way of introducing competition into the passenger market through franchises—on to the system. By independent operators, I mean those who do not require subsidy. Only those going for franchises will be able to bid for subsidy. Potential commercial operators have already identified a number of market opportunities.

Private sector operators are more likely to be responsive in this way to the market. So, especially with economic growth, we can expect independent operators to expand the number of services that can be operated without subsidy and, accordingly, to move the boundary between franchised and independent services.

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): There is concern in my constituency today. British Rail Maintenance Ltd., which employs 1,500 people, has announced that because of the reduced work load next year it is seeking voluntary redundancies. There is widespread suspicion that that is associated with plans to privatise BRML. Can the Secretary of State say when he will announce whether BRML will be privatised, and can he give us an assurance

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that no atempt will be made to run down the work in Eastleigh either before or after privatisation, if that is what is agreed?

Mr. MacGregor: What has happened today is designed to deal with current market conditions. It is not connected with the franchising process.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I must get on, because many hon. Members want to speak.

The participation of the private sector in the operation of passenger services should also enable a leasing market to develop for rolling stock.

Mrs. Dunwoody: When?

Mr. Macgregor: Following privatisation. Private sector franchisees will inevitably be interested in spreading the cost of new equipment over its life, in the same way as shipping and airline companies do. With financial risks transferred out of the public sector, new rolling stock investment will be outside the constraints of public expenditure.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. MacGregor: No, I must get on.

There are considerable advantages in the development of such a leasing market and the stimulus that that can provide to investment and the United Kingdom railway manufacturing industry. My hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport is chairing a working party that includes representatives of potential passenger franchisees, the rail manufacturing industry, financial institutions and, of course, the Government in order to make further progress in this important area. I expect to receive their advice on the development of a rail leasing industry within three months.

These policies for expanding the role of the private sector and for greater competition depend upon getting the structure of the railways right. I have already mentioned the vital role of the access and charging regime. The responsibility for allocating train paths will rest with Railtrack, which will own and operate the infrastructure. It is vital that Railtrack be neutral in that process. It will not therefore itself operate any passenger or freight services. It will also be policed by the new rail regulator who will provide a further guarantee of fair treatment for operators.

There are many other important issues with which I can deal only briefly, such as safeguarding some of the important features of the present system. We are committed to preserving through-ticketing, which the regulator will secure by means of suitable terms and conditions in licences.

I expect operators to reach voluntary agreement among themselves about the provision of other network benefits. The regulator will have a duty to promote competition and to protect the interests of users. He will have powers to require operators to participate in other joint arrangements where he considers it desirable to secure co-operation between them, but we do not want to pin down future operators simply to replicating all aspects of BR's present system. New operators will need flexibility to improve and innovate.

Other safeguards will protect the continuity of services. We have made it clear that the statutory closure procedure for passenger services will be no weaker than the present one. We have given a clear commitment, which I am happy to repeat, to continue to provide subsidy where necessary to support loss-making but socially necessary services. The aim of our policy is not to cut services or to fossilise the existing timetable but to achieve greater responsiveness to passengers, improved efficiency and a better railway.

Consideration for the safety of the travelling public and the work force has been of paramount importance to the Government. We are committed to ensuring the safe operation of the railways, and our proposals were drawn up with the expert advice of the Health and Safety Commission, which will continue to have a role in the development of proposals. It has been asked to arrange a thorough study of the safety implications of the proposals in the White Paper and to make detailed recommendations, which will be published.

Primary responsibility for safety will rest with Railtrack, as the track authority, with individual operators being responsible for ensuring the safety of their own operations. Specific standards of safety will have to be met, and the Health and Safety Executive will monitor and enforce those standards across the industry.

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. MacGregor: It is better if I deal with the many points in which people are interested and then allow individual concerns to be raised in the debate. There will be many opportunities to respond to them thereafter.

Rail operators will have to demonstrate their ability to comply with safety regulations before being allowed access, and the powers of Her Majesty's inspectorate will be extended beyond those currently allowed under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to ensure continued safe rail operation.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport and I are holding meetings with rail unions to address their specific concerns. Some staff will remain with Railtrack. Arrangements will be made for other staff to transfer to successor companies as they are created. Staff transferring to new undertakings under transfer schemes will do so with their existing terms and conditions of employment, including concessionary travel and collective bargaining arrangements, protected under the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment Regulations—or TUPE as they are known—and the European Community's acquired rights directive. Thereafter, any changes to terms and conditions will have to be negotiated in the normal way.

Future employment requirements will be for new employers. In this, as in any other industry, there cannot be guarantees of future levels of employment, but skilled and experienced railway men will be needed as much in the future railway industry as in the present one.

BR staff who transfer to franchised service operators, or who work in part of the railway industry that is sold outright, or who carry out support activities that have been contracted out, will have the opportunity to take part in management-led employee buy-outs. We shall encourage these buy-outs with financial assistance for groups of managers and staff, although they will of course have to bid in competition with other genuinely interested companies. BR will reimburse 85 per cent. of the first £10,000 and 75 per cent. of the remainder up to a maximum of £100,000 for each bid team. Assistance will be repayable only in the event of a bid succeeding.

I know from discussions with unions and BR management that pension rights are very important to existing employees. The pension rights of existing contributors and past employees will be properly safeguarded. BR and the Government are conducting a detailed review of pensions arrangements in the industry in connection with privatisation. The review's highest priority will be to ensure that the security of the rights now enjoyed by members and pensioners of the BR schemes is not undermined. Converting the BR pension scheme into an industry-wide scheme, which has been advocated by a number of people within BR, is one of the options being considered. I have already said that I will publish a further document on the subject.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Will the Secretary of State assure us that the pension rights of British Rail employees will not be treated in the same way as those of members of British Rail Engineering Ltd. when it was sold to a private employer?

Mr. MacGregor: When we publish our document, the hon. Lady will see that we shall be able to meet fully the commitments that I have given today.

We are working closely with Sir Bob Reid and BR senior management to ensure that our proposals are implemented safely, practicably and to a timetable that is suitable and that achieves our objectives. I intend to introduce the primary legislation soon. Subject to the will of Parliament, Royal Assent in 1993 would be followed by vesting of Railtrack in April 1994 and the sale of freight businesses and the first franchises in 1994. On the access and charging regime, we shall implement the requirements of European Community directive 91/440 on 1 January 1993, as we are obliged to do. Regulations will be laid before the House shortly. Liberalisation of domestic access and the associated charging regime will be introduced from April 1994.

There will, of course, be much ground to cover in proceedings on the Bill that will be introduced shortly. Had time allowed, I should have liked to deal with many other subjects, but I believe that we have found the best way, in the particular circumstances of the railways, of introducing the private sector and competition. I have shown that the policies that we are now following are those that have been pursued in other transport sectors so successfully, especially since 1979. That is why I believe that we are opening up new and exciting opportunities for the railways.

5.46 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): That was an exciting introduction to new opportunities for the railway industry. It is staggering, as we are dismantling what is supposed to be a bureaucratic system that is owned and run by the state, that it took the Secretary of State three quarters of an hour to tell us of all the bodies that will be set up to ensure that the market does not wreak its vengeance on the system. That, effectively, is what he told us. The free hand of the market and the flair of the entrepreneur will not apply. All the organisations that the right hon. Gentleman mentioned—may I call them quangos?—will ensure that the market does not operate in the way in which most of us fear it will.

I was pleased to hear the Secretary of State describe the timetable for some of the documents that he foresees being produced. I presume that the paving Bill will have completed its parliamentary stages before he introduces the privatisation Bill. The paving Bill authorises considerable expenditure. Indeed, the appointment of the regulator and franchise officer are to be paid for out of those funds. Can the Secretary of State assure us that the paving Bill will have completed its stages before the privatisation Bill is introduced?

I have always had some doubts about whether we shall ever consider the Bill. It is almost like a British Rail timetable: it has had a colourful history and has been a long time coming. In 1988, the then Secretary of State told the Tory party conference that rail privatisation was on the way. We have had it in Queen's speeches and it has been taken out of Queen's speeches, but now we have a White Paper and the promise by the Secretary of State that it will be before us in November. We await the Bill with some interest.

I suspect that the Bill will not contain all the details. It will be an enabling Bill to give powers to bodies outside the control of the House to make decisions affecting the nature of railway services. The first thing that it will do is to remove from the control of the House any responsibility for ensuring the quality of the railway system.

The White Paper "New Opportunities for the Railways" provides few opportunities, but we shall wait and see and listen to the debate. I agree at the outset with much of the White Paper's analysis of what is necessary for a railway system—I do not need to repeat that analysis, in view of the shortness of time—but I fundamentally disagree with the conclusion that a marketplace structure is necessary to produce a better railway system.

One of the strengths of our present system is the city-centre connections. A comparison with other European systems shows us that the population per mile statistics are greatly to the advantage of the British railway system. Our railways are cost-effective. The Opposition have often said that British Rail has done well compared with most railway systems. That conclusion was reached by a Leeds university study in 1979, and the economist intelligence unit confirmed it. Our railway is energy-efficient and causes less environmental damage. The conclusion which I would draw from all that is that we should ensure maximum use of the present railway system —whereas much of the Government's policy over the past few years has seemed designed to undermine it.

I agree with the White Paper about the key to success, which is that the railway system should be of high quality, reliable and efficient. The House will entirely endorse those objectives for any railway system. I add only that the system should also be safe. That is not stated as one of the objectives, although the White Paper mentions later the idea of a safe railway system. Over the past 10 years, we have been given every reason to believe that safety should be at the top of the list.

The many terrible tragedies that we have witnessed, and the inquiry reports that have followed them, have shown that safety standards have not been high enough. A number of the inquiries have made it clear that there is a

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connection between that fact and the business culture which has been developed in the railway system over the past few years, together with the lack of adequate funding both for track and for the provision of reliable stock. That has all contributed to the terrible tragedies that have occurred in our railway system.

Safety should be the first object of any railway system, and over the years people in this country have come to expect that from British Rail, although the events of the past 10 years have thrown some doubt on it.

Mr. Milligan: Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the interesting statement recently made by Mr. Enomoto, the managing director of the East Japan railway company, which used to be part of the state network but has now been privatised? Mr. Enomoto said that the first stage of privatisation in Japan has not only increased employee morale, the standard of the service and the number of passengers using the network, but has produced a sharp increase in investment in safety.

Mr. Prescott: We could get involved in an argument about the Japanese, Swedish and German railways, which are all going through various processes involving a mixture of public and private control. But it is clear from all those systems that public subsidy is needed. None of those railways is operating without public money, whether in operating subsidies or by way of assistance with investment. Whether a railway system is publicly owned, privately owned or a mixture, public money is an essential feature.

In reply to the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan), I would say that the confidence in the Japanese railway system is a function of the level of investment. That is a crucial factor which I shall deal with later. Our railway system is one of the most under-invested in the developed European economies. If people have no confidence in our railway system, that is because they do not feel that there has been sufficient investment in it.

The Government solution for achieving the objectives set out in the White Paper is, of course, to introduce more competition and to end British Rail's monopoly status. They keep referring to BR as a monopoly, although BR itself does not, in the main, feel that it is one. It has to compete with all sorts of other modes of transport, and that has had an effect in terms both of freight and of passengers.

The Government argument is that privatising the industry will introduce private capital and management flair. Such criteria, indeed that very formula, were used in the 1930s. It would be instructive for the Secretary of State to analyse what happened in the 1930s. Then we had a railway system operating just as he describes, even with some of the quangos that he has mentioned. The idea of a clearing house goes back to the 1930s. I understand that the building which was used as a clearing house for co-ordination between all the private companies still exists today, and my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) tells me that Sealink has bought it.

In the 1930s we had a railway system which was under-invested and begging for the state to come and take it over. No profits were being made, and there were major safety concerns. The railway companies were pleading for a state takeover. That all resulted from policies such as those which the Secretary of State wants to impose on our railway system now.

We have only to examine the history of the 1930s——

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): Is the hon. Gentleman seriously asking hon. Members to agree that the privately run railway companies of the 1930s were unsuccessful? I ask him to bear in mind that the private companies of the 1930s—the Great Western, the Southern, the London and North Eastern and the London Midland and Scottish—were the pride of British industry. Their marketing was most successful.

The hon. Gentleman has suggested before that one of the problems with the Government's plans is an intention to bribe with public subsidies, but he also says that the Government will cut rural services. Which does he mean?

Mr. Prescott: If the hon. Gentleman would read history instead of making such comments he would discover that none of those companies made a profit or paid a dividend. I thought that profit was one of the symptoms of the success of privatisation. Profit is supposed to be the engine and motive that produces a railway system. There may have been wonderful steam trains in the days that the hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) mentions —and even the Prime Minister has been talking about bringing back the chocolate and cream carriages on the Brighton line, and about new regional railway systems. We shall be back to coal fires and close encounters next— *[Interruption.]* I mean brief encounters; after all, close encounters and brief encounters are not so different. The basic idea seems to be to return to the romantic age of the railways. That is no way to run a modern railway system.

The truth about the railways in those days is that they did not make a profit. There were under-invested. Outside the network of main lines which the hon. Member for Blackpool, South mentioned, the companies failed to maintain a good railway system. They were the ones begging for compensation and a takeover. They did not want to retain the system and continue to run the railways *[Interruption.]* That fact is not in doubt; it is a matter of history.

It is absurd to advocate introducing a similar formula —a 19th-century philosopy—to take into the 21st century our railway system, which is so desperately needed both for mobility in a modern economy and to help reduce congestion and the environmental damage being done in this country, as in all modern developed economies.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Prescott: No, I am afraid I must get on. Many other hon. Members want to speak.

There is no justification for the Government's plan. Why do we want change? Let us consider the comparison with Europe. Many studies have been done on productivity, efficiency and the amount of subsidy required, and our railway seems to be one of the best in Europe. The real problem with it is that it has the highest fares, the lowest investment and the oldest stock, and it is declining in quality. That is a matter of fact. Comparisons have been made within the European Community, and a later study by the Economist intelligence unit backed up those findings.

The consequences of inadequate financial support, poor investment and lack of subsidy are that, as in the 1930s, we shall have to provide money for investment. The Secretary of State has now made it clear that even under the new private system he intends to provide money for the railways.

The InterCity network proudly claims that it does not make a loss—although I believe that it makes a small loss at the moment. That claim is the result of an awful lot of creative accountancy, throwing in bits of line to make up InterCity's revenue so as to show it as making a profit. I presume—perhaps the Secretary of State will tell me whether I am right—that under the new principle not all of InterCity's routes will be taken, and when it loses some of them it will be possible that, although InterCity does not now claim a subsidy, it will become a subsidised rail network system. The profitable bits will have been pinched, if Virgin is prepared to go for a little more publicity and take more of the routes. Even the one service that claims not to receive a subsidy is now likely to be subsidised.

The argument is not only about ownership. We must remember all the other railway systems. I do not make an ideological point about whether the railways should be publicly or privately owned. I have my opinion—I would put the case for a publicly owned system—but I am prepared to concede that whether the ownership is public or private is not the real issue. We can run a railway provided that we are prepared to find the resources from the taxpayer to fund the network system. The railways could be publicly or privately owned.

One of my arguments against private ownership is that presumably the owners would want a rate of return. If there is a profit to be made from a service, we shall have to encourage people to come in for more than 4 or 5 per cent. rates of return—if we can achieve that in our present railway system. Someone has to pay for that. The money comes either from the fares or from extra subsidies. That is what is involved in running the railway system. The Government are involved through subsidies, as regulators or in encouraging some form of greater investment in the system.

Let us consider all the railways in Europe and in Japan. The main issue is not whether we want private or public. The real issue is how we get a proper level of investment in the railway system. In reality, we have inadequate investment in the railways.

We have often had arguments at the Dispatch Box about who put in more investment. In debate, I have made it clear to the Secretary of State that neither Conservative nor Labour Governments have put sufficient funds into railway investment. In 1979, Peter Parker, then chair of BR, pointed out in a report that we needed twice the amount of investment that British Rail was getting or which was envisaged. He even asked why British Rail could not be allowed to lease trains, just as ships and aeroplanes were leased. He made that point to suggest a way in which to get extra resources outside the public sector borrowing requirement so that the railway system could be financed.

Railways could involve companies which regularly deal with finance, and such financing is used in France and in Germany. It is only we who are prepared to say, "This is the British way of doing it." The British way does not produce sufficient resources for investment. That has affected reliability and the quality of the system, and it is one of the basic faults in our system.

There is no ideological argument about getting into agreement with private ownership. There has been private investment in wagons, in trains, in routes, in the passenger transport authorities, in the management and in the profit centres about which we are talking. That has been going on in British Rail for decades.

In the past few years, there has been concentration, there has been reorganisation and there have been cost centres, but nobody has argued about whether there is a role for a private-public mix in various operations. The Government have endorsed private sector leasing arrangements for European trains and European sleepers. Even British Rail's present stock is a leasing arrangement. It is a public company in a leasing arrangement. No major principle is at stake here. It is an argument about whether the Treasury has one way or another in which to stop the railways getting the resources. Leasing is a way in which the railways could get more money.

Whether in the organisation of capital, or in the management or operation of the facilities, there have been joint public and private operations. That is quite proper and I see nothing wrong with that if it provides a better railway and gives access to funds that may not always be available from the taxpayer.

A report by Steer Davis and Gleave was launched yesterday. I am sure that the House endorses the view that it was an excellent report. It shows various investment projects which we desperately need. Does anyone think that anyone will invest in the north-west line as a franchise service? No one will. Franchisees might want to offer trains on the east coast line, as Virgin is doing, but no one talks about new trains. The company only wants to paint old trains on a leasing arrangement and that is all it is interested in. That has a massive effect on our manufacturing capacity.

Railway manufacturing is on its knees at present and is about to be eliminated unless more orders come in. I hope that the Secretary of State will take on board the point made by the report. In the transitional period, while the legislation goes through the House, there will be a dearth of orders. We cannot keep manufacturing industry hanging on without orders, whether they involve the Jubilee line, the start of the north-west line or replacing and refurbishing in a number of areas. There will be a delay.

The prospect of leasing by private franchise companies will mean that companies might look for old stock rather than new stock, which will mean in turn that there is no possibility of orders in the short term. All the manufacturing capacity in this country may be eliminated, which will mean that we shall have to place our orders in Europe, as we have done in so many areas. That is common with privatisation proposals.

That point leads us directly to one of the justifications given by the Secretary of State. He has not given that justification here, but he has said it often in previous debates. He has often told us to look at the privatisation and deregulation of the bus industry. Yes, let us look at it. If that is given as an example of what will happen, everyone has reason to fear what will happen to our railway system.

There are problems in the privatisation of the bus industry. There are fewer services. It is true that the buses

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are running more miles, but that is because they tend to be in our city centres. Ministers should go to Sheffield and see what deregulation has done to the bus system there. Fares are higher. Investment in buses has collapsed and most of our bus manufacturers have been put out of business. The congestion and environmental damage in our cities have got so bad that even Sheffield has had to come to the Government to ask about the possibility of regulating the bus system. Many of our cities are beginning to demand that because of the congestion and environmental damage.

Those problems came directly from the deregulation and privatisation of the bus system. There is also a problem about safety. Our buses are older and more are being pulled in because they are not safe to be on the road as public vehicles. If the bus system is an example of what the Secretary of State feels will happen to the railway industry, we have every reason to feel that his proposals are the wrong approach for dealing with public transport and especially with our rail industry.

Mr. Adley: The hon. Gentleman is painting a scenario that many of us fear. The hon. Gentleman implied that the worst that might happen was that franchise companies would have to go to European manufacturers to get their equipment because the British companies would no longer be in existence. That is fine. However, is the hon. Gentleman aware that, as a result of the single market, virtually every European railway manufacturer has an order book full for 10 years so that it can escape the rigours of competition which the single market will bring? There will be no possibility of getting equipment even from that source.

Mr. Prescott: I very much agree with what the hon. Gentleman says. The evidence is clear.

I worry about what the period of a franchise will be. A company will want at least 10 years in a franchise agreement, as the Secretary of State said. That is interesting, because it means that he will give guaranteed subsidies to a franchise, for 10 years. Under Treasury rules and the Public Expenditure Survey Committee review, they cannot be given for more than three years. Have we begun to change our Treasury rules for the private sector when we are not prepared to change them for the public service obligation? We always discriminate against the public sector and against the quality of the system. I presume that I am right. I am happy to give way to the Secretary of State. Perhaps he can given us some information on this little detail.

Is it the intention that the franchise agreement will give franchises for more than three years? No company would touch a three-year franchise, so the franchises would have to be longer. Does that mean that the subsidies will be guaranteed for longer than the period presently guaranteed under the PESC review for the public service obligation payments?

Mr. MacGregor: There are many contracts in the public sector which run for more than three years.

Mr. Prescott: The Secretary of State always has difficulty in understanding. I will make the point again. The present PSO agreements are given for three years under Treasury rules and the Secretary of State knows that well because he was a Treasury Minister—according to all the recent statements, he may want to go back to the Treasury.

Are we prepared to guarantee to the franchisees the subsidies which the Secretary of State said would have to be given to them for more than three years? Will he change the present Treasury rules to give to the private sector the subsidy guarantee of more than three years?

Mr. MacGregor: That does not change the rules. There are contracts in the public sector which run for more than three years. Yes, it is likely that franchises will run longer. A franchise may be for five years. All the details will have to be sorted out in relation to much longer franchises, if that is what we decide to do on reflection in view of the responses we get to the consultation document. Clearly——

Mr. Prescott: So the answer is yes.

Mr. MacGregor: No, let me make it clear. There will have to be consideration of exactly how the longer-term contracts are framed. For shorter franchises—yes, we should intend that the arrangements would be for more than three years. There is nothing especially favourable to the private sector in that which we are not offering in a number of contracts to the public sector.

Mr. Prescott: Again, the Secretary of State took about two minutes to say yes.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): The Secretary of State appeared before the Select Committee on Transport yesterday. When asked the question that my hon. Friend had just asked, he said that the subsidy to franchisees would run for the length of the contract. On further questioning, he admitted that the contracts could run from five to 15 years. That is how long the subsidies will run.

Mr. Prescott: It is not only an unprecedented yes, but a welcome one. All that to get yes.

The more important point is how we are prepared to change the rules for the private sector when it takes over rather than for the public sector. That shows bias against the public sector. The rule to which I have referred is not the only rule, but it is an interesting one. It appears that the Treasury will change its own rules. Perhaps it will change its ideas from leasing next so that we can give the public sector a chance to get more of its resources for investment.

I welcome some of the objectives set out in the White Paper, although it has to be said that the Government have spent 10 years undermining most of them. On safety, the tragedies at Clapham, King's Cross, Belgrave and the Severn tunnel might have been prevented had sufficient resources been available to provide adequate safety equipment. On quality, the Transport Users Consultative Committee has made it clear that the PSO level is far too low. It has been reduced considerably, affecting the quality of service and investment. As regards the essential passenger services, high fares prevail and there is no guarantee in respect of rural services. Systems are inadequate. As regards the desired network benefits, InterCity is already cutting its network to get a better rate of return. There is a conflict between maintaining network services and the desire to maximise revenue and profit, just as there is a conflict between the interests of safety and the business culture.

I welcome some of what the Secretary of State said about opportunities for employees, including the possibility that a paper will be produced on pensions and employee benefits. In reality, however, I am not sure that previous privatisations, such as that of Sealink and British Rail Engineering Ltd. have been good for employees. Pensions, concessionary passes and some of the arrangements that the Secretary of State guaranteed would be forthcoming may remain only until someone new takes over the company concerned. If a franchising company pulls out after three months, as Stagecoach has, and if another company takes over, there is no guarantee that the pensions and concessionary passes will continue. Previous privatisations provide abundant evidence to suggest that they will not.

The Secretary of State said that, on privatisation, we would not be going back to running hotels. I see no reason why British Rail should want to run hotels, although I do not see why it should not make a commercial judgment to make a profit if it wants to. The hotels went because the Government were not prepared to allow British Transport Hotels to reinvest by way of a form of mortgages. The company was underinvested. It was sold for a song; now it is worth hundreds of millions of pounds. Sealink provides a similar example. Its 33 ferries were sold for £60 million. Its buyers went on to sell three of those ferries and Isle of Wight ports for £100 million. That is an example of the Government selling off public assets to their friends in the City.

Environmental benefits are fine, but the Government have been doing everything in their power, through high passenger fares and freight charges, to push people off the railways on to the roads, adding to congestion and environmental damage. BR now faces the loss of all its revenue from coal freight—hitherto a profitable service. Like other freight services, no doubt that service will fold. The Government's policies have worked against the railways, as I said about deregulation. Their policy is all about selling off the profitable bits and leaving the less profitable services for the taxpayer to pick up.

Let us consider the trailblazers for privatisation. Tiger Rail came in, took the Cornish clay up to Scotland and then collapsed. Who had to pick up the pieces? British Rail, as the supplier of last resort. Charterail started a profitable service with Pedigree dog food, went up to Scotland and collapsed because it could not afford the charges and went bankrupt.

What about Stagecoach, the wonderful Aberdeen-London night rail service operation on which the Minister himself travelled? We heard that he had joined that wonderful service, then discovered that he shot into the sleeper as soon as the cameras had gone. The trouble is that, when people booked, they did it thinking that they would get a sleeper with their ticket. What has happened to Stagecoach rail service. It collapsed. What about the leasing agreement? As a tour operator, it now books 20 per cent. of the places on that service. The fact that tour operators can book 20 per cent. of the seats on a service does not make that service a separate privatised service. The fact is that Stagecoach rail service collapsed.

Those are the trailblazers for the entrepreneurial flair and ability that are supposed to be coming into the system. It is just a load of nonsense. The hard reality is that we need a railway system that is regulated and subsidised.

On the question of a regulated railway, where, in all this, is the free invisible hand of the market, which the Government's laissez-faire philosophy says will produce the best for the consumer? What is proposed? We are to have a regulator to control costs and access, a franchising authority to allocate franchises and regulate fares, a rail track authority for the timetable and maintenance, the joint industrial board to co-ordinate ticketing and information, and the railway clearing house for company accounts. On top of that, we shall have the HSC, the Office of Fair Trading, the passenger transport authorities, the Department of Transport and—let us not forget it—the good old Treasury, which will have to ensure that everything fits its requirements.

Those are the bodies that will regulate the new privatised railway system—a system that is supposed to have benefits bestowed on it by the invisible hand of the market. What a load of nonsense. The system will be more regulated under the proposed arrangements than it is at present. At least the Secretary of State is accountable for the railway system under the present arrangements. In future, he will be less so and will argue that the regulator is responsible.

I should have more confidence if the regulator and the franchise officers were likely to have the benefit of knowledge and to do better than the Secretary of State. The one thing that the right hon. Gentleman has never shown in his present job is knowledge of transport. I might add that previous Secretaries of State have set a good precedent in that. Let us look at the notice in *The Sunday Times* advertising for people to fill the new posts. Among all the qualifications that the regulator needs, I was staggered to read:

> "knowledge of railways/public transport an advantage but not essential."

Yet the regulator is the man who will run the railway system.

The Secretary of State does not understand the system himself, and now he is to appoint an adviser who need not have any knowledge of it whatever—on top of all the new regulatory bodies. Will that produce railways in rural areas and inter-city railways? Will that encourage people to get off the roads and on to the railway system? The whole thing is a load of waffle.

What will the new system cost? I wish that the Secretary of State would tell us how much the quangos will cost. How many civil servants will be involved, and what will be the extent of the bureaucracy? Some 17,000 to 20,000 people in the freight and transport services will be made redundant, and the same number of people will be employed in the bureaucracy. People who earn money and make value will be put out of work to make room for civil servants to organise the rail system so as to meet an ideological requirement and prove that it is possible to run a railway system privately—but only 5 or 10 per cent. of it, because the rest of it will have to be maintained by British Rail as the supplier of last resort.

I do not have time to deal with all the problems now. The Government have answered some of our questions and have agreed to provide some reports—particularly one on employee conditions—which we look forward to seeing. As with the buses, I am sure that we shall see a move to part-time instead of full-time labour, the de-staffing of the systems and the loss of pensions.

What will happen to the transport police? The experience of previous privatisations suggest that there will be a move to part-time policing and private security systems. We desperately need security and safety on our

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railway system. Unless the Secretary of State proposes to make an exception in respect of the British Transport police, their services will be got rid of.

The track authority, the regulator, the franchising body and so on are all matters that give rise to numerous questions that I certainly do not have time to ask today.

It is now accepted that the railway system will be subsidised. It will be more regulated than it is at present. There is little hope of further investment. Let us not be too sure, for example, that leasing arrangements will produce new orders and investment. It will produce old trains, tarted up to run on profitable parts of the system. After five, eight or 10 years, companies will not want to invest. A massive amount of investment is needed to replace trains. A franchisee may want to operate for 10 years without investment and then run the service down and get out having made what money it can. Who will pick up the pieces and run the service? Good old British Rail, in the name of the Government. It will be a cherry-picking system that will work to the disadvantage of the community.

The White Paper has nothing whatever to do with new opportunities for our railways, and everything to do with creating massive profits for the Government's friends in the City. The Government are selling the community's assets, cherry-picking the most profitable routes and leaving the loss-making ones to BR and the taxpayer.

Theirs is a policy designed to impose an ideological 19th century laissez-faire straitjacket on an industry about to enter the 21st century. It will mean fewer services costing more. It will cause thousands of redundancies and reduced employment conditions for the lucky few remaining. It will mean newly painted old trains instead of new rolling stock, adding to the demise of our once great rail manufacturing industry. It will mean greater pressure to maximise costs at the expense of safer railways.

Above all, the policy will cost the taxpayer more, with a needless expensive bureaucracy and quangos. That will lead to higher fares and force passengers off rail and on to roads, causing great congestion and environmental damage. That is why we reject the crazy philosophy behind the White Paper and any Bill based upon it.

6.18 pm

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling): In contrast to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), I found the White Paper imaginative. It introduces some welcome and radical new thinking into the running and financing of railways. Like my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, I look forward to seeing what further progress can be made in harnessing the private sector to produce better railway services.

However, I have two very deep concerns about the potential practical implications of the proposals, particularly in relation to my constituents. My first concern relates to fares to which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State did not refer. As far as my constituents are concerned, the bottom line will be the fare implications for them.

As I represent a constituency in Network SouthEast, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be aware of the pressures faced by those who use the commuter rail services on that network. In practical terms, those people have no alternative but to use the rail services to London. They have faced yearly real increases in fares, and another real increase in fares has recently been announced. It costs about £2,000, payable from after-tax income, for an annual season ticket from my constituency to London. That cost for travel to work has become the largest single item of inescapable expenditure in the household budget, with the possible exception of food, for many people.

Fare levels have already reached the limits of many people's capacity to pay. For some people in my constituency, fares have risen beyond their capacity to pay and they have had to resign posts in London and try to find alternative employment elsewhere. The fare dimensions of the proposals are critical.

Considering the history of previous privatisations, will the privatisation of the railways be a rerun of the privatisation of gas? If that is the case, then all well and good. In real terms, gas prices are about 15 per cent. below what they were before privatisation. If that happens with the railways, that will be fine.

On the other hand, will the privatisation of the railways be a rerun of the privatisation of water? Water charges are now 26 per cent. higher in real terms than they were before privatisation. If there were fare increases in real terms of that order, that would be immensely damaging financially for my constituents. I do not know which way it will go, but I have an uncomfortable feeling in my bones that it might go more the water way than the gas way. However, I earnestly hope that I am wrong.

Although I do not agree with the sentiments or philosophy of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, it is worth considering that the experiences of Charterail and Stagecoach show that, when the private sector is involved, a higher rate of return may be required, with consequent fare implications for the users of rail services.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir John Stanley: I will give way, but I am immensely conscious of the number of hon. Members who wish to speak, and I do not want to delay the House longer than I have to.

Mr. Flynn: Perhaps a more telling illustration is what has happened in respect of the deregulation of buses, which have much in common with rail services. The experience in metropolitan areas is that fares have increased by between 25 per cent. and 33 per cent. in real terms.

Sir John Stanley: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says, but I take a different view from that of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East in respect of bus deregulation, which, in my part of the world, has produced a variety, range and flexibility of services which did not exist before deregulation.

The fare implications of the proposals will hang wholly on what happens in two critical areas of policy—the policy on subsidy and the policy on the degree to which fares are controlled.

The subsidy element is critical in Network SouthEast. As the White Paper states, the subsidy paid in the financial year 1991-92 was £345 million, which was approximately 28 per cent. of the network's turnover. If we consider the policy for subsidy in the proposals, the franchising consultation document says—a reference which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State effectively repeated earlier—

> "The Government has said that it will continue to pay subsidy, where necessary, for as long as it is needed in order to secure the provision of socially necessary services."

The statement begs more questions than it answers. Which rail services do the Government consider to be socially necessary and therefore worthy of subsidy? Is the whole of Network SouthEast regarded as socially necessary or only part of it? If the latter is the case, which part?

The statement also begs a question to which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State did not refer. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport will deal with it when he replies to the debate. My right hon. Friend referred to subsidy being maintained. Is the commitment to maintain not merely the level of subsidy, but the level of subsidy at least in real terms? That would be the crucial issue for fares. Those are central questions about subsidy to which we still await answers.

The second issue is whether fares will be controlled by what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State acknowledges in the White Paper to be monopolies—in other words, by the franchises. The documents make it clear that during the franchising period the franchising body will have the right to exercise fare control. However, it is not necessarily clear whether the franchising body will actually do so.

Paragraph 66 of the White Paper states:

> "As long as London commuter services are franchised, any abuse of monopoly power will be controlled through the contracts between the Franchising Authority and franchisees."

There is a clear locus for the franchising authority to deal with the "abuse of monopoly power" and ensure that fares are constrained.

However, the franchising authority is also responsible for getting franchises off the ground and ensuring that franchising takes place. When it does that, it will clearly be interested in showing that the maximum revenue can accrue. In that capacity, it will not have an interest in fare control; its interest will be to make the degree of fare control light.

There is a direct conflict between the position of the franchising authority being responsible for, in the Secretary of State's words, preventing abuse of monopoly power when it is also the body responsible for establishing the franchises with the maximum benefit to the franchisee in revenue terms. That is a fundamental contradiction in the position of the franchising authority.

The consultation document on franchising makes an attempt to resolve that underlying conflict. It appears that the Secretary of State for Transport will act as referee between the two tensions. Paragraph 2.3 of the consultation document states:

> "the Secretary of State for Transport . . . will provide guidance on:
> in what circumstances and to what extent fares might be controlled."

The House should note that the term is "might be controlled" and not "will be controlled."

There is a guidance role that the Secretary of State will perform. That in principle might be thought to be welcome, but even the involvement of the Secretary of State, based on history, does not guarantee that the level of increase in charges will be kept down to a reasonable amount.

We had exactly the same position with the water privatisation. I have with me the press release that was put out by the then Secretary of State for the Environment on 7 February 1990, in which he announced how he was going to exercise his control of water charges. Charges went up in real terms throughout the country. In my constituency in west Kent, the Secretary of State's controlled increase in year one was 20 per cent. in real terms; in year two, a further increase of 20 per cent. in real terms; in year three, a 4 per cent. increase in real terms; and in year four, a further 4 per cent. increase in real terms. That is not a very happy history for my constituents. It would be very helpful if my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport would say how the Secretary of State will exercise his intention to issue guidance on fare control in relation to franchises.

I am sorry to say that my second concern is narrowly based, but it is of the utmost significance to my constituents. It is possible that my constituents will face not merely an increase in fares, possibly of a substantial order, in real terms as a result of the proposals, but a diminishing number of commuter trains at peak periods. That could come about in this way: my constituency is astride the main existing rail link from Cheriton, the channel tunnel portal, to Waterloo, on which the through channel tunnel trains will, I hope, start to run at the end of next year or, possibly, in 1994. As the House will know, that line runs through Ashford, Tonbridge, Sevenoaks and up to the centre of London.

It has always been evident to me that a significant potential risk could occur for my constituents: those on board channel tunnel through passenger trains—for example, the Euro-officials and the Euro-business men from Paris and Brussels—would wish to arrive in London in the morning at exactly the same time as my constituents wish to arrive and would therefore compete for exactly the same train paths.

I pursued that issue at a very early stage. I am glad to say that I have a letter of 25 July 1986 in which I received a most important assurance on that point from the then Minister for Public Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell). In that letter he gave a commitment that internal services —in other words, domestic commuter services—would not be curtailed on that line in order to make room for through channel tunnel trains. The House will not be surprised to know that I have been clutching that letter to my breast pocket ever since.

The relevance of that letter to the White Paper lies in paragraph 37 of the White Paper, in which the Government make it clear that privatisation is to be extended to European Passenger Services Ltd., which is the British Rail subsidiary which will operate the through passenger services from the channel tunnel as from next year or thereabouts. The White Paper states:

> "The Government is considering how EPS should be transferred to the private sector."

I stress that the word used is not "whether" it should be transferred to the private sector but "how". Will my hon. Friend the Minister give a firm and unequivocal assurance that the——

Mrs. Dunwoody: Preferably in writing.

Sir John Stanley: Across the Floor of the House will be every bit as good; it will be in *Hansard.* Will he give a clear and unequivocal assurance that the undertaking that I was given in July 1986 that there would be no curtailment of

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internal domestic services to accommodate channel tunnel through train services will hold good, even when EPS is apparently to be privatised?

Until I have clear answers to my deep concerns about fares and train paths for channel tunnel trains, my position on the legislation can only be one of very guarded neutrality.

6.34 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I have often wondered what the advantages of a public school education really are. I have decided that it is the ability to congratulate someone in the first instance and then knock hell out of him for the subsequent 10 minutes of one's speech. I congratulate the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) on putting his colleague the Secretary of State for Transport firmly on the spot.

The debate has been rather frightening. I have never thought of the Secretary of State as Scarlett O'Hara, but a tremendous amount of the proposed legislation can best be summed up as, "I will think about that tomorrow," pronounced either with a southern accent or with a Scots accent. It amounts to the fact that we are actually proposing major changes in a basic transport system without any clear idea of what it entails.

The Secretary of State, even after the traumatic events of last week, did not say, "As a Department, we have estimated that, if we push through this privatisation, the job loss in manufacturing, in trains and in rolling stock as an industry will be a minimum of 30,000." He did not say, "If we push through this legislation, the job loss for railwaymen and related workers in other industries will be so great that we have not had the courage to specify the number." He said, "We think that it would be a very good idea if we privatised this system. The slight problem is that we don't know how we're going to do it. We don't know who is going to be stupid enough to pick it up, and we're certainly not going to spell out any of the implications, because the House might find them unacceptable."

The Secretary of State should have told us the answers to several basic and important questions. What is the Government's environmental policy in relation to the use of railways? Why has he not given us one indication of his vision of the use of railways on a crowded island in the 21st century? Why has he not been prepared to set out in any detail why we need a railway system, how it will be properly funded and how it will best benefit the people of these crowded islands? None of that appeared anywhere in his speech.

On top of that, the right hon. Gentleman has decided that he will say that privatisation has proved itself in the transport industry. I do not know how anyone who watched what happened to the bus industry can seriously say that we know that privatisation of basic services works. The bus industry was a classic example. The women who are standing around in the wet because the central bus stations in many of our towns have been asset-stripped by the small private companies that took them over have a clear idea of whether privatisation works. The people in rural villages for whom the provision of bus services is difficult have an even clearer view of whether privatisation works.

We are talking about a system which, unlike buses, requires very specific tracks—very specific hardware—to provide a service. Oddly enough, trains do not jump in front of one another when one breaks down. Oddly enough, if individual companies are concerned, it will not be easy for someone to provide alternative services. Who will have the contingency responsibility, if for any reason any of the franchisees do not provide a service of the highest quality, to substitute rolling stock trains or other services? That is not made clear. We are simply told that employment as well as other aspects of transport such as safety will be discussed in the future. Frankly, that is an astonishing attitude for a responsible Government to take. I also find it astonishingly irresponsible.

The report that came out yesterday proved that many private industrial companies will face empty order books from the middle of next week. That shows what can happen when part of the transport industry—railways—is thrown into chaos. Unless there are full order books for new rolling stock, services will not improve. It does not matter who provides services—they will not improve. Unless there is a way of subsidising services which are socially useful, and unless that is a continuing commitment, services will not improve. Unless there are trained railway staff to provide not only safety but facilities and services, services will not improve. I would not have thought that that was a difficult concept for any Government to understand, but it appears to be beyond the understanding of a Conservative Government.

It is a disgrace for the Minister to talk about a major change, which will result in job losses that we cannot fully estimate at present, without spelling out exactly what the Government will do to replace, protect and help those people. Let me make it clear. British Rail Engineering Ltd. was sold off as part of the rage for privatisation. We were told that there would be greater efficiency and much better provision of equipment. We were also told that everyone would benefit.

On a simple matter such as pensions, which we shall discuss in dealing with the forthcoming Bill, BREL is an interesting example. The Government said that British Rail would be responsible for ensuring that its employees were protected until the change of ownership took place. Beyond that point BREL employees immediately found that they faced a diminution of their pension rights and the loss of many of their privileges, which had been part of the calculation of their wages. Even when they bought shares in BREL, they found it extremely difficult to get any specific benefit from the sale of their own company.

Those who talk about management buy-outs should examine what happened to BREL. Only one of the original directors who fronted that management buy-out has remained with the company. Those who work for BREL have even been told that they cannot sell their existing shares, because the company that took over BREL's assets organised the sale in such a way that the shares could go only to the new company and only at a highly artificial and controlled price.

So much for management buy-outs. They have not protected jobs; we have lost jobs. They have not improved the lot of those who work in the industry, and they certainly have not in any way replaced the conditions that the employees had when the company was a subsidiary of British Rail. That is what would happen to railwaymen and women if privatisation went ahead. There can be no doubt about that. Neither their employment nor the benefits which they currently receive would be protected.

I find the debate totally obnoxious, because we cannot tell our constituents that the House will happily accept the introduction of a paving Bill which is so wide in its terms that almost any amount of taxpayers' money could be used to create a completely new set of organisations without a clear statement at an early stage of what would actually happen.

It is not clear whether the Department of Transport has worked out a method by which a system of transferring lines could take place. It is not clear whether the Department has considered that private operators will be quite happy to take tiny pieces of the lines—for example, the Victoria to Gatwick line—but they will not be happy to run services from Preston to Blackpool or anywhere else. The cost of that in terms of employment and good transport systems is absolutely indescribable.

Tonight, the Minister has presented dogma in its purest and most irresponsible form. It cannot be defended in terms of economics, politics or a commitment to provide a good service for those who use the transport system. As the Minister cannot give us any of those reasons, may we assume that he is suggesting that it would be useful for the Treasury to asset-strip the railways part of the transport system in the way that bus companies asset-stripped the bus system?

6.45 pm

Mr. Matthew Banks (Southport): I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me so early in this important debate today to make my first speech in the House. As you know, I am one of the youngest Members of the House, having been elected earlier this year at the tender age of 30. I am now 31. After the events of the past two weeks, I am not sure whether I am any wiser, but I certainly feel a great deal older.

I have the honour and privilege to represent a delightful Victorian seaside resort. Southport is a constituency which, after three years of hard work, I managed to wrest from the Liberal Democrats. I should like very much, without further ado, to pay a fulsome tribute to my predecessor, Ronnie Fearn. As hon. Members will know, Mr. Fearn was for some time the Liberal Democrats' transport spokesman in the House. Although the political complexion of my constituency has now changed, I am pleased that Mr. Fearn has been replaced by another Member who is equally interested in transport matters.

Mr. Fearn was first elected as a local councillor in 1963 and has remained a councillor ever since, including his time as a Member of Parliament. He was first elected to Southport county borough council when it was in Lancashire. Sadly, my constituency is now in Merseyside. I should like to lay down a marker today. I make it clear that in the not-too-distant future, during the passage of the Local Government Bill—sadly, my predecessor voted against it—I shall do my utmost to make sure that the Local Government Commission brings my constituency back into Lancashire as a unitary authority.

It is a tribute to my predecessor's standing in my constituency that my task in wresting the seat from him was so difficult. Indeed, I know that it is a great surprise to some hon. Members that I am here at all. My journey here was not courtesy of a first-class InterCity rail ticket; it was something more along the lines of political Network SouthEast or Merseyrail ticket. I hope that the principles behind the White Paper will satisfactorily address something along those lines.

I should also like to place on record my thanks to Sir Ian Percival QC. He represented my constituency between 1959 and his retirement in 1987 and is a former Solicitor-General. I am most grateful to him for the support, advice and the generosity of his time which he gave me in the past few years.

Finally, although it is not possible this evening for me to thank all those who have helped me and my colleagues over the past two to three years, I should like to place on record my thanks to a former Member of Parliament, Mr. Cecil Franks, who was the Member for Barrow and Furness between 1983 and 1992. He is sadly missed on the Conservative side of the House. I should also like to pay tribute to him tonight for guiding me through some of the difficulties of the past few years.

My constituency does not appear to be on the map at Westminster at present. I seem to have a tremendous task ahead of me. Unfortunately, all too often, right hon. and hon. Members confuse my constituency with Stockport. Stockport is some 50 miles away in land locked Cheshire. With the greatest respect to Stockportonians, there is a considerable difference between the two. No prizes for guessing which one I think is the more delightful.

If I am to put my constituency on the map, I must put myself on the map first. One of the difficulties that I have faced is that I am consistently, and irritatingly, confused with my hon. Friend and look-alike the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry). He is on the chubby side too, but if hon. Members bear in mind that he is the good-looking one, they will have no problems in future.

I am pleased to report that I have been able to solve one problem. I no longer receive the Refreshment Department bills of my namesake, the hon. Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks).

On the White Paper, if the objective is to create better quality services through the gradual introduction—I stress the gradual—of private sector competition, it has my 100 per cent. support. Listening to some hon. Members speak in the House and outside it, one would think that the Government were trying to privatise British Rail lock, stock and barrel. That would be a ridiculous and impractical course of action.

I urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to listen carefully to the concerns—I hope that they are constructive concerns—of right hon. and hon. Members in this debate. When a Bill on that subject is tabled and is considered in Committee, I urge him to ensure that important matters such as franchising, access to track, the independent regulatory authority and safety are considered sensibly. I hope that my right hon. Friend will listen carefully and, if necessary, amend his plans to ensure that those important proposals are as practical and workable as possible.

The idea of private sector competition and involvement in the railways is nothing new. About 40 per cent. of rail wagons are privately owned. I have no doubt that, in the years ahead, that percentage will rise considerably.

The White Paper is long overdue. I have been waiting to make my first contribution to debates in the House, and I wish that it had been possible for us to debate it earlier. I hope that it will not be too long before a Bill is introduced so that we can discuss the issue in greater detail. There will

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be occasions more important than today, especially in Committee, when hon. Members who have constructive suggestions for amendments will be able to table them.

I urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to be clear in his mind that, while there are one or two honourable exceptions on the Conservative Benches who do not believe that the proposals are workable, in principle the Government have my support and they have considerable support among my hon. Friends.

Britain's railways play a vital role in the nation's transport needs. The White Paper offers the opportunity to expand and improve on those services. I emphasise that the White Paper refers to the gradual introduction of private sector competition. It does not concern me that in 1994 only one or two companies may be running franchises. The opportunity to do so should exist, and gradually many companies will take it. I welcome the fact that many companies have expressed an interest in running services on Britain's railways.

In making my first contribution, I am mindful that I do not have the time to deal in detail with some of the matters relating to franchising, access to track, and the indpendent regulator, among others. I do not wish to take up the time of the House. There is no doubt that some genuine concerns exist on both sides of the House, which will need to be dealt with, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider them.

The principles in the White Paper are important and I wholeheartedly support them. Given the difficulties in Britain's railways, and the enormous pressure on British Rail in the public spending round—not merely this year but any year and under any Government—it is vital that we give the private sector and the consumer the opportunity to benefit from private sector competition. In the months and years ahead, when private sector companies are operating franchises, I hope that their management and work forces will get closer to the travelling public and to the people whom they seek to serve.

Ultimately, the White Paper will provide opportunities to improve the quality of service, it will be good for choice and I sincerely believe that it will be good for my constituents in Southport.

6.55 pm

Mr. Nick Harvey (North Devon): Before attending to the White Paper, I congratulate the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) on his accomplished and amusing maiden speech, and I thank him for his kind remarks about my predecessor, the Liberal Democrat transport spokesman, which were appreciated on this Bench. We look forward to more contributions from the hon. Member.

I do not voice my concerns about the White Paper out of any philosophical objection to the principle of private operators on the rail network, but for fear of the practical consequences of fragmenting the network. If the ground rules were right, we could envisage a slowly growing market for private sector operators. Our argument is about the ground rules.

If I have understood the Secretary of State correctly, he has said that he expects the majority of the network to be in the hands of private operators within the lifetime of this Parliament. That is pie in the sky. He was talking about the time scale as if he were holding back a deluge of would-be operators until the spring of 1994. My fear is that, if he goes ahead on anything like the time scale that he has described, there will be mayhem on the railways.

The proposals fail to acknowledge the social and environmental contribution that the railways make to life in Britain; they do not merely reduce congestion but also mean energy savings and a reduction in CO_2 emissions. The suggestion that the new track authority, Railtrack, must raise its funds "fundamentally"—I hope that I quote the Secretary of State correctly—by charging operators fails to put any value on the social or environmental contribution made by the railways.

There is no hint in the White Paper of who will pay for the vital investment needed in the rail network. Do the Government honestly believe that the would-be private operators will be able to afford the sort of infrastructure investment that successive Governments have failed to make? The fate of the two pilot operators—Charterail and Stagecoach—the difficulties that they encountered and their failure show that it will not be private operators but the passenger who will end up having to pay.

The hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) told us earlier this week, with commendable clarity:

> "Someone has to pay for the operation of the rail service —and that means either the taxpayer or the user. I am convinced that it is right that users should pay enough to cover at least the majority of the operating costs".—[*Official Report*, 26 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. 762.]

The right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) compared plans for the railways with the privatisation of the water industry. The crucial difference is that the customer base in the water industry comprises just about everyone and is more or less the same as the taxpayer base—except for fortunate souls like myself who are able to use a natural spring instead of a connected water supply. In the case of rail investment, the customer base is much narrower.

I submit that the public are fed up with hearing that the Government are making a record investment in the rail industry, when they still find themselves commuting, crammed into carriages every morning like sardines, with their fares continually increasing. They know that that simply does not add up, and if one takes out investment in the channel tunnel project, they are right. Investment is nowhere near adequate.

The Secretary of State referred to Japan and Sweden. He did not mention that, before the first stages of Japanese privatisation, a massive programme of investment was carried out by the Japanese Government and all historic debts were paid off. He also failed to mention that with the Swedish system—perhaps the nearest comparison to what is proposed here—the Swedish Government actively subsidise the track.

There is a clear need for large investment on that scale in this country before there is a market for private train operators. The Secretary of State told us that, towards the end of this year, he will publish a document outlining the access and charging arrangements. We have to hope that, when he does so, he will reconsider his suggestion that the new rail track body raise its income by charging operators. It is essential that there should be some direct investment in the track itself.

I am concerned also about the future of the freight industry. What free-marketeering freight operator will opt for the rail system when he can use the roads at a much reduced cost, subsidised by the Government in a way that they simply decline to do for the railways? If only the Government had addressed that point, this White Paper might have had some use.

We welcome the slight modification on the question of a level playing field in investment in road and rail, but that is not what we are going to get, in any meaningful sense, from the proposals in the White Paper. Once a franchise is up and running, there is little to be gained from an operator carrying out imaginative market research as there were a new product. I submit that the Government plans are plans for stagnation, and they are the reverse of enterprising.

On the question of banning British Rail from bidding for franchises, there is certainly room for British Rail to improve its sense of enterprise; the fact that private operators were involved might be just the incentive that British Rail needed. Why not allow British Rail to bid for franchises? No one in the private sector has ever run any sort of railway system before. Why should private operators not have to beat British Rail in a bid? Will the bids coming from the private sector be realistic, or will we see a repeat of the channel tunnel enterprise, when the bids were phenomenally lower than the true costs? If a franchisee does take on a loss-making service, what will happen when it goes wrong? I suspect that what remains of British Rail will have to take on the service, and in one way or another the taxpayer will pick up the tab.

There is a clear clash between open access and franchising. The European Commission wants to open up rail networks so that operators from other countries can run a rival service. It sounds rather like allocating slots at Heathrow airport and then saying that anyone who wants to do so can fly in or out at any time. The potential winners of those franchises will have to beware of falling into a trap: if they bid at a particular price for a private monopoly service, they will be in for something of a shock if, at some point down the line, a French or German operator comes in and operates a rival service alongside them. Why should the franchising authority be the body that decides on the grouping of services? We have already heard about the contradiction between their role in handing out the franchises and protecting the passengers. Why is there not a passenger body to do that job instead of a Government quango?

Given the performance of the other regulators in other privatisations, what grounds for hope can there be that the rail regulator will protect the passenger from higher and higher fares? The British public want binding guarantees. I accept what the Minister says about no rail line being guaranteed for ever, but the public want stronger reassurances that the level of service will not decline, that fares will not increase unfairly and that there will not be social blight in areas such as mine in north Devon, where many people are entirely dependent on the Barnstaple-Exeter line. The new bodies must be given terms of reference that demand that present services are maintained and improved.

It is disappointing, for example, to know that the Government are planning to transfer responsibility for deciding the fate of the experimental services that were set up following the work by my predecessor in 1981, which enabled some of the old lines to re-open.

The White Paper is a missed opportunity. With a massive injection of capital along the lines which preceded the Japanese privatisation, the commercial skills of the private sector might indeed have been harnessed to run services to everyone's benefit. But the Government's conviction that, by simply decoupling themselves from the railways through privatisation, they will make the trains run on time is over-optimism in the extreme.

As other right hon. and hon. Members have said, the Government should have taken more heed of bus deregulation. By committing themselves to breaking up the British Rail network, rather than allowing a small and gradual introduction of the private sector, the Government risk the destruction of the enterprises that want to operate before those enterprises have even had a chance to get going.

I ask the Secretary of State to consider the time scale seriously. Earlier in the week, the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) called on the Government to await the findings of the Select Committee on Transport before going ahead. There are fears on both sides of the House and among the passengers who are crammed into carriages and stranded on platforms that a time scale of one parliamentary term is too short to force the entire network into the private sector.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before I call the next hon. Member to speak, I remind the House that there is now a 10-minute limit on speeches until 9 o'clock.

7.6 pm

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): The hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey) said that he thought that this White Paper was a missed opportunity. I hope that he and the House will not find that it is a messed opportunity.

The maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) was one of the most fluent and splendid I have ever heard. My only advice to him would be to tell the Whips, not ask them, about his views on this matter or on any piece of legislation. Whether this will turn out to be poll tax on wheels, I have no idea, but my hon. Friend should beware of offering Southport as a sacrificial lamb to the first franchisee.

My interest in the railways is a simple one: it is in seeing a strong and successful railway. I shall judge the proposals of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State by whether they will make a better or a worse railway system. I have never thought that party politics and public transport policy were anything but uneasy bedfellows. I should like to believe everything that my right hon. Friend tells me, but I cannot give blind acceptance to bland assurances. At present, that is all we have and we have rather to take it on trust.

Support for the Government's proposals—I say this modestly—does appear to be in inverse ratio to knowledge of the complexity of running a railway. The White Paper itself is a philosophical ramble. It should have been a Green Paper. As the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) said, we have had no debate about the role of the railway in our society. We should have had that first. What is expected of it, not just who runs it, should have been the debate about the future of the railway.

The background of the White Paper is clear: it has been an enduring commitment to privatisation by Conservative Governments over the past 13 years. Some of them have been good, some have been bad; with some we have not

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comprehended their eventual side effects. Last week, we lived through the coal tragedy, which was undoubtedly a product of the privatisation of electricity.

The Secretary of State gave us a brief history lesson and talked about the 1930s. Let no one ever forget the Railways Act 1921, brought into effect by a Conservative Government in 1923, which reduced from 112 to four the number of railway companies because of the chaotic state into which excessive competition had brought the railway system.

While my right hon. Friend was speaking, I was jotting down notes about a possible future privatisation of the Ministry of Defence. We would have Army plc, Navy plc and Air Force plc. I was wondering who would build the European fighter aircraft. That is not wholly a stupid analogy to this debate. We talked briefly earlier about new technology, but who will pay for the introduction of new railway technology in Britain? Where will our equivalent to the Shinkhansen lines, the TGV in France and the Inter-City Express in Germany come from? If we do not get that clear, in the next few years we shall be spending an endless amount of time discussing an ever-declining railway system, and that is not something that I want to see.

We have had 13 years of Conservative government and it is clear that the failure of former Secretaries of State, such as Lords Ridley, Moore and Parkinson, to produce any White Paper on railway privatisation was the result not of a lack of enthusiasm but of a lack of ability to find a workable system. The jury is still out on whether this system is workable.

Reference has been made to the Government's remarkable document "The Franchising of Passenger Rail Services". I do not propose to quote from it, but I ask hon. Members to look at the second paragraph under the heading "Important Notice" at the beginning of the document. Anyone who believes that, with those disclaimers, it is possible for prospective franchisees to put forward a business plan or any sort of serious proposal is living in an unreal world, and I say that with some years of business experience.

I refer also to paragraph 5.6 of that document. I want to read one sentence which shows the situation that we face. Let me take a deep breath. It says:

> "The open access regime will continue to apply to infrastructure needed for passenger services that ceases to be operated by Railtrack because it has been sold outright or is being operated under a leasehold arrangement."

I could not say all that in one breath. For those who have any concern about the future of our railway system, that is the stuff of which bad dreams are made.

Paragraph 71 of the White Paper puts the onus for closure policy on the franchising authority. That is a proposition at which we need to look carefully. Paragraph 21 talks about the subsidy level of uneconomic services and says:

> "the level will be determined by competition in the private sector."

Most of those services are run because of the social need for them. Competitive bidding alone is totally inadequate for people who want to see railway services continue in Cornwall, Scotland, Wales, right across the rural areas of England and on the commuter lines.

What about through-ticketing? My right hon. Friend referred to the commitment to that, yet paragraph 5.8 of the franchising document from which I quoted refers to the possible need for more than one ticket outlet at single stations. There is some incompatibility—to put it no stronger—between the White Paper and the first of the eight subject documents that we are to see.

I share the concern of the hon. Member for North Devon. The only body to be excluded from the bidding to run trains in Britain in future will be the only body with any experience of running trains—British Rail. Even in local authority tendering, public works departments are at least allowed to tender. My right hon. Friend really must look again at that.

Why is there this dissatisfaction with British Rail? We know all about that dissatisfaction. Will my right hon. Friend do one simple thing—look at the drop in the public service obligation grant for the past four years for which figures are available? It has come down from £1,600 million to £575 million. Will he look then at the level of complaints received by the regional transport users consultative committees, which have more than doubled from 3,010 to 8,053? The fact is that the cut in the PSO grant has caused the increase in complaints, the Goverment blame British Rail and we are faced with this legislation.

To many of us interested in railways, it is the familiar pattern of closures in the post-Beeching era. The timetable is disrupted and connections destroyed, then the station is painted and the track renewed and the outcome is reduced income, increased costs and then closure. Many of us are not prepared to see that happen again to our railway system.

If things are so bad on British Rail—we can all find improvements—is it because of bad management, the reduction in the PSO grant, or the unfair competitive position of rail versus road? None of that is mentioned in the White Paper, and those issues need to be attended to before we come to any conclusions.

There is no mention in the White Paper of taxation policies. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan) talked about Japan. Japan's railways are not privatised. It has six regional monopolies, all state-owned, but the success of the Japanese railways is due not just to the huge investment referred to by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) but to the fact that 80 per cent. of travellers on commuter services have their fares paid for them by their employers and the other 20 per cent. have tax allowances on their fares. That is the exact reverse of what happens here.

If we were to use our taxation policy as the Japanese do, our railways could succeed. The Germans use tax policies to offer incentives for the use of rail freight. If we did the same, that would go a long way towards helping our railway system, but nothing like that is proposed anywhere.

My hon. Friend the Minister made a speech, to which I referred briefly in the Select Committee yesterday, about our rolling stock manufacturers. There is a serious problem here. We simply cannot go on debating in the House setting up all these quangos, while giving British Rail no continuity of rolling stock investment and allowing our manufacturers to go to the wall. Not only will our manufacturers go to the wall, but our railway services will go to pot.

There is lack of vision about all this. Before I support the Bill, I shall need to be satisfied that the proposal is not a hangover from Thatcherism but a guaranteed way of increasing investment in and improving the service on our railway system. The White Paper needs a large question mark after its title. Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley), I, too, have grave reservations about this. I give notice that I am not willing to support any legislation unless I have many more answers than I have had so far.

7.16 pm

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): What we have in our hands is an incoherent patchwork designed to create maximum uncertainty, and uncertainty is the last thing that we need in our railway system at this time.

The White Paper has bold objectives. It says that it wants a reliable, efficient operation, offering high quality services to users, but its chosen instrument is the introduction of competition through greater involvement of the private sector. Nothing could be less relevant to the present needs of the railway system.

Railway passengers want a reliable service which gets them to where they are going on time with a smooth journey and as economically as possible. That has nothing to do with the introduction of competition through the involvement of the private sector.

Even the White Paper does not intend to move to privatisation of everything. It excludes InterCity from its first plan, except in so far as paragraph 35 says:

> "The first priority is to improve the service to customers by introducing private sector management, culture, disciplines and incentives."

What on earth does that mean when it is read alongside paragraph 3, which says:

> "The productivity of the BR workforce is among the highest of any European railway. InterCity services and BR freight operate without direct subsidy"?

What do the Government mean when they say that they want to introduce private sector management culture?

The only conclusion that a British Rail worker could draw is that there is an intention to ensure that, despite their high productivity, they will be pushed around more thoroughly in future. That will not improve morale on the railways.

The White Paper forecasts and wants a healthy second-hand market in trains. We saw what happened when buses were deregulated in my area. A healthy second-hand market in buses developed—but healthy for whom? It was certainly not healthy for my area, which had had a very healthy productive capacity for new buses through Leyland. Employment has gone and passengers ride in clapped-out vehicles; that has been healthy only for the short-term profits of a few. The last thing that we need is a healthy second-hand market in trains. Rather we need healthy investment in new trains.

Paragraph 4 contains a glowing account of the record of investment on the railways. From my seat in Preston, it looks rather different. GEC in my constituency has recently invested £5 million in its plant, but that plant is no longer in full use and 50 per cent. of the work force are on short-time working. Out of a work force of some 2,000, there have been 150 redundancies—55 in Trafford Park and 95 in Preston—because, having ordered 43 class 91 trains for InterCity in 1985, which were delivered on time in 1988, instead of proceeding with class 93 for the west coast line, there have been no further orders.

The order for the west coast line would have produced about three years more work, but that has not happened. British Rail wanted a faster train—faster than the track could take. Nevertheless, GEC put in a bid for such a train and was then told that British Rail would not proceed with it, so we have neither a faster train nor the class 93 train. We have nothing and no work, which is good neither for those who travel to the north-west nor for those who work there.

The Networker trains also give work opportunities for the regional railways, but only 50 per cent. of that order has ever been placed. GEC has had orders for 143 sets and British Rail Engineering Ltd. has had orders for 288 sets. That work at GEC is now coming to an end and, from next January, there are no fresh orders.

We want not a Government who mess around producing a patchwork, but a coherent strategy for a railway based on investment in new trains to give good service to passengers. When, ultimately, new orders are placed and new investment is made in rolling stock, will there be a manufacturing sector in this country? I was interested in the remarks made by the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), who told us that the manufacturing companies in Europe have full order books for the next 10 years. When we finally get around to deciding that we need new trains, we may find that foreign and EC companies are too busy and that ours no longer exist. What will happen then to the reliable service for passengers discussed in the White Paper?

The White Paper is a dangerous irrelevancy. While we are considering it, more and more people in the manufacture of trains will find themselves on the dole. We shall have to pay subsidies that will go into private pockets, possibly for an inferior service and certainly for a complicated service, without through ticketing and with doubtful systems. We shall also pay to keep the skilled workers in my constituency on the dole instead of producing the trains that all our passengers need.

I stress the word "passengers". Rail passengers do not benefit from being called "customers". Nor do they benefit from being treated simply as people who will pay out to a multiplicity of companies. They want a strategic service that regards them as passengers whose main desire is to get from here to there in the shortest possible time with the most comfortable possible journey and, in doing so, benefit the environment to a great extent.

Let the Government move in that direction instead of pursuing their dogma. Let us have a coherent strategy instead of the waste and muddle of the White Paper.

7.24 pm

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): I give notice to the House that, unfortunately, I shall be unable to remain for long after I have spoken. I must return to my constituency to honour a commitment that I gave some months ago.

I was delighted to hear the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Banks), who spoke well, confidently and with tremendous lucidity. We look forward to hearing many of his speeches in the years ahead. Indeed, I hope that he will double the record of his predecessor but one and be here for at least 36 years, by which time he will be 66 years old.

I listened to the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) with great interest. She has been extremely consistent in the line that she has taken in the House over many years,

[Mr. Bob Dunn]

in the two capacities that she has been an hon. Member. I do not agree with much of what she said but recognise the fervour with which she said it.

Unlike the two hon. Members who spoke immediately before me, I welcome the White Paper. It is long overdue and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will adhere to the timetable that he has set to bring forward legislation earlier rather than later.

I listened with respect and admiration to my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley). We are real friends, although in terms of philosophy we are a million miles apart. I listened to what he said about the 1923 legislation, when the then Conservative Government reduced 112 railway companies to four because of the mess that they were in at the time. The early 1920s followed a long and devastating world war and, undoubtedly, investment had not taken place in the railway companies due to a variety of factors. The Conservatives, then as today, were entirely realistic about their approach to the transport infrastructure and to alternatives.

For too long British Rail has been a sad music hall joke. It has been easy at meetings of women's institutes or political parties to make a comment about British Rail and for heads to nod. The poor people who must work there are given not the benefit of the doubt but the benefit of derisory laughter. British Rail is a Titan waiting to be freed from the shackles of the state, which is why I welcome the White Paper.

No hon. Member representing, as I do, a commuter constituency can fail to register with the House his or her concern and anxiety for the continuing deterioration and neglect of the services that our commuter constituents must cope with day after day, week after week—not just for the past year or 10 years but for many years. My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch and the Minister know that the Dartford loop line is a byword in lore and fable for poor service. Indeed, I would argue with any hon. Member from Essex that the Dartford loop line and not the line that runs from London to Southend—which is almost as bad—is the worst in the country.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dunn: No, because I am speaking under the 10-minute rule. Essex man must wait.

My constituents must put up with old trains. I know that steps have been taken to improve and replace rolling stock. The rolling stock is so old that the graffiti say, "Down with Ramsay MacDonald". The trains are unreliable——

Mr. Adley: That is not what my hon. Friend said last time.

Mr. Dunn: True. Last time I said it was Baldwin, actually, a different character altogether——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that he should be addressing me.

Mr. Dunn: I thought that I was——

Madam Deputy Speaker: It did not look like it.

Mr. Dunn: The trains are dirty and covered with graffiti and there are many cancellations and delays. That has a tremendous impact on commuters. They are frustrated by the delays in getting to their place of work and it is difficult for my commuters who are late time after time, when jobs are difficult to get and hold on to, to explain themselves to managers who may not live in communities that rely on railway services to get people to work.

Of course there is an alternative in Dartford—the motor car. Unfortunately, the A2 in my constituency is being dug up yet again on both sides of the carriageway, and it has been up for road works for the equivalent of five years out of the past seven. So there is understandable frustration. There is no real choice between alternatives. Two poor alternatives face my constituents and those of other Kentish Members——

Mr. Adley: Perhaps they should get on their bikes.

Mr. Dunn: It is not a question of that. There is no facility for bikes to cycle down the A2—it was dug up by the Department of Transport.

Occasionally we feel that the Department of Transport is conducting a personal vendetta against the people of north-west Kent. No doubt the Minister will take steps to assure me that that is not so.

Now we have a White Paper which I and many colleagues fully support. It contains a coherent strategy and, importantly, it is gradualist. It will enable my colleagues in government to consult the wider interests —not least the Select Committee on Transport, so ably chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch. The strategy will enable position papers to be issued from time to time so that we can evaluate the impact of the legislation on freight, on pensions, on employment prospects and on investment.

British Rail will gain in two ways—or rather, those who take over from it will. They will be accountable and in control, and they will be responsible. Dealing with British Rail at the moment is rather like dealing with the Liberal Democrats—like trying to strangle a jelly. One is passed from one person to another and time and again given standard replies. Senior management figures in British Rail have told me in conversation that they are ready and willing to take on the challenge of commercial liberalisation and the privatisation that this legislation and White Paper will offer.

The restraints of the Treasury will also be removed from the railway service. I know from our debates of a few years ago that my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch shares my firm belief that, if British Rail is to be allowed to make amends for the indifferent service that it offers from time to time, it must be free to operate within the market, and that means access to financial support from the private sector——

Mr. Adley: British Rail has that now.

Mr. Dunn: But not enough. There will probably be greater access to it in future.

The attitude struck by the Government today is wholly commendable, and thousands of commuters will welcome it, because we must put passengers first. It is the Government's responsibility to see that passengers' interests are considered and rewarded.

Many hon. Members have quoted allegedly poor examples of privatisation and of the private sector, but there is one example of private sector work about which I agree with the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr.

Mackinlay)—the Dartford bridge. It was built by private money and private enterprise, and it was built on time. For south Essex and north Kent, the Dartford bridge, as an adjunct to the tunnels which were full to capacity every single day, has made a tremendous difference. That should be stressed as a major example of how the private sector can work, how it will work and how it should work, given accountability, control and responsibility.

The difficulty with British Rail is that it is a monopoly. It is not like going to the supermarket; if people do not like Tesco, they can go to Sainsbury, Marks and Spencer or Gateway. If people cannot afford a car, they have no choice but to travel on the railway. Many of our constituents do not have cars; and even if they have them, they have nowhere to park them, so British Rail is their only choice, and sometimes that is no choice at all.

Hence I welcome and wholly support the White Paper and the legislation that will follow from it.

7.34 pm

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): I should acknowledge an interest as I am sponsored by the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers. Perhaps I should also acknowledge my paramount interest: I represent the city of York. Many people claim to have railways in the blood; York has railways in its soul. People think of the minster and the city walls, but the past 150 years of York's history have been dominated by our place in the railway network. The A1 passes us by 20 miles away, but the east coast main line goes directly through York, which is why it is a modern, thriving city today.

Despite the reductions in the number of BR employees, the east coast main line headquarters and the north-east regional railways headquarters employ between them some 3,000 workers. York is the operational centre for more than 500 railway men and women. The carriage works employ 1,500 people; the national railway museum 200. There must be between 4,000 and 5,000 rail pensioners in York. York, more than any other city in the country, depends on the railways for its economic livelihood.

Rail privatisation could therefore devastate our city. I ask the Secretary of State to note this point. Privatisation could hit us harder than any other city. We could end up as a ghost town. There is no point in him claiming that for every BR job lost a private sector job will be created, because for the most part those private sector jobs will not be in York. If, for the sake of example, Richard Branson puts in a successful bid, his operation will be run from Gatwick airport or from wherever his corporate HQ are. He is unlikely to run the operation from York.

If works are contracted out to civil engineering or electrical engineering companies, the chances of York's jobs being replaced by other private sector jobs are minimal or nil.

I am not scaremongering. The railway men and women of York have given me a document written by John Welsby, chief executive of British Rail, and circulated to all managers in my region. It states:

> "The medium term future for support services will be within the private sector."

Mr. Welsby says he is talking about jobs in new works design, project management, infrastructure renewal and maintenance, train maintenance services, station plant and building services, and computer services. So thousands of York jobs are at risk. We would be left without the railway industry forming the core of our local economy.

I have with me a voluntary redundancy notice circulated to all members of staff in regional railways north-east. For those who remain, wages will be at risk. A document sent to his staff by the on-train services manager of British Rail Network SouthEast states:

> "I feel it only fair to advise you that on the basis of past privatisation experiences both your basic and average earnings will reduce when this comes about."

This manager goes on to advise his employees not to enter into new credit agreements or mortgages that could get them into difficulty.

Great anxiety has been expressed to me about the security of pensions for railway pensioners. I welcomed the Secretary of State's remarks to the effect that he is considering establishing an independent, stand-alone, industry-wide pension scheme. He said three months ago that he was considering it, and I hope that he will soon confirm that that is the way the Government intend to proceed, because it would reassure thousands of rail pensioners in my constituency. Those people also want to be reassured that they will retain the travel concessions which they earned—they are not a gift—through a lifetime of service to the railways. A petition in my constituency is currently attracting thousands of signatures in favour of the retention of a national system of railcards for the elderly, the disabled, families and young people. The current proposals put railcards at risk.

York has two further special interests, the first of which is investment in new rolling stock. The Steer Davies and Gleave report, which was published on Tuesday, raises serious doubts about the prospect for investment in rail vehicles. Today I received a fax from ABB Transportation Ltd., the company that used to be called British Rail Engineering. The company confirms that the fears in the consultants' report are well founded. Over the past couple of years in York that company has invested heavily in the capacity to build modern aluminium-bodied railway carriages for Network SouthEast. On the basis of discussions with Network SouthEast, it invested to create the capacity to build 400 vehicles a year. It is currently building 200 a year,

> "because of Network SouthEast's cutbacks in ordering new trains".

The company's present work load runs out in 1994, and unless there are further orders soon, it will run into difficulties because the company needs a year to order components from its suppliers. It is the only company in the United Kingdom able to make modern aluminium-bodied railway carriages. A gap in production will put at risk the company's future and the future of our country's ability to build modern railway carriages. The ABB fax states:

> "unless the ground rules are clearly defined and are designed to assist positive decision making in a 'rail' future and positive investments decisions, the onset of rail privatisation will at the very least increase the commercial uncertainties faced by ABB Transportation Ltd., and in the worst case lead the company to review its medium term productive capacity."

We cannot afford that on our railways or in British industry. Commuters in north Kent and Essex and throughout Network SouthEast cannot afford delays in the production of new carriages. The Secretary of State should give a firm commitment either to allow an increase in British Rail's external financing limit in the period leading up to privatisation to enable new orders to go

[Mr. Hugh Bayley]

through, or allow BR to do what he proposes for the private sector—to lease trains so that additional finance becomes available.

Another constituency interest was mentioned to me by the national railway museum, which has rights under section 144 of the Transport Act 1968 to claim redundant equipment from British Rail. It has been discussing with the Department of Transport the continuation of those rights which the Department says will be exercisable over future public rail operators but not over private sector operators. That could damage the rail heritage of which the national railway museum is our guardian and create an unlevel playing field, because it would be a cost for the public sector but not for the private sector competitor. Either the cost to the rail operator is minimal, in which case it can be imposed without fear on the private operator, or it is substantial, in which case the same rules should apply to the public and private sectors.

The acid test for the people of Britain is whether the service will be better or worse. The regulation proposals in the White Paper are to protect the interests of the franchise bidders, the cherry pickers. Will the Secretary of State provide a regulatory body, an "Ofrail", to protect the interests of passengers and the public? Will he look carefully at the franchise document, which I see as a 167-page cherry-pickers' charter because it lists, service by service and vehicle by vehicle, what is up for grabs by competitors? Will the new rail system provide a better or worse service than the one provided by British Rail?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but I have to apply the brakes.

7.45 pm

Mr. Iain Sproat (Harwich): I should like to deal with two matters arising from the White Paper. First, I strongly support the Minister's determination to liberalise, privatise, and inject competition into Britain's railways. Privatisation has improved every industry to which it has been applied. The improvements have varied in content and size, but every privatised industry has got better for the customer, and that will be the case with the railways.

Britain does not have the rail system it deserves. Far too often the system, and especially passenger services, is dirty, uncomfortable and unreliable, and does not care about the needs and requirements of passengers. Of course, it also loses a great deal of money which the taxpayer has to cough up. There are exceptions, and in the past few years British Rail has made serious efforts to improve itself and has done so, but it is still not good enough. The country will not get the rail system that it deserves and needs until British Rail's monopoly has been broken and private sector competition has been introduced. That is why I strongly support the White Paper.

The second matter is an uneasiness which was increased when it was mentioned by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott). It is that the White Paper envisages the undoubted benefits of bringing private sector methods to the railways and bringing in entrepreneurial innovation, but also proposes a vast increase in a new, extensive and complicated bureaucracy. Three new quangos—the franchising authority, the rail regulator and Railtrack—are to be created, and there is also the involvement of British Rail, which is not a private sector company, and the Government. Before the Bill is introduced, will the Minister look carefully to see whether, in our desire to control this, as we must, we do not make it too bureaucratically top-heavy and do not engage in bureaucratic overkill.

One of the quangos, Railtrack, is to be a subsidiary of British Rail. Will the Minister look again at that matter, because there are two strong objections to structuring the track authority in that way? I am not arguing against the establishment of a track authority; I am arguing against the establishment of a track authority that is part of British Rail. I do not see how a private-sector company can feel confident that a British Rail-controlled Railtrack will be able to make an independent decision between, let us say, two services that want to run on the same route at the same time—one of them being British Rail and the other being a private company.

My right hon. Friend will rightly point to the passage in the White Paper which states that the regulator will examine such matters. I have some experience of business, however, and I cannot think that any business man will believe that BR can be neutral when it comes to deciding whether to benefit another part of British Rail or a private competitor, despite the Chinese walls that will have been erected and the fact that a separate British Rail management will be involved.

It is hard to find evidence for my argument, because so far there has not been much attempted participation in British Rail by private-sector companies. None the less, I well remember being told by the chairman of Orient Express of the appalling aggravation, hassle and difficulty that he encountered when dealing with British Rail. He described how much easier it had been to deal with the French and Italian railway authorities.

We cannot expect British Rail to bend over backwards to help its competitors. We have seen a bit of the problem with Orient Express; and I understand that the Central Railways group, which is trying to run a track from Coventry down to the channel ports, is finding it almost impossible to deal with BR, which is making every conceivable difficulty. It is certainly clear—at least from the media, and we could not gain information in any other way—that BR did not bend over backwards to help Richard Branson. All our experience and common sense tells us that a Railtrack that is part of British Rail cannot take a neutral attitude to BR's competitors.

I have another objection to my right hon. Friend's otherwise splendid plans. Railtrack will be at the heart of the new system. It will be responsible for infrastructure maintenance and infrastructure investment; it will also be responsible for signalling and timetabling. That means that the old British Rail will be at the heart of the new system. If that really means the old BR culture—the old sloppy, slack, slovenly ways—I fear for the new system. What we want is a track authority that is independent.

During the summer recess, I had the pleasure of going to Sweden to look at its rail privatisation, or liberalisation, programme. The Swedes have a track authority, but it is completely independent of the Swedish national rail system. It bends over backwards to accommodate new competitors, but does so fairly; its director general came from outside the railways. I ask my right hon. Friend to look again at the idea of an independent Railtrack. I do not think that it would upset his plans—indeed, I believe that it would enhance them by injecting confidence into the private sector. I want the private sector to believe that its bids will be handled fairly and neutrally.

Having said that, I must end my speech by emphasising that—despite my uneasiness about the extension of a complicated bureaucracy, and about the establishment of a Railtrack that is not independent—I strongly support my right hon. Friend's proposals.

7.54 pm

Mr. John Heppell (Nottingham, East): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak—not just because I am sponsored by the RMT, but because I am a former British Rail employee and, in local government, have been responsible for the development of a number of rail-based schemes. I hope that I am a good supporter of public transport, and I feel that I have some understanding of the complexities of a railway's finances and operations. I welcome any proposals that will make the railways more efficient, effective and competitive, and improve their quality; I therefore cannot welcome the White Paper, for I see nothing in it that would do any of those things.

I recognise that I am not a member of a Government, and I know that the present Government are committed to privatisation. They have a right to press for that objective; of course they want to secure the necessary legislation and thus to implement at least one of the promises contained in the Conservative party manifesto. The White Paper suggests, however, that the privatisation objective has now become an obsession. Caution and common sense have been abandoned, and it is privatisation at any cost.

It worries me that we are debating this matter with so little information. The Secretary of State has been unable to give a full answer to any question that he has been asked. We began with a paving Bill that told us absolutely nothing; now we have the White Paper. John Harlow summed it up very well when he wrote in *The Times* that the White Paper consisted of

> "21 pages of large headlines, white space and mission statement markedly thin on detail".

It is indeed markedly thin on detail, but the Secretary of State was very hurt by that criticism. He replied:

> "It is nonsense to say that the White Paper is presentation rather than substance . . . Naturally we must have a Bill which will take a considerable amount of time to pass through both Houses, and it will be possible to go into more detail then."

We waited for the detail. The first bit of detail came in October—not the 21 pages that we had seen before, but 167 pages. I was relieved, until I read the document and realised that nothing after page 29 had anything to do with privatisation: it was simply a description of British Rail's existing passenger services. Not one of those 138 pages —not a single paragraph or even a single word, such as the word "privatisation"—dealt with the Secretary of State's proposals.

I thought that at least 29 pages were an improvement on the 21 that we had originally had to consider. Then I realised that two of those 29 pages constituted an introduction. When I subtracted the blank sheets and white spaces, I ended up with a total of only 16 pages. The Secretary of State's supposedly more detailed document was actually shorter than the original.

We are left with a number of questions. What on earth has the Secretary of State been doing for the past three months? Does he think that he should be on performance-related pay? That could save the Treasury a considerable sum. If he continues to work on the same basis, I suspect that by the time the Bill is presented it will be short enough to be written on the back of an envelope —or possibly a rail ticket.

I exaggerate. There is another page. It is an important one. It tells us that it is important, right on the front. It says "Important Notice". I thought that I had better read this important notice. It tells us that the information and opinions contained in the document do not purport to be comprehensive. It does not surprise us that they do not pretend to be comprehensive when the document contains only 16 pages.

It was the bit after that that got to me. It says that recipients should not rely on the document's accuracy or completeness and that no responsibility or liability is accepted by the Department of Transport or the British Railways Board, or any of their respective advisers, officials, directors, partners, or employees as to its accuracy or completeness, or the information or opinions contained within it. So the document tells me straight away that it is not worth the paper it is printed on. Nobody seems to want to take responsibility for it—not the Department of Transport, not British Rail, not its employees. I do not blame them one iota. The Secretary of State, however, will have to take responsibility for it.

I suspect that people do not want to take responsibility for that document because the advice behind the scenes is that what is contained in it just cannot work. Half an idea in the Secretary of State's head will not turn into a practical reality. He should take note of the fact that the chief officer of the ambulance service did not listen to advisers who told him something similar about something that did not work. I do not ask for the Secretary of State's resignation. That is unnecessary. I have noticed that Secretaries of State for Transport come and go and that eventually they decide to spend more time with their families. I do not know how many Secretaries of State for Transport my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) has seen off, but I am certain that it is a fair number.

The Secretary of State was not sure in July about the proposals that he wanted to make. He certainly is not certain in October. Again we are left with a lot of unanswered questions. What will the size of the franchises be? We do not know. Will they operate on single lines? We do not know. Will they operate single services? We do not know. Will there be operator networks? We do not know. Who will train the staff? We do not know. When will the leasing markets be introduced? We do not know. How will train times be co-ordinated? We do not know. How will through ticketing be achieved? We do not know. What will be the effect on fares? We do not know. What is really worrying, though, is that the Secretary of State does not know. He did not know in July. He does not know in October.

What, however, the Secretary of State does do is to respond to any question to which he does not know the answer. It is a bit like Ross Perot. I have listened to the presidential debates. Whenever Ross Perot is asked a question that he cannot answer he says, "I'll set up a task force." Whenever the Secretary of State is asked a question that he cannot answer he says, "We'll work that out later. We'll have a quango to work it out." The number of bodies that will be stitched on to this new bureaucracy grows and grows. That new bureaucracy will equal that of the Civil Service.

[Mr. John Heppell]

When it all goes wrong, who will be to blame for a complex system that does not work? Will it be the Secretary of State, the new regulator, the new franchising authority, the passenger transport executives, local authorities, or British Rail's passenger and freight operators? We do not yet know how many there will be. There may be 10, or 100, or 1,000. The Secretary of State does not know. Will the Health and Safety Executive, or Railtrack, or the new joint industry boards be to blame? We do not know who will be to blame. It will be difficult for anybody else to find out who is to blame. The system will be so complicated that it will be a mess.

Many of us with an interest in the railways recognise that the railways were split up a long time before privatisation came on the scene. They were split up long before Sealink, Travellers Fare or British Rail Engineering Ltd. broke away. The railways were broken up into two parts—the railway industry, which included drivers, signalmen, the people who maintained the trains and the track——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Gentleman's 10 minutes have come to an end.

8.4 pm

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): As a new Member of Parliament, it is somewhat dispiriting to have to listen to Opposition arguments that echo arguments that we have heard for the past 12 or 13 years regarding the merits or demerits of privatisation. This privatisation, as with all other privatisations, can only be good for the industry. It will come out of the hands of state bureaucracy and go into the hands of private enterprise which will show much greater consideration towards the people who use the railways and will try to provide the services that they want.

I have to declare an interest. I like travelling by train. I have not yet been completely put off travelling by train by British Rail's antics. During the summer recess I spent several days travelling across the United States by train. I would recommend that holiday to anybody. However, I, like other hon. Members, find that once I have ploughed through the letters that I receive about animals, the third world and many other issues, the majority of them contain complaints about British Rail. I do not intend to go into detail about the anger, frustration and despair that people feel, but the story is always the same: that British Rail's management are not delivering the service that they, as customers, require. People are not nostalgic about the trains of the past, even though they like travelling on steam trains. I used to enjoy travelling on them.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): My hon. Friend is not old enough to have done so.

Mrs. Lait: I am of that age, I am afraid, but it is very kind of my hon. Friend to suggest that I am not. I always had a sneaking suspicion that the reason I was wearing a navy blue school uniform was so that the dirt from steam trains did not show. Today's trains have not improved significantly. They are still dirty. They are still late. Station staff are no more helpful now than they were then. We need a modern service.

I want to tease out from the Minister what is to happen to my beloved town of Hastings. It would be stuck on to the end of any franchising operation. It takes less time to get to Doncaster from London than it does to get to Hastings, which is only 65 miles from the capital. Until there is investment in the line, I do not believe that many franchisers will wish to include it, unless they are made to do so. I hope that the Minister will be able to reassure me by telling me how he envisages the station at Hastings being included in the franchise.

We know that there are problems about the tunnels in Hastings. They were managed by companies that were not the best run in the world. That is why there are problems; the tunnels were not properly checked and maintained. Hastings is an area of high unemployment. There is more unemployment per head of population in Hastings than there is in Newcastle and Sheffield. Our communications, therefore, desperately need to be improved. One of those communications is the line from Hastings to Ashford, which is crucial to the development of the channel tunnel and our infrastructure. Electrification of the line has been promised for many years.

Can the Minister tell me whether, on the privatisation and franchising of that line, there is any chance that electrification will go ahead before the legislation comes into force and whether Railtrack will accept private investment in a railway line such as the Hastings to Ashford line, by means of which the private sector could deliver the type of service that the people of Hastings, Rye, Ashford and beyond want and need? As with roads, we need a good quality service so that people can travel easily along the south coast and thereby benefit from the channel tunnel.

I welcome the White Paper, which will solve problems with the poor management of British Rail, and look forward to the introduction of the Bill and the help that it will offer my constituents.

8.10 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): The debate has highlighted the reason why the Government's privatisation programme, and especially the White Paper, has caused so much concern among my constituents, Opposition Members and, rather surprisingly, some Conservative Members. The principal reason for the concern is the way in which the Government seem prepared to proceed with programmes, throwing aside the need for strategic transport planning and failing to recognise the strategic importance of railways.

It is odd that we are debating the White Paper without considering the environmental consequences of our decisions or recognising the strategic importance of railways in a European context.

The hon. Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat), who is no longer in his place, said that he was extremely disappointed that Richard Branson was not allowed to secure some InterCity 125 sets. My constituents and I were delighted that he was not allowed to do so. The press reports that the hon. Member for Harwich mentioned suggested that Mr. Branson may have been given sets in north Wales, which would have led to the ending of InterCity services along the north Wales coast.

That is the fundamental flaw in the Government's policy. If InterCity services stopped running in north Wales, what would happen to Wales in the run-up to the single market and to our ability to get our goods to

Europe? What would have happened to the Irish Republic, because its only rail access to Europe is through north Wales?

I well remember a debate in the House some years ago on the European dimension in transport matters. I recall how disappointed I was that the Government were so negative about the idea of a European integrated transport system. Countries such as Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are on the periphery of the European Community and can compete only if the Government understand the need for strategic transport policies.

We are concerned about the future of peripheral services, as described in the new plan for British Rail. InterCity services in Wales and main lines in the north and south of Wales are regarded as peripheral services by British Rail. There is no doubt that the introduction of franchising would place them under considerable threat.

Let us remember the valuable service that is offered by regional railways in Wales. It is a source of regret to my colleagues and me that British Rail runs Wales from Manchester, Swindon and Birmingham. Wales is not regarded as a region by the Government or British Rail. All decisions affecting our regional railways and rural services are taken from outside our borders. There is a case for considering the future of Welsh railways in a Welsh context. As the Welsh Office is now assuming greater responsibility for administrative affairs and public finance in Wales, the future of our rail services should be considered from a Welsh perspective.

One of the difficulties with developing rail services in rural areas has been the lack of funding. We need major infrastructure investment—especially on the north Wales main line, if I may make a parochial point—if we are to compete effectively. One of the reasons why InterCity can no longer compete with the advances made on the A55 and the road network is the ease of travel. It can no longer compete because rail investment has not matched road investment. We are shifting more and more heavy cargo on to roads. We have an excellent rail service that needs proper investment so that it can shift freight, to our environmental, social and economic benefit. Investment in the north Wales line would be of immense benefit and would be better than trying to find ways of withdrawing InterCity from north Wales altogether.

I should like to put a number of questions to the Minister, the first of which is about the franchising authority. Will the authority make proposals for new passenger services? Will there be a stimulus for new services, and what criteria will it use in determining the need for the publicly supported network? Will the new private passengers service operator be required to meet the requirements of the passengers charter? Since the lack of punctuality and unreliability are the most serious interruptions to service, who will take responsibility if signalling is faulty? Will Railtrack pay compensation?

If a breakdown by another franchisee causes all services to be delayed, will the franchisee be responsible for compensation and or reimbursement of losses to other operators? Will the Government specify the standards that must be met in the Railtrack contract with operators and in the operators' ticketing terms with passengers? Will an Association of British Travel Agents type bonding arrangement be necessary so that compensation claims are met from a central pool? How realistic is it to expect that private operators will be prepared and able to pay from their revenue Railtrack's charges for maintenance, including safety costs and modernisation of the network?

What role—this is an important point—will the European regional development fund and other European Community structural funds, which are particularly important in Wales, play in continuing to support infrastructure renewal and modernisation? Will the transfer of some assets and most operations to the private sector lead to a reduction in ERDF grant aid, both in percentage grant and eligibility for grant? Many of the publicly supported transport services in mainland Europe, particularly rail, receive tremendous support from their own Governments and from the European Community. Even if the Government were to proceed with their privatisation programme, would that eligibility for grant still apply? The Government must answer those questions.

Wales will not benefit from the new proposals. We know that the north Wales line was retained for InterCity services only by the skin of its teeth. It almost went in the past few weeks, and if Richard Branson had been given sets, such services would have disappeared. We know that, in 1994, people such as Richard Branson may be in the market again. We know that they will not run services to north Wales. They will be looking to run the profitable routes or the core services of the network. Services to north, south and mid Wales and our regional railways must be retained as part of an integrated transport network. Unless assurances are given, we shall oppose the proposals in the Lobby.

8.19 pm

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): I first add my congratulations to those of my colleagues to my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) on a most assured maiden speech. We shall all look forward to hearing him again on this and other subjects, and on this subject it will be a pleasure to work with him in the Select Committee on Transport, of which we are both members.

I must declare an interest which is noted on the Register of Members' Interests—although I should add that my interest is closely related to freight, whereas my speech tonight will be largely directed towards passenger services.

Opposition Members have been determined to think the worst of the Government proposals, whereas I am prepared to take a rather more upbeat approach, as they offer a great deal of hope.

Mr. Mackinlay: Hope?

Mr. Haselhurst: Hope from my point of view.

I approach the proposals with certain objectives in mind. I hope that it may be taken for granted that we expect the highest safety standards to be maintained. One trusts that there will be a coherent national timetable and inter-availability of tickets. Having said that, my principal objectives are to bring about better management of our rail services, and a shift from road to rail of both freight and passengers. I want an increase in investment and an improvement in the quality of service.

I am prepared to welcome the proposals which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has put before the House. I see in them the possibility that my objectives may be achieved.

It has been well demonstrated that in every case of privatisation we have been able to bring about dramatic

[Mr. Haselhurst]

improvements in management standards. Throughout the history of British Rail one cannot help noticing a management culture which is too inbred, which has tolerated lack of innovation, and has shown extraordinary equanimity about low standards of service, as lost revenue seems more acceptable than high costs.

There is an in-house engineering culture in which unit costs are too high, time scales are too long and attitudes too incestuous. There is a work force still affected by restrictive practices, which has a poor interface with customers. There are still byzantine accounting practices, rooted in post-war academic dogma, which discourage sensible cash management and encourage short-termism.

I have not plucked those views out of the air. I can assure hon. Members that they are informed by discussions with people within British Rail. It is recognised that that has been the blight of management over the years —I acknowledge the fact that, in recent years, with the establishment of profit centres, there has been some improvement. However, there is still enormous scope for an altogether improved management culture in our railways, which could be brought about by my right hon. Friend's proposals.

It is natural that one should hope that an improved railway system will attract more freight and passengers. I hope that, as more detail becomes available, our discussions will reach the point of maturity at which we may be able to persuade my right hon. Friend that we should have built-in targets for achieving a shift from road to rail. I should like there to be a clearly defined purpose in the legislation, not simply the hope and expectation that we may achieve an improvement. I should like that consideration to influence the charging regime for freight as well as the design of the franchises for passenger services.

It seems that the vehicle for investment will inevitably be Railtrack, and that the key to future investment in infrastructure will lie with the rules which govern Railtrack's ability to raise money, and the level of public contribution which will accompany that. The more assurances that we have that a more liberal regime will exist for the new track authority the more confident the House and the country will be.

We also want to know more about the charging system. There are so many queries for potential freight operators and franchisees of the passenger services. They want to know what sort of burdens and restrictions will apply to them. Another key factor to which much more thought needs to be given is the development potential of the stations and the land. It is proposed at present that stations and land may be sold or leased, but the wording of the White Paper undoubtedly implies that the Government are prepared to welcome suggestions.

If those assets are capable of producing considerable sums, I shall be anxious to try to find a way of ensuring that those moneys are fed back into the improvement either of the infrastructure or of services to passengers. I hope that that will be the guiding thought in determining how those assets should be handled.

The passenger franchise idea is quite ingenious in terms of achieving a better quality of service and, certainly at the outset, I rather prefer that approach to simply believing in open access and the existence of competing train services on the same set of lines. The franchise idea seems the only realistic way of getting regional railways, Network SouthEast especially, into a better state. I welcome that aspect of the proposals.

I also welcome the fact that the Secretary of State says that there will be flexibility. That is good. Again, as ideas are fleshed out through the extra information which my right hon. Friend has promised the House, I hope that we shall give more specific guidelines to the franchising authority about how we expect it to determine the final shape and content of the franchises.

The analogy that comes to mind is the way in which we franchised out the television stations. We should have a distinct quality threshold which goes beyond mere reliability, safety and so on, and offers passengers the prospect of a better ride on the railway. The conditions in which many people have to commute are appalling, and even some of the more recently designed rolling stock is also the most uncomfortable. It may be cleaner but it is uncomfortable. I hope that such considerations will become a material factor. Surely they will be the key to determining the nature of future rolling stock, which, whether it is new or refurbished, should be better designed.

I see a potential conflict in allowing two operators on the same track. The question of engineering works may arise. One operator might be content with a speed restriction, whereas another might insist that a bridge be rebuilt or redesigned so that his trains can go faster. If the engineering work is carried out, would the first operator have to bear the burden of increased costs, willy-nilly?

Other practical problems will arise. How will the dividing line be drawn between operators at stations such as Stevenage and Reading, where InterCity expresses now interchange with Network SouthEast? Commuters could have the opportunity to step on to an express train run by one operator over track which is also part of the franchise.

I hope that consideration will be given to out-of-area operations, too, as part of the franchise. A franchisee may say, "I can use my capital equipment to offer a cheap, low-cost service to destinations outside my area." That would help to provide extra services for passengers and valuable revenue for franchisees. All those ideas will help to ensure that the franchisees deliver high quality.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State must of course expect questions, even from Conservative Members, on the proposals. We are bound to reflect our constituents' queries on such matters. We are dealing with an industry in which expectations have been so low for too long. We all recognise that the proposals relate to a highly complex operation. The approach of the Secretary of State is innovative, so it begs questions. It is inevitable that those doubts will have to be resolved. It is time that we tackled the subject. My right hon. Friend is right to put this challenge before us.

8.29 pm

Mr. Keith Hill (Streatham): I first declare two interests —as a member of the Select Committee on Transport and as an officer for 16 years, until the general election, of the National Union of Railwaymen, now the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers. I am sponsored by that union.

On the basis of that long connection with the railway industry, I turn immediately to a fundamental difficulty in the White Paper proposals. The Government plan to separate infrastructure from operations as their preferred method of privatisation. The separation of managerial responsibility for track and train operations strikes at the heart of the profession of railway management. It will jeopardise the planning of investment and the operational integrity of the system.

The greatest benefits in terms of financial returns and customer satisfaction arise when the whole of the equipment on the line—track, signalling and rolling stock—is renewed at one time. That policy, known as total route modernisation, has been pursued on the east coast main line and on the Chiltern line where passenger numbers and revenue are growing. Such modernisation schemes depend on close co-ordination between track and rolling stock at the stages of specification and implementation. If responsibilities for track and for rolling stock are separated, as the Government propose, we will face the problem of one party wishing to proceed with modernisation while the other may not be ready to do so.

Even worse, if there are several different operators on a route and one is unable or unwilling to provide improved rolling stock, will the pace of modernisation be determined by the speed of the least innovative operator? The separation of the responsibility for track and the responsibility for operations has the potential to create even more trouble on a day-to-day basis when breakdowns and failures inevitably occur.

There will be disputes about who is to take the lead in sorting matters out, and about the right of an operator to use rolling stock and train crews to minimise passenger inconvenience rather than to do what suits individual operators. Determining who is responsible for shortcomings in services will be time-consuming, bureaucratic and often inconclusive. The scope for buck-passing at the expense of the passenger will be endless.

At present, we at least know whom to blame when something goes wrong, and we often do. It is British Rail. No intensively used passenger railway system in the world separates the management of track and operations in the way proposed by the Government. I invite the Secretary of State, through the Minister, to name any respected professional railway operator or engineer who believes that such a division represents a satisfactory basis on which to run a railway.

The Government have a history of ignoring the advice of professionals and running into trouble. They did so over the poll tax. If they had listened to professional advice on electricity privatisation, they would have avoided the fiasco of the pit closure programme. Will the Minister given an undertaking to take serious heed of those with professional operational experience on the railways? Will he give a commitment that he will think again about the separation proposals in the light of advice he receives?

We have heard a great deal from various speakers in the debate about the extraordinary bureaucratic structure being proposed in the White Paper to replace the single structure of British Rail. Not only will new operators and franchisees face a multiplicity of new bureaucratic structures, each with a finger in the pie, but the chief player in the game will still be the Government in their least encouraging guise, as the Treasury.

The consultation document on passenger franchises makes it perfectly clear that

"Most passenger services would at present not be viable as stand-alone businesses."

In other words, most passenger franchisees will rely on subsidy from the Government doled out by the franchising authority.

The critical issues here will be the length of franchises and the reliability of the subsidies. I know that the Secretary of State is well aware of the significance of those matters, because we discussed them yesterday during his appearance before the Transport Committee. He made a number of important commitments on that occasion. I will spell them out and I hope that they will receive confirmation before the whole House.

As the Secretary of State and the Minister know well, the normal time scale for most railway investment is a minimum of 25 years and often 30 or 40 years. The White Paper speaks of franchises of variable duration. Until yesterday, it was generally believed that the franchises were likely to be on offer for periods of five to 10 years. Yesterday, the Secretary of State referred to franchises of five, 10 or 15 years—and possibly longer.

That point is vital. A fundamental question mark hanging over the Government's proposals in relation to investment is whether franchisees would be willing to engage in the required scale of asset renewal and improvement when they are unlikely to be in business long enough to derive the rewards of their investment. The Secretary of State seemed yesterday to have answered that question, although his answer gives rise to further questions relating to competition when franchisees and/or operators will enjoy such long franchises.

There is an additional and equally important question which arises from the reliability of the level of subsidy initially agreed between the franchisee and the franchising authority. The Secretary of State yesterday appeared to give an important answer to that question. In undertaking a franchise, the private operator will be asking for long-term financing from the banking system. Unless there are firm guarantees about the level of subsidy, there is no way in which the banks can have confidence in such investment.

The subsidy will come ultimately from the Treasury, which operates on the three-year cycle of the public expenditure survey round. In practice, the Treasury often parts with money no more than one year in advance. That is the dilemma between the long-term needs of the railway and the short-term decision-making of the Treasury with which British Rail has long had to wrestle.

The potential problem for the franchisee is how to conclude successful negotiations for the leasing of assets over five, 10 or 15 years when it would appear that his guarantee of subsidy is for three years at the most. The consultation document maintains that the Government intend that the subsidy will be determined in advance for the whole period of the franchise, but it adds the ominous words:

"both grant and the service specification may be subject to periodic review."

Yesterday, the Secretary of State was reasonably emphatic that subsidy would be at a guaranteed level for the duration of the franchises. He was less than explicit on the issue this evening. We seek again from the Minister an explicit guarantee that the subsidy will be at a guaranteed level for the duration of the franchise.

The White Paper raises many more questions than it answers. The Government are embarking on an elaborate process of consultation to try to find the answers to some of the questions. It might have been more sensible to delay

[Mr. Keith Hill]

the commitment to privatisation until they had sorted out those questions. It would certainly have been more sensible to delay publication and proceedings on a Bill until the Transport Select Committee had completed its work.

The bottom-line question is whether privatisation will lead to the growth of investment which is so desperately needed in railways. Could that objective have been better served by a better-funded British Rail? I am bound to say that, so far, the balance of evidence does not favour the Government's proposals.

8.38 pm

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): I add my congratulations to those of other hon. Members on the excellent maiden speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Banks). I know that we will hear him many more times in the Chamber speaking adeptly on this issue and on many others.

I am delighted, first, to take up some of the points made by the hon. Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Heppell). The hon. Gentleman spoke wittily on the subject of the latest consultation document, but what would Opposition Members have said if the document had not been a consultation document or if it had not contained a full description of the current system? They would have criticised my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for not including such a description.

Mr. Heppell: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hawkins: I am sorry, but we are all caught by the 10-minute trap—and I did not intervene in the hon. Gentleman's speech.

It is abundantly clear that the document is a consultation document inviting views. That is one of its great merits. I appreciated the wit of the hon. Gentleman's speech, but I should point out that the section at which he most poked fun—that headed "Important Notice"—could not have been omitted. For a number of years in the early 1980s, I was the secretary of the Railway Lawyers Group, a national organisation, and I feel that the hon. Gentleman should understand that those words have enormous legal significance in relation to the investment for which hon. Members on both sides of the House argue.

If those words were not contained in a document inviting views on franchises, which are legal and financial matters, the document would not be appropriate. When poking fun at them, the hon. Gentleman should bear in mind that it lies ill in his mouth and in the mouths of his hon. Friends then to say that we need more investment from the private sector. Only if such matters are carefully addressed can we expect private sector investment to be forthcoming, and it is in attracting such investment that the significance of the document, the White Paper and, eventually, the Bill, lies.

The most important aspect of the White Paper is that it states that passenger safety is paramount. Hon Members on both sides of the House will acknowledge that that is stated time and again in the White Paper and the consultation document, and I am sure that the concept will have all-party support.

I regret to say, however, that many Opposition Members seem far more concerned about the morale of the staff—which, I may add, I do not discount as an important factor—than about passengers who are the customers of the railways. The railways are there to serve the people. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) ought to bear it in mind that, if Opposition Members go to public meetings—not party or union meetings—and suggest that there has been nothing wrong with British Rail since the industry was nationalised in 1947-48, they will be laughed out of court.

The White Paper and the Bill seek to improve the service that is given to passengers. The hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise)—who is not in her place—complained that we should be talking not about customers but about passengers. She is missing the point. Passengers want to be treated as customers and they want better service than the service that they have had to put up with for years.

The acid test of the Government's proposals is that, with the involvement of private sector franchisees, there should be a better service for passengers. I welcome the Government's policy because I recognise that the private sector operators who will be brought into the industry will be similar to those who run airlines, whose staff take care of their customers.

I am the first to recognise that British Rail has many dedicated staff who believe in customer care. The problem lies with the minority who do not. They are at the sharp end. I am lucky: I use the north-west main line twice a week, and its staff have very high standards. Many other British Rail staff also have high standards but—no doubt like Opposition Members—I am nevertheless besieged by complaints. As the hon. Member for Streatham (Mr. Hill) said, we know who to complain to at the moment—and we often do complain—about the British Rail staff who let the side down, who are seen leaning on brooms instead of doing their work and who cannot answer passengers' complaints. [HON. MEMBERS: "Come off it."] Opposition Members may make scornful remarks but I am sure that they have to answer the same complaints in their surgeries as I do.

When I was in the United States with a number of Opposition Members, including the hon. Members for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) and for York (Mr. Bayley), we saw a shining example of the benefits of the private sector in rail transport. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where?"] At the Union station in Washington DC, which is the showpiece.

Anyone who has been to a British Rail station in recent years should recognise that one of the best things that has happened to customer service is the involvement of the private sector. One can now get a far wider choice of meals, and, under the new proposals, we look forward to still wider consumer choice. Opposition Members will have to answer to their constituents for the fact that they pour scorn on such improvements and defend an outmoded socialist bureaucracy that does not provide an adequate service to customers.

I believe that the monopoly must be broken, not least because BR as it is now has withdrawn the direct InterCity service on which my constituents have relied for many years. The hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) talked about the dangers of the private sector and what might happen to services in his constituency. He is lucky because his constituents still have a service, whereas British Rail has withdrawn the service to my constituents. The hon. Member for Preston should realise that the customers who now have to transfer from the InterCity service in her constituency—many of them disabled customers who have to negotiate a footbridge or steep ramps—are not getting a proper service.

We want to open up opportunities to people who can run a through service to the biggest tourist resort in the country, which has always had a service. Opposition Members saw that service withdrawn on the Monday of their party conference in Blackpool and ought to have been aware of the complaints.

Mr. Snape: The hon. Gentleman was not there.

Mr. Hawkins: I was there. I travelled on the last through service to my constituency, and I can tell Opposition Members that I have always been a regular rail traveller. It was Opposition Members who arrived at their party conference by car and who were not aware of the complaints of their constituents and their party members.

Opposition Members are very unwise if they pour scorn on the welcome involvement of private sector capital. They claim, in a mealy-mouthed way, that they are not against some private sector involvement, but everything that they have done and proposed is intended to deter the involvement and investment that they claim to support. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East has already threatened publicly that a Labour Government would immediately withdraw the franchises. What do such threats do to encourage the private sector to bring in the investment that he claims he supports?

The Government are committed to bring in as much capital as is needed, and our proposals represent the only way to do that. I am not an ideologue. I believe in the injunction, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." The problem with British Rail is that it is broke, both financially and because it does not provide an adequate service to customers.

I accept that Opposition Members with real experience of the industry have made some valid points. I accept the need to ensure through-ticketing in the revised system and that safety is the paramount consideration in the revised system. I also feel, however, that our principal duty is to look after the passenger and the customer.

I strongly agree with the hon. Member for York that the country's rail heritage should be looked after.

8.48 pm

Mrs. Jane Kennedy (Liverpool, Broadgreen): I make no apologies for being about to pour scorn on the proposed privatisation of British Rail. However, before I do that I have a confession to make. In this debate on the new opportunities for the railways, I speak as a confirmed motorist, albeit as a motorist with a very uneasy conscience; one who uses her car knowing full well what damage that causes to the environment and the congestion that it causes in cities. I do so also as a motorist who knows that by using her car as regularly as I do I increase the likelihood of my having an accident. I deliberately choose a form of transport that is less safe than the railway service.

I am the kind of motorist who is looking for an intitiative by the Government that would persuade me to travel by rail. However, I see nothing in the White Paper to persuade me to do that. I am an occasional rail traveller whose tolerance level sinks low where rail travel is concerned. In comparative terms, I can tolerate a hold-up at junction 14 on the M62 with equanimity. However, I fuss and fume over the smallest delay or inconvenience when I travel on InterCity.

Unlike the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait), I tend to get off a train infinitely more stressed than when I got on. I rage at the three classes of rail passenger when first class passengers travel in spacious luxury; when second class—sorry, standard class—passengers receive a free cup of tea or coffee; and third class—sorry, saver ticket holders—are lucky to get a seat on some trains.

If my ticket costs as much as £30 for a third class return trip, why cannot I be guaranteed a seat? Why is the food so expensive? Motorway services and BR rip off travellers quite shamelessly. Therefore, I fret and grumble about unexplained stops. Why can one never quite hear what the guard is saying just when you really want to hear? I sit in my stationary car just north of Birmingham and persuade myself that at least I have some control over my journey.

Those may be somewhat petty examples of the frustrations felt by rail passengers, but they are nevertheless genuine and deeply felt. However, it is irrational for me to rail at BR over its pricing policy when the Government's failure to subsidise BR forces it to raise revenues in the only way it can. It is irrational for me to grumble about unscheduled stops and to imagine that no such delay would have occurred had I gone by car. However irrational that may be, I cannot deny those feelings, and I thought that it was important that I should explain them to the House.

Conservatives take that experience and the real frustrations of rail passengers and they exploit them for the pursuit of their own privatisation dogma just as they have done whenever they pushed our national assets and public services into the private sector. The Government told the public that things would be better when the gas or electricity supply was run by the private sector. However, over the past few weeks we have seen the chaos that has been created in our coalfields by the privatisation of our energy industry.

The Conservative party believes that people will have more control and accountability as customers than as passengers of a public service. In the past, the Conservatives have said, "Your child will enjoy his or her school meal more if it is prepared by a private company rather than by school dinner ladies." They have said and continue to say, "Your hospital will be cleaner if it is cleaned by a private company rather than by your ward domestic who keeps stopping work to chat to you, ask how you are, make you laugh and then warn you not to burst your stitches."

In paragraph 5, the White Paper plays upon the frustrations of rail passengers and it makes the right analysis of the problems facing passengers, but it prescribes the wrong treatment. It states:

> "BR's staff and management work hard to improve services. But they are limited by the structure of the industry in the public sector."

That is the wrong diagnosis and the wrong treatment for the problems facing BR. That is the Conservatives' privatisation con trick all over again. They cuddle close to rail travellers and say, "Don't worry. We know how you feel. We can assure you that your rail journey will be less frustrating if Mr. Branson runs the train than if BR runs it." However, the Secretary of State was tonight unable to reassure hon. Members when he was asked specific questions about the lack of detail in the White Paper.

[Mrs. Jane Kennedy]

When passengers complain about BR, they are told that it is all BR's fault; if only it was privatised, there would be no more unscheduled stops. It is claimed that prices will come down because there will be more competition. That is just not true, as our experience of other privatised monopolies has shown. Privatisation is not a panacea for the problems facing BR.

I want briefly to illustrate the point by describing the problems that have faced water customers in my constituency. Residents in a road in Old Swan complained to the water authority that there were bits in their drinking water and were told that they were imagining it. They were told that they were the only people in the area complaining about it. They were told that their domestic pipes were the problem. One elderly woman bought a new washing machine, although she could ill afford it, when there was nothing wrong with the old one.

A survey of residents carried out by the Labour party showed that four out of five residents had experienced problems and a number of them had reported those problems. That is an example of how privatisations have not worked in many of the areas when the Government have forced them on the people of this country. I am happy to say that the water authority has undertaken to renew the mains supply, but there is no compensation for those who were persuaded that the remedy lay in their own hands.

What remedy will be available to rail travellers after privatisation? I do not know the answer to that and I have seen no remedies that will work. However, the Government will be able to say, "It's nothing to do with us now. Don't complain to us; we are no longer responsible. Go and see the franchising authority." People will be told to go to the operators and Railtrack.

The Secretary of State will no longer be ultimately responsible for passenger safety. Paragraph 79 of the White Paper states:

> "The primary duty for guaranteeing the safe operation of the railway will rest with Railtrack and individual operators of trains, terminals, depots etc . . . . Railtrack and operators will be responsible for undertaking the necessary investment which will sustain safe operation".

That is different from the present situation where the Secretary of State is responsible. Who should be providing failsafe doors to prevent further tragedies in which people fall to their deaths from trains?

For those who rely on it, the rail network is vital to their ability to get to work or for the delivery of freight essential to their work. It is a key element in the management of our economy. That reason alone is good enough for me to believe that political accountability for the operation of the rail service is essential.

I do not believe that privatised rail operators will pay sufficient heed to long-term regional planning that is so necessary, if not essential, for areas such as Merseyside and my constituency. Unless it is Government-led, how are we to see investment in a cross-Pennine rail link which would create a land bridge across Britain from Humberside to Merseyside and encourage the flow of freight and passengers to and from Scandinavia and northern Europe through Hull to Liverpool and on to Ireland?

With respect to greater choice, all I can see after privatisation for rail passengers is that the choice will be as it is now. Many of those passengers will do what I do now because the White Paper offers no hope to motorists like me who would rather travel by rail.

8.57 pm

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): We have always known that Blackpool is famous for fresh air and fun. Clearly, something in that air lends a passion for railways among hon. Members from that part of England. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) on his vigorous defence of the railways and, in particular, my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) on his vigorous and entertaining maiden speech. He talked of his problem of being mistaken for our hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry). I fear that I suffer a worse fate; I am regularly mistaken for my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth).

It is probably right that I declare two modest shareholdings, for I am a shareholder in two of Britain's highly successful private railways. I am a modest shareholder in the Severn Valley Railway. Therefore, I attach great importance to the comments of the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley) about the possible impact of the legislation on the national railway museum. I hope that the Minister will carefully consider that matter.

In response to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mrs. Kennedy), I am also a shareholder in Eurotunnel. Last week, I had the privilege of being on the first passenger train to go into the channel tunnel. Of course, the channel tunnel is a railway system rather than a tunnel. It is a very vigorous example of what the private sector can bring to transport in this country, and I congratulate all those involved in it. I unreservedly welcome the private sector's involvement in railways. Why should British Rail uniquely be disqualified from the advantages that privatisation has brought to other privatised industries—the private sector flair and capital?

Many hon. Members heard the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), but his views are not widely shared on Conservative Benches. However, Conservative Members share his view that the Government's objective should be a better railway, and we are convinced that the Government's proposals will provide precisely that.

I pay tribute to the present railways. I am a regular user of InterCity, of regional railways and Network SouthEast. Again, in response to the motoring hon. Member for Broadgreen, I wish that I could arrive as reliably at my destination by car as I can count on arriving by train.

I thoroughly endorse the comments of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about the radical change in British Rail's approach and performance in the past 10 years. On most measures of business performance, BR outperforms its European competitors. InterCity remains the only main line railway in Europe to operate profitably. It also runs more trains at more than 100 mph than any other European railway. We can look with confidence to the railway staff, many of whom will move to the new private sector operators to rise to the challenge of the private sector.

However, there are problems with the network. There is poor marketing at local level, and limited access to private capital. Investment policy is determined by the Treasury, not by need and, very worryingly in some recent developments in the railways, there is no transparency of charge which enables private operators to enter the market.

In my constituency of Worcester, I see stations not fully exploited and their potential not fully explored. I see confusion, not clarity, about where to address complaints. I see timetables that are not consolidated for the benefit of the travelling public in the way that they are for bus services. It is difficult to work out how to get to London or understand the range of destinations that are served from my constituency. I see a destination—one could call it in-fighting—between the three passenger sectors of the railways to provide through services to London, and that has significantly delayed the development of a good service. I am delighted that those problems will be resolved and that we will have the new turbo trains in next May's timetable. The success of those new through services will lead to enormous pressure on Railtrack for re-dualling of the Cotswold line between Worcester and Oxford.

The success or failure of the Bill will depend crucially on its detail. I am sure that the principle of franchising is absolutely right, but we must make it work in practice. In that context, I welcome the Government's clear commitment which Opposition Members have sought to criticise on many occasions and have sought to deny that we will subsidise those socially necessary services.

However, I should like to raise several details with the Minister. I realise that he will not have an opportunity to reply to all of them, but I hope that he will be able to reassure me on them in due course. I am aware of the Secretary of State's comments about not pushing detail too far at this stage. We must let the consultation process and the various detailed documents that have been promised receive their due consideration. I congratulate the Government on their approach in that regard.

The hon. Member for Streatham (Mr. Hill) has stolen some of my thunder about the apparent conflict between the length of franchises and the need for major capital investment by operators. The new class 91 locomotives which are operating successfully on the east coast main line cost about £8 million each and have a 30-year design life. The west coast main line urgently needs new trains, which will cost between £12 million and £15 million. The InterCity 125 units which serve my constituency and many other constituencies certainly will not last indefinitely, either.

We need to be sure that the franchise periods will be sufficiently long to encourage operators to make new investments. Those new investments are important not only for the manufacturers of that rolling stock and its locomotives but for the quality of service that the new private operators will provide. I also share the view that we must be sure that the Treasury will be prepared to commit subsidy over a long time. Indeed, the public expenditure survey must not be the limit of the franchise period.

Many hon. Members share the concern that more freight should be attracted on to the railways. I am confident that private-sector practices enhance that process. I am encouraged by Ministers' frequent assertions of the importance which they attach to that process.

It has been suggested to me most forcefully that more transparency of cost might increase the costs to freight operators and lead to disputes, for example, about the level of track maintenance required, which differs wildly between the high-quality run required for the 225 km per hour passenger trains and that required for heavy freight trains. I hope that the Minister will reassure me that the charging regime that is introduced will encourage the use of railways for freight transport.

I am similarly encouraged that, although it is planned that the infrastructure and the rail track will remain in public ownership, paragraph 18 of the White Paper envisages possible private sector ownership in the long term. Will the Minister reassure me that, if a proposal comes from the private sector, earlier private ownership will be possible?

I am sure that every hon. Member attaches importance to network benefits for timetabling, through-ticketing and the national discount structure operated through the railcard system. I am convinced that the application of information technology could solve the timetabling and through-ticketing problems but what about the discounts, which are so appreciated by such a wide range of groups in my constituency?

My final detailed point is on how regulation will work. Will it be overseen by people steeped in the existing British Rail management style, techniques and practices or by new brooms from other sectors? In the privatisation of the telecommunications industry we saw the crucial importance of the effectiveness of Oftel. The qualities of Professor Bryan Carsberg will be called for in the regulator of the railways. I hope that we shall also have an assurance from the Minister that we will not follow the example of previous privatisations and call the office of the regulator "Ofrail".

The principle of the forthcoming Bill is right. I look forward to its earliest possible introduction and the benefits that it will bring to all the passengers who will experience the services that will flow from it.

9.6 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): There are many comments that I should like to make, but time, and the fact that I am a member of the Select Committee, dictate that I should reduce my remarks to several headings. I shall endeavour to do that.

Before doing so, I invite you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you read your *Hansard* over cornflakes tomorrow morning, to reflect on the content of the speeches of Conservative Members. After the ritual congratulations to the Secretary of State on publishing with an innovative White Paper, there followed a catalogue of questions, followed by a litany of hope, as we heard in the speeches of the hon. Members for Worcester (Mr. Luff), for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait), for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) and for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins). Time after time they asked questions that are not answered in the two documents pumped out by the Secretary of State in recent weeks.

One must ask why there are so many unanswered questions. We must come back to the fact that the genesis of the documents before us today is not the present Secretary of State or Minister of State but the premiership of Margaret Thatcher, who dictated, along with her political colleagues, that British Rail should be privatised. The two Ministers inherited this chalice and have had to try to put something together. I know that they deny it, but I do not believe them.

The Secretary of State and the Minister of State are decent people who have fallen among sinners. Effectively, they have had to cobble together something to present to

[Mr. Andrew Mackinlay]

Parliament because they inherited the policy from their predecessors. I do not believe that their hearts are in it. Nor have they been able to complete the job of presenting meaningful legislation. Consequently, we have been presented with an opaque White Paper. The Bill will be purely enabling legislation, and if it is passed and receives Royal Assent it will be a total abdication by Parliament of its capacity to control and shape the future of an important part of our transport system.

What is happening with British Rail is similar to what happened with the poll tax. We were told that the rating system was unwelcome and we needed to find alternatives. However, when it was examined, generation after generation of people realised that it could not be done easily and painlessly. Similarly, rail privatisation has a superficial attraction, but on examination one finds it cannot be done while maintaining a national service and network and ensuring swift mobility, at low cost, in our cities.

If the legislation receives Royal Assent, Parliament will have ensured that parts of our rail network will be privatised without further debate in the House. I predict that Conservative Members and their successors will greatly regret a decision taken now which means that they were unable to influence, temper or reject the privatisation of key areas of our rail network. It shall have been a profound mistake. We would be abdicating the capacity to decide the shape of our rail network and who should control it to the franchising authority, and that is unprecedented, even in terms of this Government's privatisation programmes.

I know that the Minister of State will consider that I have repeatedly probed him on the issue of the British Transport police. I continue to do so because we never get a reply. I probed the matter in the Committee of the British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Bill, in the Select Committee on Transport yesterday, and I shall do so again tonight. Why are the Government unable to tell the House what they intend to do about the much-respected and appreciated British Transport police who are vulnerable, especially if the Government succeed in their objective of privatising, as distinct from franchising, some of our rail network? If I am wrong, I cannot for the life of me understand why we must wait for another paper from the Minister of State. Why is he not able to reassure us, the public and the police at the Dispatch Box tonight?

The hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) claimed to have the worst railway line in Britain within his constituency and dismissed my claim. I do not want to get into an auction with the hon. Member—I accept that we both have the worst railway lines within our constituencies.

The proposals before us are irrelevant to the needs of passengers and of customers, who have to try to tolerate the line from Dartford or the line which goes through my constituency, through Tilbury, Grays and Purfleet. If the proposals receive Royal Assent, these services are likely to be diminished still further. There is no prospect of either line being an attractive purchase or franchise for any sensible or prudent financial institution or individual.

I fear that there will be a temptation to give away the real estate and the service to the present managers of such lines. I underline the word "managers" as distinct from employees. Much has been unfairly said about the bulk of British Rail employees, who have to endure the irritation of many passengers who must tolerate the appalling travelling conditions on the Dartford and Tilbury lines and elsewhere. However, it is not within the employees' capacity to improve those services. The Government, the management of British Rail and the line managers are to blame. I fear that the line managers are already making dispositions to enable them to get the franchise on those lines.

I have no confidence in the line managers of the Tilbury and Southend line and nor have passengers, customers or employees. I hope that there will be no nonsense whereby the managers will be given the almost exclusive opportunity to place a cosmetic bid for those lines. That would be unacceptable and would compound the irritation of passengers and the bulk of employees.

I find it breathtaking to listen to the hon. Member for Blackpool, South bleating about the loss of his InterCity service. He is in part to blame, and I hope that his constituents will note that. He has acquiesced in a situation in which InterCity is viewed as a profit centre. It is clearly being pruned to make it attractive for privatisation. Presumably he will support that in the Lobby. I hope that he will pay dearly for it at the next general election.

Mr. Hawkins *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

9.14 pm

Mr. Hartley Booth (Finchley): The debate has been long and informed and—as Conservative Members always do—I have welcomed the depth of information and experience that we have heard about from Opposition Members. That is why I have been so surprised that, despite their experience of British Rail, they do not understand, as Conservative Members do, that British Rail's network was built by private money; that for two thirds of the life of that system it was run by the private sector; and that some of the great exports through this country have been railway exports under the private sector. Yet there has been no ghost of a hint by the Opposition of the fact that during that period—100 years of private sector management—there was enormous initiative.

In 1902, stenographers were provided on the railway to Broad street. Hon. Members, had they have been travelling on the trains, could have had their letters written. Such was the imagination and initiative under the private sector. None of that was heard from Opposition Members.

So what is the prospect for the future? The hon. Member for Streatham (Mr. Hill) told us that he had never heard of proposals by management that the two sides of the railway, the track and the running operations, be separated. In 1947, a book was written by the management of the London and North-eastern Railway called "An Alternative to Nationalisation". They were fighting the Labour party in those days. They proposed then that the track should be separated from the operating part of the railway. It was a good idea and it is part, perhaps, of what we have seen in the White Paper today.

I have only a few minutes and all of us have an agenda of questions, so I shall ask only three main questions. First, I see a danger with this privatisation at which many of us on the Conservative Benches have hinted. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is hearing these points about which we are very anxious as well as our welcome for the White Paper. The question is: if a number of different operators are bidding for a particular good service, such as the 8 o'clock on the east coast route, who will decide who gets it?

Are we to fill the pockets of more lawyers? Do we have to have an arbitration system? We have heard of "Ofrail". I hope we shall not be derailed in all this. We need to have a private sector body, a private independent body, that commands the respect of the public, to decide those matters quickly and effectively.

We also need—I refer to page 2 and paragraph 8 of the White Paper, "New Opportunities for Railways"—a reference to interchanges. In all our transport training and practice, transport has been dealt with in boxes, such as air, water, rail and road. It needs to be dealt with in interchanges. I want to see opportunities for interchanges between stations and car parks surrounding the stations and I want the airspace over railways to be used for urban regeneration and not used for the wrong purposes. I do not want the question of interchanges or airspace to be forgotten in what is proposed.

I welcome this proposal and the Government's initiative. It shows the Government's typical courage to deal with complex issues. I also welcome the Government's desire to sweep away the cobwebs of the past and their determination to enter the next century by harnessing the ideas, the money and the initiative of the private sector for the passenger—a concept that the Labour party will never understand.

9.19 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): I have seldom, in almost 20 years in the House, known a Bill to be welcomed with so many qualifications. Some of the earlier enthusiasm for the Bill expressed by Conservative Members was rapidly qualified as it dawned on them that, just in their constituencies, it was perhaps not such a good thing; a case of capitalism red in tooth and claw—but not too much of it these days in Finchley, I notice, listening to the hon. Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth), and not at all in Blackpool.

We had a tirade from the hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkings) about idle and slothful railwaymen. Then suddenly realisation dawned that, with a majority of 1,640, or whatever it is, that was rather a risky strategy, so the idle railwaymen were not present in Blackpool any more.

The whole tenor of today's debate has been a welcome for the forthcoming Bill from those with ambitions on the Conservative Benches, albeit hedged with all sorts of qualifications in the light of the fact that their ambitions might not be realised if the Bill, as envisaged by the Secretary of State and his faithful acolyte, were implemented in the way that we think it might be. I say "think" because if ever there was an imprecise White Paper before the House, it is this one.

I do not want to harp for too long on the speech of the hon. Member for Blackpool, South because, to be honest, I do not think that it is worth it, but he talked about a consultative document. I am no great procedural expert, but I always thought that a White Paper was an indication of what the Government intended to do—a precursor to legislation. Yet any detailed questions from either side of the Chamber today were greeted earlier by the Secretary of State saying, "Wait and see." A positive myriad of documents are to be produced early next year.

Mr. Hawkins *rose*——

Mr. Snape: It is too early yet. The hon. Gentleman must contain himself.

Her Majesty's Stationery Office is already geared up. It will be working overtime all next year producing documents to explain the legislation that we here today are supposed to be discussing.

The Secretary of State and the Conservative party will have to forgive me some puzzlement about exactly in which direction this train is heading, or, looking at the two characters opposite, who is the driver and who is the fireman.

First, and in a non-partisan way, I congratulate the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) on a maiden speech which was fluent and concise. I hope that I do not blight his promotion prospects by so doing. I do not know why we have had to wait so long for a speech that was so assured. I noted with some interest that he was receiving Refreshment Department bills for his namesake, the hon. Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks). He is lucky that he is not receiving them for his other namesake, my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). Hon. Members on both sides of the House will join me in saying that we hope to hear the hon. Gentleman often in the future.

The concept of railway privatisation is based on a myth. Ministers continually talk about a railway monopoly, as if the only way to get from A to B in Britain were to take the train. But competition in transport exists here as elsewhere. Given the British devotion to the company car and the well-founded view within the Department of Transport that the heavy goods vehicle is a good thing, greater competition probably faces the railway industry in Britain more than anywhere else in western Europe.

The Government continually peddle another myth about the railway industry. They portray the industry as an inefficient uncaring outfit which, if it only enjoyed the bracing effect of private sector involvement, would be miraculously transformed.

As recently as yesterday, while he was giving evidence to the Select Committee, I understand that the Secretary of State referred to British Rail as a monolithic monopoly. The prospect of an intelligent dialogue with a Secretary of State as capable of self-delusion as that makes those hon. Members on both sides of the House who care about the future of the railway industry despair.

Where is the monopoly for travellers between, for example, Birmingham and London? After all, having just spent millions of pounds on the M40 motorway, presumably to allow car drivers to avoid the monopoly of the M1, and given that British Midland airways runs an occasional—albeit somewhat expensive—service between Birmingham International and London Heathrow, where is the monolithic monopoly referred to by the Secretary of State? The fact is that it does not exist, and nothing that Conservative Members have said justifies that assertion.

[Mr. Snape]

The problem about any rational discussion with Ministers about the future of the railway industry is that they appear to be motivated entirely by an ideology and dogma that would have seemed quaint and unrealistic even to the much-vaunted Victorians who built our railway system in the first place. The danger of the whole nonsensical exercise in the White Paper is the damage that is being done, and will be done, to a railway system already rotting away after 13 years of hostility and indifference by Secretaries of State who have come and gone faster than the Gatwick express.

The most obvious danger in the Government's proposals is their effect on the overall operation of the railway system. Despite the popular view that anyone can run a railway—a view that is obviously shared by the Thomas the Tank Engine personalities who inhabit the Department of Transport—it is an enormously complex system which operates on a 24-hour, seven-day a week basis. Many thousands of people, in a myriad different grades within the overall structure, co-operate together with the objective of providing a service to both passenger and freight for the public and the country. That system works as well as it does only because all those people share that goal and are pulling in the same direction.

It may be hard for the Conservative party to appreciate, in these cynical days, the fact that most of the people involved in our railway industry share a sense of achievement at the end of a successful working day. Those who clean the trains, often very early in the morning or late at night; those responsible for planning and the safe passage of the journey; drivers and signalmen who shepherd a train safely along its route; and those responsible for planning that and the turns of duty—all share a sense of pride in the railway industry which not even 13 years of attack by successive Secretaries of State in the present Administration has reduced.

As a former railwayman who worked on the railway until the trumpet sounded for the 1974 general election, and as the son of a railwayman, may I say with personal pride that the non-stop denigration of those who work in that great industry is extremely dispiriting. Many of them, underpaid as they are, feel strongly about the services that they want to provide and have genuine fears. They have fears not only for their jobs—such fears are human—but genuine fears which many of them express to me about the future of the railway industry if those barmy proposals are implemented.

Mr. Hawkins: The hon. Gentleman has drawn attention to the fact that several Conservative Members have referred to a minority of rail employees who let the side down. I am sure that he would not wish to defend those who let the side down. We have all paid tribute to the high standards of the majority and I wish to do so again, but the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott)——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman may make a brief intervention, not a speech.

Mr. Snape: The hon. Gentleman has made that point before and we all know why—he must look over his shoulder. I shall go to Blackpool again shortly and when I meet the local branch of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers—the RMT—I shall say that the hon. Gentleman expressed concern about its members' welfare and job prospects. I have no doubt that they will give him the same support as they have given him in the past—[HON. MEMBERS: "He got elected."] Aye, but only just. He might be a Member of Parliament in Blackpool temporarily, but I remember Blackpool when it was one of the safest Tory seats in the country. I confidently prophesy that the hon. Gentleman's constituency will be back in the Labour camp by the next general election. He will end up leaning on his broomstick on Blackpool North platform.

The core of the Government's philosophy hinges on the right of access to the railway network for private sector operators, both passenger and freight. If I can take the Conservative party no further, its members will at least agree with me about that. Whether they will seek such access depends on the price charged by publicly owned Railtrack, operating as it does under the direct control of the regulator, whose qualifications, as my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) said, do not include a working knowledge of railways.

We believe that the most likely outcome of these proposals for freight transport will be that they will bring even more joy to the Road Haulage Association, despite the fond hopes expressed by Conservative Members. It will be more expensive to carry freight by rail under the new regime, when subsidies to rail freight will be forbidden, just as they are now. Rail freight is not subsidised, although in the opinion of many of us, given railways' enormous environmental benefits, it should be. At the moment, however, freight enjoys a favourable charging regime on the railway network, although nowhere near as favourable as that granted to road operators. Where freight trains share track with passenger trains, by and large they bear only the marginal costs of the track and signalling along the route.

It is impossible to imagine that such a system will continue when a multiplicity of private operators are seeking to operate freight trains in the way the Secretary of State fondly imagines they will.

I am intrigued when I listen to Conservatives and Ministers talking about the need to attract freight from road to rail. Let us not worry about what is in the White Paper or about what may happen in future—although worry we will. Let us look at what has happened over the past year while Ministers have been telling us that freight will be transferred from road to rail—or at least, that that is their objective.

In the past 12 months, we have witnessed the collapse and withdrawal of the Speedlink wagon-load network from British Rail. The lines between Cambridge and Fendrayton, Yate and Tytherington, and Alves and Burghead in Scotland have all closed. We expect the line from Northallerton to Redmire to close later this year, and under review are no fewer than five freight lines in various parts of the country. Among the terminals closed in the past year, while the much-vaunted policy of the transfer from road to rail has been in action, have been Hawkhead in Paisley, Ridham Dock near Sheerness, the Bristol Freightliner terminal, Roseisle in Grampian, South Lynn in Norfolk, and Eccles Road in Norfolk, in the constituency of the Secretary of State himself. If that is the experience of rail freight under the current regime, how much worse matters will be once, and if, this nonsense is implemented.

The whole track charging regime to which I have referred is shrouded in mist even denser than that which surrounds the Government's economic strategy. Earlier this year, the Minister of State gave a keynote address to a rail privatisation seminar entitled "Deregulation and open access", held under the auspices of the Institution of Civil Engineers. I am sorry that I was not there; I was invited, but I had another engagement. Nevertheless, I did read the Minister's speech, in which he said that Britain had

"played an active role in framing an EC directive on the development of European Railways".

I am always fascinated to hear Ministers telling us how we lead Europe and are at the heart of Europe.

The Minister went on to talk about access rights for rail freight customers under the new proposals and he asked a number of questions about how they would work. Unsurprisingly, as he could not answer his own questions —the Secretary of State still cannot answer them—he played safe. Instead of adopting a former Prime Minister's view, that one should set up a royal commission that took minutes to set up and years to report, this Government engage consultants to present these reports.

In January the previous Secretary of State appointed Coopers and Lybrand and told it to report in June. Perhaps it could not find any answers because it never reported. But that did not faze the Minister who, if nothing else, is a resourceful chap, and he appointed Mercers to carry out the same exercise. This is the Government who lecture us about the need for careful stewardship of public money. I hope that both reports will be placed in the Library. I am sure that the Minister has received the first report and that it does not match his conclusions. We can compare the two and discover what public money was spent on and the expensive conclusions.

The Government's proposals have no friends. Conservative Members have given them a muted welcome. The hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), who is not in his place, is presumably waiting to catch a train on the Dartford loop. I can hardly wait to see all the Richard Branson imitators waiting to buy the Dartford loop when the proposals are implemented. The hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait) spoke about being at the end of a branch line and about how wonderful it would be for private enterprise. Obviously she does not know much about the history of the Hastings line. Private enterprise made such a good job of building it that the tunnels were defective and British Rail had to install signals at them. Before that the much attacked publicly owned British Rail had to build special trains to fit the tunnels. The hon. Lady appears to be digging up a few Victorians. Does she think that there will be many buyers for the Hastings line or that a comprehensive network service would operate on it?

The hon. Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) also gave the proposals a muted welcome and posed some preceptive questions to which the Minister had no answer. In his winding-up speech the Minister of State will tell the hon. Gentleman, as he told the rest of us, that next year a series of documents will be produced. The House is being treated with utter contempt. The Government want to do something about the railways but they are not sure what, so they dress up dogma to look like policy and place it before the House. They have not been able to answer a single question on the vital matters that must be discussed before any legislation is presented.

What about railway safety? Which of the would-be railway kings will pay for the signal protection system on which millions of pounds of public money is currently being spent? Who will pay for the safety training of railway employees? About 5,000 people per year are killed on the roads, while in three of the past 10 years no passengers were killed in a moving train accident on British Rail. Such a glittering record is expensive. Who will pay for it in future? The Secretary of State will not tell us but says that he will produce a consultative document next year. That is not much use in the context of legislation that is to appear in November.

Of course not just the working railway costs a great deal of public money. Who will pay for the maintenance of bridges and viaducts and the other structures on closed branch lines that are still owned by British Rail? We shall pay, and while we are doing so the profitable segments of British Rail will be parcelled up and sold to the private sector. Is that how the profit motive is to be demonstrated in the legislation?

No fewer than 60 rail user groups, the customers who Conservatives say they are concerned about, came together as recently as last week to attack the White Paper and the philosophy behind it. The statutory Transport Users Consultative Committee was appointed by the Government. The former leader of the Conservative party said that her first question about any appointee was, "Is he one of us?" Presumably, many of the committee's members are "one of us" in the Conservative party's terms; yet they too have condemned the proposals in the White Paper, and the likely legislation.

Let me end on a non-controversial note—I do not like controversy when it is not necessary. Let me pray in aid an organisation that rarely finds itself on the same side as the Labour party—although the more it sees of the activities of the present Government, the further it moves in our direction. I refer, of course, to the CBI, which published a press release last Wednesday headed "BR privatisation: CBI signals at amber". The CBI feared that the proposals lacked "clarity and detail"—in spades, one might add. It went on to say that they

"ought to be seen within the context of a more coherent transport strategy."

I do not want to baffle the Secretary of State by using such jargon as "transport strategy", because I know that that is a philosophy that he has long eschewed; indeed, he and his Minister of State are very anxious to avoid it.

The CBI added:

"if further reflection needed by the Government causes them to delay the timetable, so be it . . . the overriding concern of CBI members is not primarily one of ownership but one of how the quality and level of railway services can be improved."

I am sorry if all this bores the Secretary of State, who is yawning. If he had listened to more of the debate, he might be a bit livelier. He has probably been travelling on Stagecoach, which I understand is a pretty unsuccessful way of travelling between England and Scotland. *[Interruption.]* I must remind the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) that Whips are traditionally silent. I am not surprised that he is making sedentary interventions: he is wasting his own party's time by provoking me in this way.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that questions of order can safely be left to me.

Mr. Snape: As long as you are in the Chamber, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will not trust them with anyone else.

The CBI concluded:

> "As the proposals currently stand, there will be a daunting array of regulators involved in the running of the railways. Far from encouraging private sector interest, there is a real danger that privatisation will be a blueprint for bureaucracy. We urge the Government to think hard before moving ahead with the legislation."

So do we—and, in their heart of hearts, so do many Conservative Members.

9.41 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): The argument advanced by the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape)—that the Government are consulting on the detail of their proposals and should not be doing so—is unconvincing. The whole purpose of the exercise—the whole purpose of producing a White Paper and then debating it, in advance of legislation—is to enable the views of the House to be understood and, indeed, to consult widely. That is exactly what we are doing. If we had presented a cut and dried policy down to the last detail, the hon. Gentleman would have been the first to criticise us for doing so.

We have set out our principles clearly. We have not sought to set out the implications in detail, and I think that that is right. The details can be discussed in the Committee stage of a Bill that will receive overwhelming Conservative support on Second Reading. If the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East thinks that he can build a case for the defeat of the legislation on the speeches of two hon. Members and one right hon. Member—whom I greatly respect, and I shall deal with the points that they made—he has another think coming.

Let me correct what the hon. Gentleman said about the use of consultants. He has confused two tasks. Coopers and Lybrand was appointed to propose the new basis of track charging by Railtrack. It has not completed its work; when it has done so, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will publish its conclusions and deposit them in the Library of the House. Mercers is examining the structure of the freight industry, which has nothing to do with track charging. As my right hon. Friend said, when we receive its report in the new year, we will bring its recommendations for sale of the assets to the attention of the House.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) said that the railways can be privately owned, that he had no great argument about whether the railways should be public or private and that the issue was taxpayer support. We have made it plain that revenue support will continue. About £1 billion is going to Network SouthEast and Regional Railways. The Secretary of State said clearly that that regime will continue. We have also said, regarding the infrastructure, which will be Railtrack's responsibility, that Railtrack's revenue costs will be recovered by charges to passenger and freight trains but that the public sector will support Railtrack in the way that it supports any nationalised industry—through Railtrack's ability to borrow.

We have gone further than that. In answer to the hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey), we said that we had announced a change in the appraisal rules. Everybody will broadly welcome that change. When Railtrack appraises new infrastructure investment, non-user benefits will be taken into account. The appraisal of new electrification schemes will become much more like that for road investment appraisal. That is a step forward. A grant would be provided by the Government—it would be non-repayable and non-interest bearing—for non-user benefits.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East spoke at great length about finance and leasing. He said that it was one way of getting more money. I shall be brief about leasing; we can go into the matter in detail in Committee. British Rail already writes leases. They are called financing leases. They are for channel tunnel night stock and for deep sea container freight wagons. Those are long-term, financial leases that, rightly, are signed with the Government's approval.

British Rail, as the only operator of railways in this country, cannot at present write an operating lease for railway rolling stock because there is no other operator. If British Rail could find a financial institution that could write a lease for seven years, who would operate the trains when British Rail had concluded the lease? Without our proposals, the hon. Gentleman's leasing proposals would amount to the public sector underwriting the full amount of the commitment.

The previous Secretary of State wrote to the hon. Gentleman and asked him to clarify how he thought that the public sector would account for his operating lease suggestions for British Rail. The hon. Gentleman never replied to that letter. He could not reply to it. He knows that the shadow Chancellor would require the operating leases written by British Rail to be capitalised, shown in the balance sheet and treated as long-term debt. It is only because the Government are introducing privatisation proposals to let the private sector come in and run rail passenger franchises that we have the opportunity to develop a leasing market, which I very much welcome as it will bring more private sector capital into the railways.

Mr. Prescott: If the hon. Gentleman looks into British Rail's history and into the work of the Select Committee on the nationalised industries, he will find that British Rail, even under public ownership, operated leasing arrangements in the past. That is not new. The Treasury, however, rejected them. British Rail was doing deals with bankers; there was a taxing arrangement. The Treasury did not like it, but leasing arrangements are not new.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman is misinformed. If he looks at the practice of the private sector, whether it be ICI or Marks and Spencer, he will find out how it treats financing leases. He knows that a public sector state monopoly that wrote a lease without there being any other operators on the railway lines would have to treat that operating lease as long-term debt.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) raised important issues. If I cannot answer all the points raised in the debate, I shall write to hon. Members and answer their questions in more detail. My right hon. Friend asked me how the Government will ensure that train paths are controlled. A commitment has been given that commuter services in Kent will not be dislodged by European passenger trains, after they have been franchised, going through the channel tunnel. I give him the assurance, which I hope he will accept, that under the franchising mechanism my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be able to ensure that companies operating franchises in Kent and south-east London will provide for the allocation of those train paths. A mechanism for doing so is available simply through the regulator's power and the franchising authority's power. They will both be public sector bodies and responsible to the Secretary of State.

Sir John Stanley *rose*——

Mr. Freeman: Will my right hon. Friend forgive me? I have only 11 minutes, in which I should like to answer some other points.

My right hon. Friend asked about fares. The conflict, to which he correctly referred, between seeking to control fares and to reduce subsidy exists already. It has always existed and it will exist in the future. The Government have said that, for all monopoly services, which include Network SouthEast rail services, we will ensure that there is control over fare levels, unlike bus services. Ultimately, a political judgment must be made about the level of fares and subsidy. I cannot give a categorical assurance about the regime that will apply to fare increases on Network SouthEast, but in due course we will, and I will write further to my right hon. Friend about that.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich made a number of points. She mentioned pensions and travel concessions for British Rail employees. I shall look again at the history of the arrangements that were made by BREL and Sealink, but the information currently available to me is that they have honoured their arrangements for pensions and travel concessions.

Mrs. Dunwoody: No.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Lady contradicts me. I give her the undertaking that I shall look carefully at what has happened in those two companies and write to her. If she tables a written question, I shall answer it.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) on his rousing, self-assured speech. We welcomed his contribution and look forward to him serving on the Standing Committee and making an even more valuable contribution upstairs.

The hon. Member for North Devon made a number of points. I remind him that we have introduced systems similar to cost-benefit analysis for appraising rail infrastructure schemes—something that his party has called for—and I hope that he welcomes that. From reading the proceedings of his party conference, I am not clear about the Liberal Democrats' policy on the private sector and competition. His party conference overturned the leadership's recommendation about welcoming the introduction of the private sector.

My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) made an important speech. I shall briefly give him the information that he requested about the public service obligation grant—perhaps he can be brought up to date. For 1988-89, the PSO grant was £473 million, for 1989-90 it was £501 million, for 1990-91 it was £602 million, for 1991-92 it was £892 million and this year, 1992-93, it is more than £1,000 million. That is a substantial——

Mr. Prescott: What about the zero PSO target?

Mr. Freeman: The Government, like—I hope—the Opposition, live in the real world. In the past five years, the PSO grant has increased substantially. I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch was quoting facts that are a little out of date.

I wish I had the certainty of my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch. He is doubtful, he says, that the railways will improve. I find it hard to understand how one could argue against the privatisation of rail freight services. We have the evidence of the National Freight Corporation, and we know that every other mode of transport carrying freight is in the private sector. I am not sure that the House will be persuaded by his scepticism.

We have said that the infrastructure will remain an integrated public sector obligation and responsibility. *[Interruption.]* On railway operations, we are simply saying to the private sector, "Can you run a service on certain lines?" The approach will be gradualist. We shall not franchise all rail services overnight. That is impossible; we do not have a private sector. We shall respond as fast as the private sector wants and introduce new franchised services. That seems a cautious, sensible and pragmatic approach.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch is interested in the Japanese railway system. I recently visited Japan for a week—*[Interruption.]*—and I was much encouraged by the experience. The railway companies may be different, but I assure my hon. Friend that there has always been a private sector in Japan, despite the fact that about 70 per cent. of rail services were nationalised some years ago. The Japanese Government will move to privatise the services fully when the stock market permits, but there is nothing in the experience of Japan—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have a view about seated interventions, but what is going on seems more like a seated commentary throughout the Minister's speech.

Mr. Freeman: That is not an unusual occurrence, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I welcome your protection.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) —[HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?"] My hon. Friend apologised earlier to the House for the fact that he would not be here now. He welcomed the White Paper, and he will be pleased to hear that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and myself—his faithful acolyte—will travel on the new Kent link service when it is inaugurated next month. An investment programme of £700 million has been financed. We hear little about rolling stock which has already been ordered and is now being manufactured by BREL and GEC Alsthom. I can understand hon. Members' worries about 1995 and 1996, but let us give credit for the volume of investment now being undertaken. That £700 million investment has produced train services which will greatly improve the service in Kent.

The hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley) and several of my hon. Friends talked about the railway heritage museum in York. I shall visit the museum soon with my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch, and I shall see the hon. Member for York when I get there. He is mistaken—the Government have not said that we have ruled out the contribution of private sector exhibits to the museum. We are still consulting about the best way to ensure that the museum has contributions from both the public and the private sectors.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat), who is a former Transport Minister, wanted to ensure that Railtrack dealt fairly with all railway operators. He was worried that the playing field might be slightly tilted in favour of the public sector—British Rail's residual

[Mr. Freeman]

services. My right hon. Friend and I will consider further my hon. Friend's valuable contribution. We want to ensure that Railtrack operates wholly independently, and we are determined not to introduce unnecessarily bureaucratic controls to the new railway industry of the next decade or so. That would be a retrograde step.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Ms. Lait), who welcomed the proposals, for her contribution. Electrification of the Ashford-Hastings line will continue to be the responsibility of the public sector, in the form of Railtrack. I am well aware of the advantages of electrification. Indeed, with the lesser burdens upon the public purse which will inevitably result when the private sector plays a bigger role in investing in and ordering new rolling stock, I dare say that that valuable project, on which British Rail is so keen, will proceed. I cannot give my hon. Friend a date, but clearly the project is attractive.

The hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) raised a number of points, and I shall write to him about the others, but one concerned the passengers charter. He asked who was to blame for leaves on the line. When the customer, the passenger, blames the operator, does the operator turn round and blame the track authority for allowing the leaves to stay on the line? The answer to that question is clear. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said the other day to the Select Committee, initially the passenger will complain to the operator, but the operator will have an arrangement with the track authority, because he will be paying for the use of the railway lines. Therefore, responsibility will fall correctly.

My hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) asked about the track charging regime. We shall publish our conclusions as soon as we can, and I hope that that will be towards the end of the year. We are determined that the freight industry will not be priced off the rails. If we want to expand the freight industry, we must have a user-friendly system. We must have a non-discriminatory system of charging for the use of rails. However, we shall ensure that we do not prejudice the rail freight industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) was right. He talked about the need for a demand-led industry. That is a crucial point. British Rail has been essentially a producer-led industry managed as a state monopoly for more than 45 years. The problems have been compounded by it being cash limited. We want to move to a demand-led, user-friendly railway system——

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

PETITION

Boundary Changes

10 pm

Mr. Roy Thomason (Bromsgrove): I present a petition in the following terms:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of Michael Richardson, 71, Meadowfield Road, Rubery, Rednal in the County of Hereford and Worcester.

Showeth that the proposal of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to transfer Rednal and Rubery into the City of Birmingham is against my wishes and my personal interests.

Wherefore your Petitioner prays that your Honourable House will reject these proposals and leave the boundaries as presently drawn.

And your Petitioner, as in duty bound will ever pray, etc.

The petition is signed by Michael Richardson.

I have today deposited in the Bag almost 2,400 similar, individually prepared petitions as an indication of the strength of feeling on the issue and of the concern of my constituents.

To lie upon the Table.

Noise Pollution

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

10.1 pm

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): I am grateful for the opportunity tonight to raise the important issue of neighbourhood noise pollution and to explain some of the work of a dedicated group of people—the Right to Peace and Quiet Campaign. The group is endeavouring to improve a difficult situation which is experienced by many of my constituents and by a vast number of people throughout the country. The issue is noisy neighbours.

We live today in an age of greater affluence and greater opportunity. In general, the vast majority of people are far better off in all respects than were their parents, their grandparents or similar people 50 or 100 years ago. We also live in an age of greater awareness which is due in the main to a better education system and to the mass media. We hear a great deal today about the environment, about pollution and the ozone layer. All those issues are widely discussed and extremely important.

Far nearer to the lives of individuals in this country is the issue of noise pollution, which is an equally important and immediate problem. It is a problem that destroys the quality of life for many people. I will speak about neighbourhood noise pollution this evening. It was because of the problem of noise in our society and especially the noise from neighbours, either intentional or unintentional, that the Right to Peace and Quiet Campaign was established.

At my constituency surgeries in Erith town hall on a Friday evening, I regularly see people who suffer from noisy neighbours. The problems of the loud use of radios, televisions, cassette players and compact disc players are well known to us all. There there are the frequent parties which disturb neighbours and go on long into the night —perhaps all through the night; the do-it-yourself home improvement addict who seems to be drilling away at all hours of the day and night, causing noise, disturbance and problems; the dogs that bark constantly; the revving of car engines late at night; the slamming of doors; and, of course, domestic rows. All are examples of domestic noise nuisance, and cause annoyance, stress and even despair to neighbours who want only to enjoy the peace and quiet of their own homes. They do not want to hear what is going on next door or down the street. They are not only uninterested; they are annoyed by such disburbance.

Day after day, individuals trying to live their lives in their own homes are harassed by unpleasant, unwelcome and often unceasing noise. The word "nuisance" is probably an understatement. "Nightmare" might be a better word. Quite often the noise makers are unaware of the nuisance that they are causing but, regrettably, sometimes the noise is deliberate. Other noise may be the result of mere thoughtlessness or a failure to notice the noise being made. Noisy people get used to their own noisiness. In some cases, the noisy neighbour may just not care. In highly populated urban areas such as my constituency, where many people live in flats and houses with relatively thin walls, the noise carries to many dwellings and affects many homes and people.

Let me say a little about the formation of the Right to Peace and Quiet Campaign and its aims and about how those who, like myself, who are involved in the campaign are hoping for more help from my hon. Friend the Minister and the Government. No history of the campaign and its origins could begin without emphasis being placed on the work of Val Gibson, who lives in my constituency and who founded the campaign with a few friends in May 1991. She had herself been the victim of noisy neighbours and had been forced to move home because of the intolerable situation in which she found herself. She enlisted my support and that of John Cartwright, then the Member of Parliament for Woolwich, who, like me, was well aware that many of his constituents suffered a plight similar to that of Val Gibson. In addition, certain show business personalities and celebrities, such as Spike Milligan, Barry Fantoni and Dr. Alan Maryon-Davis were swift to give their support to the campaign.

I am pleased to report that the campaign has gained backing from all sections of the local community and has spread beyond my area of south-east London across the country. It commands support from members of all political parties and people from all backgrounds.

The first meeting of the campaign was held at Woolwich town hall in July 1991. Its aim was to see what could be done about neighbourhood noise pollution, to consider how best to campaign to highlight the problem, and—it was hoped—find some solutions. Subsequent activities have included meetings with Ministers, the promotion of a noise-free day, a noise awareness day, press campaigns and the distribution of a leaflet entitled "Everybody Needs Good Neighbours", which includes a community code listing a number of dos and don'ts to encourage harmony between neighbours: "Don't mow your lawn late in the evening. Do be co-operative if asked by a neighbour to reduce noise. Do realise that your pleasure should not lead to your neighbour's distress. Don't take a radio or hi-fi outside. Don't use domestic appliances such as vacuum cleaners or washing machines late at night. Please don't carry out DIY after 9 pm on any day and before 10.30 am at weekends. If possible, never carry it out on Sundays. Drilling into and hammering on walls are particularly disturbing." The "Good Neighbours" leaflet has been widely circulated.

The local radio campaign in August culminated in the presentation to Radio Wyvern, the Worcester-based radio station, of the noise awareness award 1992 for being the most noise-conscious radio station in Britain. My hon. Friend the Minister will be aware that we had a very useful meeting with him in his Department about a year ago to discuss those issues. He was sympathetic and gave us a good deal of his time, for which we were all grateful.

The Right to Peace and Quiet Campaign was established to achieve certain fundamental objectives. They are many and varied and I will refer only to the key objectives tonight.

First, it has allowed people who are suffering the constant and wearing pain of noise nuisance to contact other people in the same or similar situations. People who are suffering will realise that they are not alone. The campaign can, and does, give considerable support to those people. The practical advice is greatly valued. I am aware of that from constituency cases in which people have contacted the campaign and have been put in touch with people in similar circumstances so that they can discuss the issue to discover how they can improve the situation.

Secondly, the campaign believes that there is a need to amend the law to give the police and environmental health

[Mr. David Evennett]

officers more powers to deal with the perpetrators of noise nuisance. I realise that I cannot press for a change in the law in this debate, but the campaign continues to urge my hon. Friend the Minister and his Department to consider the law and noise nuisance carefully to discover what can be done and how the law might be amended.

I have pressured my hon. Friend the Minister in earlier discussions and correspondence, and I hope that he will look at the matter again and take note of our concerns. I believe that the police and environmental health officers should have more powers to help alleviate the suffering of those who are being harassed and distressed by neighbourhood noise pollution.

The campaign's third aim, which is possibly generally accepted as the most important objective, is to raise public awareness of the problems of noise nuisance and to develop noise neighbourhood watch schemes. In particular, we need to educate the public to be better citizens and to be more aware of the noise that they make and the effect of their actions on their local environment.

We must endeavour to get people to reduce their noise output and, for example, to turn down the volume knob on radios, stereos and televisions. I am not being a killjoy. I regularly listen to popular music and to Capital Radio. I am often disappointed to hear disc jockeys urge young people to turn up the volume without thinking of the consequences and the effect on neighbours or other people in the house. It is irresponsible for such people to encourage an increase in volume to an unacceptable level.

I have children who enjoy music. We constantly ensure that the volume on their stereos and television is turned down to an acceptable level. I regularly play tapes—Dusty Springfield, Annie Lennox or whatever—on my way home in the evening. However, I do not allow the volume to rise too high and I do not leave my windows open and blast out noise which might be disadvantageous and unacceptable to other people.

We have an excellent radio station in Erith and Crayford called RTM Radio on 103·8 FM which, under the financial support of Thamesmead town and the capable leadership of Rodney Collings, does an excellent job. It entertains and keeps people informed of local issues. It does not encourage listeners to turn up the volume. It is community radio at its best. It informs the community, but it does not offend it through the level of noise.

We must be responsible and educate people to be more considerate. People should think about noise and the effect that their actions have on neighbours who may be elderly, have young children, be unwell or merely want to enjoy peace and quiet in their own homes after a demanding or stressful day at work.

I know from personal experience in discussions with him that my hon. Friend is extremely sympathetic to victims of noise nuisance and disturbance and supports the aims of the peace and quiet campaign to encourage people to be more considerate. Therefore, I urge my hon. Friend to take more action. The aim must be to eliminate unnecessary and unwanted noise from our neighbourhoods so that all residents can enjoy peace and quiet in their gardens and homes or going about their daily business.

Members of the campaign, myself included, are grateful for the Government's interest in the problem, and in particular for the attendance of my noble Friend Lord Strathclyde at several of our functions. We are grateful also for what the Government are endeavouring to do to reduce noise disturbance. My hon. Friend is concerned about the problem. I have already urged him to be more positive, and I do so again this evening.

At present, there is relatively little that individual citizens can do to improve their situation in respect of noise nuisance. Regrettably, noise nuisance is an increasing problem and many people are looking to the Government to take more action to help them to deal with the problem. The Government have a very good record on environmental issues in general. I hope only that the alleviation of neighbourhood noise pollution will have higher priority in future Government policy. I call on my hon. Friend to be positive, helpful and effective.

10.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): My hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) has raised an important topic which affects the quality of the environment for each and every one of us—that is, neighbourhood noise. Most of us at one time or another have experienced the intrusive noise problems to which he referred, such as the wild and noisy party or the inconsiderate DIY addict—the problem of noisy neighbours. It is absolutely right that people should now insist on ever higher environmental standards to contribute to an ever improving quality of life, for all people, wherever they live, are entitled too the quiet enjoyment of their own homes.

I have met my hon. Friend on several occasions to discuss those issues and find possible solutions. My hon. Friend has rightly paid tribute to the work of the Right to Peace and Quiet Campaign in raising the profile of neighbourhood noise problems. I join him in that tribute and in his tribute to Val Gibson. My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Lord Strathclyde, attended the launch of the leaflet entitled "Everybody Needs Good Neighbours" and gave full Government support to Noise Awareness Month which the campaign ran in August in association with the National Society for Clean Air and Environmental Protection and the Institute of Environmental Health Officers. As my hon. Friend said, it is essential that the public are aware that noise can be prejudicial to health and a nuisance. The Right to Peace and Quiet Campaign has recognised that fact and acted on it.

We take all forms of environmental noise pollution very seriously. We paid particular attention to the specific problems of neighbourhood noise. Complaints about neighbourhood noise have increased significantly over the past 10 years and they continue to increase. It is therefore vital that continuing action is taken to tackle the problem and that people should be aware that the Government are providing the framework for successfully reducing and tackling the problem of neighbourhood noise.

It was because of increased concern about neighbourhood noise, together with the fact that there has been no review of noise policy for some time, that in February 1990, the Government set up the noise review working party to examine every aspect of noise.

In October 1990, the working party produced a most comprehensive review. The review devotes a whole chapter to the problems of neighbourhood noise. This report forms the basis of the Government's noise policy. The noise review working party made 53 recommendations, many of which have now been incorporated in legislation.

One of those recommendations was that the duty of local authorities to investigate noise complaints should be clarified. The Government implemented that swiftly in the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Local authorities are now under a duty, not only to inspect their area from time to time to detect statutory nuisances, but to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to investigate all complaints. There is nothing more frustrating than when the constituents of my hon. Friend and other hon. Members telephone or contact the environmental health department of their local authority to find that there is no immediate response. Environmental health officers must now take all reasonable steps to investigate those complaints.

The 1990 Act also provides environmental health officers with extensive powers to control noise by the serving of abatement notices which, if ignored, can result in a considerable fine. Indeed, on 1 October this year, the maximum fine was increased to £5,000, plus £500 for each day the offence continues after conviction. If a local authority believes that summary proceedings in the magistrates court would not afford an adequate remedy, it may seek an injunction in the High Court which could ultimately lead to a much higher fine—or even a prison sentence in an extreme case—if the noise maker is considered to be in contempt of court by ignoring the injunction.

I appreciate that the threat of prosecution may not always be enough to end the disturbance of, for example, a noisy party. So our first priorty must be to take measures that enable local authorities to take immediate action against neighbourhood noise disturbances. The 1990 Act provides environmental health officers with the power to remove temporarily articles such as audio equipment, hi-fi equipment and radios where a noise abatement notice has not been complied with, thereby stopping the nuisance immediately.

I do not underestimate the practical difficulties of dealing with noisy parties. It is for this reason that a small working group was set up to consider whether there was a need for further measures specifically to tackle the problem of noisy parties. Both environmental health officers and police are represented on the group.

In addition to the implementation of the 1990 Act, we announced in June our proposals to strengthen and extend the laws on noise. The proposals seek to give local authorities increased powers to deal with three aspects of noise pollution. First, there will be an extension of the noise abatement procedures so that environmental health officers will be able to serve notices in respect of noise nuisance in the street. This will mean, for example, that environmental health officers will be able to take action to deal with the problem caused by vehicle alarms.

Secondly, there will be tighter controls on the use of loudspeakers in the street. Thirdly, local authorities will be able to adopt powers to require owners of domestic and commercial burglar alarms to fit mandatory cut-out devices and to notify the police of the names of keyholders. We hope that the result of this legislation will be that few, if any, burglar alarms will continue to sound for longer than 20 minutes. Provision will be made for environmental health officers to access premises where an alarm continues to sound and no keyholder can be contacted.

Those are some of the legislative changes that the Government have made to create a framework for dealing with noise. Let me now turn to the advice and information that we have prepared in order that the legislation can be enforced to its full effect and in order to give people the fullest information on their rights.

In July my Department issued a revised version of its booklet "Bothered by Noise: What you can do about it." This summarises the latest legislation on noise and explains in practical terms what steps can be taken by any individual to eliminate noise problems, including the procedure for taking action against noisy neighbours.

In September we issued a substantial guidance document for local authorities on the roles of environmental health officers and the police in dealing with noisy parties. That had been a recommendation of the noise review working party.

Recently, we prepared a draft planning policy guidance note on planning and noise, which offers advice on how the planning system can be used to minimise noise impact on people, especially when at home, in educational establishments, and in hospital. We expect that guidance to be issued early in the new year.

I hope that the House will realise that we have taken steps to get the framework of law, advice and information right to help to reduce neighbourhood noise. We accept that we need to go further to make that effective at the practical level of repeated noisy parties, dogs that bark all day next to a worker on night shifts, and stereo systems which are turned up too loud in rooms where the windows are left wide open. As my hon. Friend made clear, people must become aware of the need to become good neighbours. That must also be tackled at a personal and local level.

One of our initiatives to get down to that personal level was the noise awareness project that we recently sponsored in Forest Hill, a small residential area of south London, among a group of local residents. That resulted in the production by the residents, with the help of consultants financed by my Department, of a community code to help to reduce noise problems within the community. The project encouraged more co-operation between the residents, the tenants' association, the local authority and the police.

Additionally, my Department's environmental grant fund is supporting a noise counselling and mediation scheme in Bristol. That project enables help and advice to be given in cases in which the environmental health officers may not be able to take action for one reason or another. All the parties involved in the dispute are contacted in an effort to resolve it by negotiation.

We have also supported a research project carried out by the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, to increase noise awareness among schoolchildren in Nottingham. The results demonstrate that schoolchildren are receptive to the subject, showing genuine concern about the fact that noise could be damaging their bodies without their realising it. At the end of the project, those involved showed a marked change in their attitude to noise.

All those are examples of initiatives that may be taken elsewhere in the country. I am sure that many other areas will wish to take similar initiatives to ensure that the message of being a responsible and good neighbour is encouraged at a local level.

My hon. Friend has expressed concern that the police have no direct powers to stop noise makers. On previous

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

occasions several hon. Members have compared the situation with that in Scotland where, under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, a uniformed police officer can request a noise maker to desist. If that person refuses, he or she can be charged with an offence. Since the offence can fall within the Scottish definition of a breach of the peace, the offender may be arrested on the spot, rather than being summonsed.

I understand that the police in Scotland exercise the right to ask noise makers to desist, but seldom use the power of arrest. The differences between north and south of the border are therefore not as great as they might at first appear. Issues of civil liberty also arise, as does the difficulty of defining an offence. How noisy must one be before one is liable to be arrested? The abatement notice procedure diminishes those problems, and it is for the courts to determine how they wish to apply the considerable fine levels available under those procedures.

It is also important to recognise that the noise review working party considered the idea of making "deliberate, sustained and excessive" noise a criminal offence. It rejected the idea, in favour of strengthening the existing statutory nuisance procedures—a measure which was subsequently incorporated into the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

We now wish to find out whether all those initiatives improve the practical application of the 1990 Act, before considering any other measures, such as extending the criminal law along the Scottish model and thereby increasing the burdens on the police force.

The Government recognise that the problem of neighbourhood noise must be tackled quickly and effectively. We shall listen carefully to reports of problems which are encountered in using the powers conferred in the Environmental Protection Act to control neighbourhood noise. Any information that my hon. Friend or the Right to Peace and Quiet Campaign have we shall carefully consider. Equally, I hope that we shall hear positive comments where the application of those powers—perhaps in association with mediation—produces positive results.

As my hon. Friend may have noted from the second year report of the White Paper "This Common Inheritance", the Government have fulfilled the majority of the commitments that they made in the White Paper with respect to noise and have committed themselves to further action. My hon. Friend, those whom he represents and those involved in the campaign to tackle the problem of noisy neighbours can rest assured that we shall continue to work towards a more peaceful local environment, keeping in touch with the views of voluntary organisations, such as the Right to Peace and Quiet Campaign.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 30 October 1992

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

School Crossing (Greenford)

9.34 am

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I beg to present a petition, which reads:

> To the honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of Friends of Costons combined school and of Betham Church of England Middle and First schools and others sheweth—
>
> That the crossing on Greenford road adjacent to Cowgate road—

in Greenford in my constituency—

> and the Greenford Ambulance Station is regularly used by children from the above schools;
>
> That the current zebra crossing does not provide adequate safety for pedestrians, particularly children, when crossing the Greenford road given the volume and speed of traffic on the road.
>
> That the the creation of a pelican crossing in this position would provide pedestrians with sufficient time to cross in safety.

The crossing is dangerous to parents and children, and especially to elderly and disabled people from Pennifather lane in Greenford. The crossing needs to be upgraded to pelican status as a mater of great urgency.

The petition was raised by Miss Debbie Gorge of 19 Ravenor court, Ruislip road, Greenford and Mrs. Jane Withs of Elm lodge, Cowgate road, Greenford, and is signed by 810 people. The petition has my wholehearted support. It concludes:

> Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will urge the Secretary of State for Transport to facilitate the introduction of a pelican crossing on Greenford road adjacent to Cowgate road and the Greenford Ambulance Station,

with a view to ending the accidents and deaths which are occurring too frequently on that crossing.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

PRESENTATION OF BILL

EDUCATION

Mr. Secretary Patten, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Secretary Clarke, Mr. Secretary Heseltine, Mr. Secretary Hunt, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Mr. Eric Forth and Mr. Nigel Forman, presented a Bill to amend the law about education: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 71.]

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I present a petition?

Madam Speaker: I am sorry. Apparently the hon. Gentleman's petition was down for last night, which he probably did not realise. If he will leave the petition, I am sure that we can look at it next week.

Dr. Spink: May I therefore formally present the petition on another day? I did ask for the petition to be presented today.

Madam Speaker: I am sorry if there has been any confusion. The hon. Gentleman will be able to present the petition on another day.

Sport

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

9.36 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Robert Key): I warmly welcome this opportunity to open what I hope will be a constructive and wide-ranging debate on sport. The Government take their commitment to promoting sport in the United Kingdom very seriously. Much of what I have to say in principle cuts across home country boundaries. Hon. Members will appreciate that, while my Department addresses sports issues on behalf of the United Kingdom internationally, domestically we have specific responsibility for sports policy in England.

The Government's belief in sport as important in its own right and as part of our national culture was exemplified by the creation of the new Department of National Heritage. Sport can only gain from being seen in a wider and more integrated cultural and leisure context. Our objective is simple: it is to enrich the quality of life of the whole population. In this, sport can play a key role in improving the quality of our daily life and of our health, as well as being a central feature of our national heritage and the modern leisure industry. As such, it is high on the list of priorities of the new Department.

The sports world has welcomed the new Department and the voice in Cabinet which it now has. Local authorities have welcomed the better dialogue which their leisure service and related departments now have with Government. We are keen to foster those links, as local authorities are the primary providers or enablers of many of the services for which the Department is responsible.

I will stress during the debate the importance of new partnerships, such as the one I saw taking shape in the south-west of England when I was recently in Exeter. The Sports Council in the south-west and the regional tourist board for the west country introduced their initiative on tourism and sport. It is clear that tourists wish to take more active holidays, so here is an natural new partnership.

Similarly, in the east midlands I recently met representatives of the regional tourist board, the Sports Council and the regional arts board, all of which were working together to produce new partnerships to their mutual benefit.

The Government's main objectives for sport were set in last December's statement on "Sport and Active Recreation." In summary these were to secure physical education in the national curriculum and make sure pupils regularly took exercise and played sport; to promote adult participation in sport and active recreation, where appropriate supporting provision of facilities; to help everyone better his own performance, at whatever level of participation, and to enable the truly gifted to excel. Other objectives were to promote better use of local authority and school sports facilities, and private sector partnerships in providing and managing them; to promote sport for disabled persons and the integration of able-bodied and disabled sports activities wherever possible; to promote fair play, and a tough anti-doping regime; and to make sure that the excellence of United Kingdom sport is promoted internationally.

To these might be added the transfer of a Home Office responsibility to the new Department. This is to ensure the safety of our sports grounds and in particular the achievement of all-seating at our Premier League and first division football grounds by August 1994, and all-seating or safe terracing at our third and fourth division grounds by August 1999.

Let me reassure hon. Members that I do not intend to spend the rest of this speech ploughing through what we are doing to implement each of these objectives in turn. Nor do I want to repeat what was said last year about the very substantial increase in sports provision during the 1980s. Rather, I should like to highlight a number of measures that the Government are taking forward and to which I attach particular importance.

The Government believe in creating the right framework and opportunities within which sports organisations have the freedom to provide what they consider is appropriate and individuals have the chance to participate and excel in sport. We do not believe in centrally imposed blueprints or day-to-day political interference in sport. In line with this approach, last December's sports policy statement confirmed that the principle of channelling Government assistance for sport through the sports councils as independent but accountable bodies remained sound, but made it clear that the structure was in need of reform.

Following that statement, we are establishing a United Kingdom sports commission capable of addressing strategically United Kingdom-wide issues. These will include promoting performance and excellence, fostering the rationalisation of sports governing bodies, and representing the United Kingdom internationally. A sports council for England is also to be created. For the first time, we shall have a body with express responsibility for English sporting matters.

Within this new structure, the regional councils for sport and recreation will continue to play an important role. The regional chairman will sit ex officio on the sports council for England together with a representative from the Central Council for Physical Recreation and a number of independent members. This involvement of the RCSRs on the new council should greatly improve co-ordination of regional efforts. These councils bring together such local interests as local authorities, voluntary organisations and regional branches of governing bodies. Their membership includes ministerial nominees, and I am delighted at the constructive and independent contribution that they have made to the work of these councils.

We had our first conference of ministerial nominees only last month. They really are independent—there is no party politics in their appointment. Their names are suggested as those of people who will be of independent mind and expertise in their regions and sports. The ministerial element lies in the fact that they have a hot line to me from all the regions of the country. That is to be welcomed.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): One of the bodies that the Minister failed to mention is the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation, known as CISWO. When I played football and cricket and took part in various sports as a miner, we were able to play on the colliery grounds. Now another 31 pits are to be shut. We have had one hell of a job trying to look after these grounds when mines have been closed in the past. Local authorities have been given the opportunity to purchase those areas, but now they are prevented from doing so because they are strapped for cash.

I want the sports Minister to tell the President of the Board of Trade and other Ministers that they should not go along with shutting 31 pits, because if they do so they will help to close 31 sporting organisations in pit villages. The Minister can do a better job today; he can save a lot of sporting facilities by having a word with the people who are threatening to close these pits.

Mr. Key: The hon. Gentleman is right to raise this important issue. He and I have had discussions across the Floor of the House on a number of occasions, and knowing me as he does, he will appreciate that I have already thought of the very point that he has raised.

The Government do recognise the importance of social welfare arrangements, including sports facilities for the people who live and work in the coalfield communities. I recognise their important contribution ever since the Mining Industry Act 1920, followed by the Miners' Welfare Act 1952, which made the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation responsible for the provision of social welfare, including sports facilities. under the Act the National Coal Board, now British Coal, was required to fund the CISWO, and it does so by means of a levy on coal production.

In view of what has happened, I undertake to give consideration to the future arrangements for coal industry social welfare, including its funding. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising the issue——

Mr. Skinner: What are you doing about it?

Mr. Key: If the hon. Gentleman had listened to me instead of talking to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell)—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Seated interventions are to be deplored, particularly when the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has already made a lengthy intervention on his feet.

Mr. Skinner: He has not answered my question.

Mr. Key: The hon. Gentleman is determined not to listen to me, which is a pity, because his constituents might gain from it.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool): While my hon. Friend is dealing with regional assistance, will he accept that those in my constituency and throughout the north-west greatly appreciate the strong support that the Government are giving to the Manchester Olympic bid? When the bid succeeds, a great many visitors will stay in hotels in my constituency. This will strengthen sport in the north-west and help Blackpool's historic reputation as a sporting town.

Mr. Key: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Manchester—the British—Olympic bid for the games in the year 2000 will have an enormously significant effect on the whole north-west, including Blackpool. My hon. Friend is right to point out the importance of Blackpool as an accommodation centre for the Olympic games, when, not if, they take place in 2000 in the north-west.

The Manchester Olympic bid committee has been consulting accommodation interests throughout the north-west. I shall draw to the attention of Bob Scott, the chairman of the bid, the points that my hon. Friend has made, for which I am grateful.

The Government have also welcomed the formation of the British Sports Forum by the voluntary sports associations in all four home countries, together with the British Olympic Association. I am aware of the reservations which the CCPR has expressed about the new body. However, it is clearly in the interests of sport as a whole that there is a united voice of the voluntary sector both domestically and internationally to complement the work of the United Kingdom Sports Commission.

However sound the new structure, it can only be as effective as the individuals in it. I am concerned that there are so few young faces among the ranks of our senior sports administrators. This wealth of experience needs to be complemented by the dynamism of youth to provide the leadership which sport deserves in both the public and voluntary sectors. I intend to explore with the Great Britain Sports Council and others ways of encouraging more of our sporting stars to become involved in sports administration. We need to develop a systematic career path in sports administration.

Quality of management and leadership is vital. That is not an ageist remark. I often hear people who have been leading British sport at all levels say that they think that they have done the job long enough and asking who will take over from them if they give up—a question that we will seek to answer.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Does the Minister recognise that ethnic minorities are poorly represented among the administrators of sport, the more so given the extent to which they contribute to our sporting teams, particularly the Olympic team? Is it not high time people of an ethnic background were represented at the highest level in the administration of sport?

Mr. Key: I warmly welcome that intervention. I could not agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman more, particularly in respect of his point about our Olympic excellence. It is not true to say that those from the ethnic minorities who excel at sport are not taking part in the administration and future policy-making in sport. They are taking part in a most energetic way in several areas. However, I take the hon. and learned Gentleman's point, and we will seek to address it in a sensible and appropriate manner.

When I was a schoolboy, I took it for granted that I could participate in cricket, rugger, hockey, swimming and sailing, all of which I did at school, as did my fellow pupils, as a matter of course. When I was a teacher for 16 happy years, I took it for granted that I would be expected to umpire and referee, judge athletics, organise sports and visiting teams and take pupils away to other schools.

Sadly, those days have gone, and I regret that very much. That means that we must try harder to ensure the highest standards of sport in schools and the availability of sport inside and outside schools. I will be discussing issues with my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools about the interface between his responsibilities and mine in respect of sport in schools.

Having put in place the right structure, we also need to lay the foundations of participation in sport and future

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success. That is why the Government believe so strongly that all young children should have the opportunity to learn basic sports skills.

In England and Wales, we have made physical education a compulsory part of the school curriculum for pupils aged five to 16. Similarly, we believe in the importance of pupils being taught to swim by the age of 11, because that is a vital life-saving skill. That is to be made a requirement in England and Wales from autumn 1994.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): While my hon. Friend is referring to school sports, will he comment on the new Education Bill which will come before this House on Monday week, and the apparent new initiative that grant-maintained schools will possibly put aside 10 per cent. of their places for pupils who show excellence in the arts and sport? Many of us interested in sport would welcome that. Youngsters with sporting ability, but perhaps without academic ability, will be able to obtain an excellent education and perhaps have some advantage that they would not have enjoyed under the old system.

Mr. Key: I recognise that my hon. Friend has a long record of interest in sporting matters. I cannot comment on a Bill that is to come before the House, but I welcome the thrust of his comments. All our schools, including grant-maintained schools, will make it a priority that sport is a chief aim in the rounded education of our young people.

I am sure that all hon. Members will agree that the role of PE teachers cannot be overestimated in developing the sporting skills of their pupils within the curriculum and in after-school sporting opportunities. Without their commitment and enthusiasm, we can achieve very little. In addition to the professionals, we must bear in mind the vast army of teachers, parents and volunteers who assist with sports for young people in schools and beyond every afternoon and at the weekends. Without them, Britain would not have its worldwide reputation for excellence in sport and access to sport that is so admired around the world.

We are keen to encourage more after-school sporting opportunities. The champion coaching scheme has been a great success in improving the sporting skills of the youngsters who participated, in encouraging new local partnerships and in providing models of good practice for other organisations to emulate. Preparations for phase 2 are now well under way. Partly arising from that experience, we will be publishing a booklet.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my hon. Friend address the champion coaching scheme at greater length, bearing in mind the fact that it reaches 4,000 pupils out of a pupil population of 8 million? We are not getting to the main body of pupils, and that will not do.

Mr. Key: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to our modest start, but we have to start somewhere. We have started with champion coaching which has been a huge success. As I have said, phase 2 is under way. The scheme has proved by its popularity that there is greater scope for it to grow, and I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that that must be our objective.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Does my hon. Friend welcome the additional £1·3 million made available to the champion coaching scheme by the Foundation for Sport and the Arts?

Mr. Key: The Foundation for Sport and the Arts has made a huge contribution to the sporting life of this country and I will refer to it specifically later. My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the fact that the foundation has contributed substantially to the scheme. I warmly welcome that and my hon. Friend's intervention.

As I was saying, we shall publish a booklet early next year designed to encourage more local youth sport partnerships between schools and colleges and a range of other local organisations including sports clubs, local businesses, local authorities and the youth service.

Building on those foundations, we are very lucky in this country to have such an excellent and extensive voluntary sector that can carry through participation in sport into adult life. The dedication and drive of thousands of largely unpaid club officials, coaches and ground staff is the bedrock of the voluntary sector. That is essential to the quality of sports participation in this country and to improving the performance of our sportsmen and women, thereby providing the basis for sporting excellence and success.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has begun a new era of openness in government, which allows me to point out that I am a member of the Cabinet committee on health strategy. The Government will also be promoting participation in sport and improving the quality of that participation by implementing the commitment contained in the "Health of the Nation" White Paper to look at ways of increasing levels of physical fitness.

Despite the significant increases in participation in sport and active recreation in recent years, as recorded by the general household survey, overall levels of cardio-respiratory fitness in the population are unacceptably low. That is why the Government, with the help of such organisations as the Great Britain Sports Council and the Health Education Authority, are looking at the feasibility of setting physical activity targets and ways in which policies might need to be formulated to meet them.

Local authorities have an important role in encouraging and providing for that growth in participation in sport. It is essential that we make better use of our sport and leisure facilities, of which there has been a very substantial growth during the past 20 years. Central to making effective use of that investment are the managers who control programming, presentation and pricing of activities. Two initiatives that the Government have been pursuing which should help assist in the promotion of more efficient, effective and accountable management in our local authority sports facilities are compulsory competitive tendering and the citizens charter.

Before March, I had the advantage of being a local government finance Minister. I made the acquaintance of many local authorities, and saw at first hand the contribution that they were making and the way in which they carried out their commitments and their voluntary policy objectives. I also learnt a good deal more about CCT.

I became convinced that the great virtue of CCT was not just that it provided better value for money for the taxpayer, but that, for the first time—too often, for the first time—it ensured that those who were providing sporting facilities and management knew what they were trying to achieve and how they were going to achieve it. Of course, the best had already been doing that, but too often the others had not.

The great virtue of the CCT system, whatever one may think about it in party political terms, is that it encouraged a new discipline in the provision of sporting facilities. Local authorities were required to submit the first 35 per cent. by value of their sport and leisure facilities by 1 January 1992, a further 35 per cent. by August 1992 and the remaining figure by 1 January 1993. Any assessment at this stage can therefore only be preliminary, and we would expect savings to come through later. However, there is already little doubt on the evidence available to us so far that CCT has succeeded in stimulating a positive review of local authority practices and improved efficiency in leisure management.

I hope that all local authorities are by now well aware of the six key principles of the charter standard under the citizens charter. They are published standards of service; customer views to be taken into account in setting those standards; clear information about the range of services to be provided; courteous and efficient customer service; well signposted avenues for complaint with independent review wherever possible; independent validation of performance against standards and a clear commitment to improving value for money. Swale borough council leisure department, Wandsworth borough council leisure and amenities service and Omagh leisure centre in Northern Ireland are to be congratulated on their recent charter mark awards.

There are a number of other ways in which better quality management is being encouraged and in which I am pleased to say the Sports Council is playing an important part.

Through the British Quality Association, the Sports Council is co-ordinating work to identify and agree high standards of service delivery across all sectors of the sport and recreation management industry. BS5750 is an internationally recognised British standard describing a system of management to ensure the consistent delivery of a quality service. Managers in sport and recreation have been quick to grasp that opportunity, and the first facilities have been assessed and accredited by the British Standards Institute in Omagh, Newcastle, the London borough of Bexley and the City Centre Leisure, in Westminster, a new private contractor in the field.

The Sports Council has continued to support the development of the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management to provide for the professional training and development of the whole range of leisure managers.

The most important and fundamental development, however, will be the introduction of national vocational qualifications due to be launched on 11 November in the sport and recreation field. The new qualification and occupational standards should provide a framework for the development and training of staff and volunteers in the sport and recreation industry on a par with opportunities in all other sectors of the United Kingdom economy.

That initiative has encouraged a new unity. A new education and training consortium has emerged involving the sports councils, the professional bodies, National Coaching Foundation, British Sports Forum, the Central Council for Physical Recreation, the Welsh and Scottish sports associations and others to work towards the implementation of NVQs and to provide a co-ordinated approach to training and to support their take-up.

I know that concerns have been expressed over the decline in expenditure by local authorities on sport and recreation over the past two years. Although levels of capital expenditure on those services have declined since 1989-90, that was an exceptional year caused by authorities' spending from accumulated capital receipts before the introduction of the new capital finance system in April 1990. In real terms, the estimated outturn for 1991-92 was more than 10 per cent. higher than capital expenditure on those services in 1986-87 both in gross and net—that is, less capital receipts—terms.

I said earlier that there is scope for local authorities to work imaginatively in partnerships with the private sector in enabling sports and leisure facilities to be built, rather than looking to the taxpayer to fund those developments.

Some local authorities may have assumed that the private sector merely wants to take over their sports and leisure centres through CCT. Major companies in the private sector have been telling me that they are keen to participate in partnerships with the public sector to provide new sports and leisure facilities, particularly of course, if, as part of the arrangement, they can secure the development of a commercially attractive leisure element. It is not always appropriate, but it may be helpful if I give two examples of the type of partnership that can be achieved.

Milton Keynes development corporation with the help of commercial leisure operators, has secured the development of a major facility, including an ice rink. The commercial operator provided a 30-lane ten-pin bowling centre, a Quasar space laser game, a night club and a cafe and bar. It also built an Olympic standard ice arena for the local community. The whole complex is managed by the commercial leisure operator.

The value of the ice arena to the local community has been enormous. It is used by more than 500,000 people per year and is home to the MK Kings ice hockey team. The MK Kings are in the Heineken division 1 and they attract between 1,500 to 2,000 spectators at their 32 home games each season. Players from MK Kings visit schools and encourage children to take up skating. Schools also use the ice rink for PE sessions.

Colchester borough council wished to refurbish a traditional 1960s sports centre. As part of the funding for the new schemes, two sites were let on long leases to a commercial leisure operator, a ten-pin bowling centre and a fast-food restaurant. The premium of £1·2 million raised from that partnership with the private sector was used to fund the community facilities in what was called 'Leisure World'. That comprises a 25 m competition pool, with spectator seating, a leisure pool, a sports hall, sauna world, a multi-purpose hall for use by the performing arts, and an outdoor all-weather pitch.

I know that hon. Members are bound to raise the 50 per cent. capital receipts rule. That rule does not, of course, apply to the replacement of like for like under the "in and out" arrangements allowed, subject to certain conditions—that is, regulation 18 of the capital finance regulations. Those arrangements are outlined in the Department of the Environment circular 11/90 on local authority capital finance and have been used to pay for new major sports facilities such as the new Guildford Spectrum sports and

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leisure facility. Another source of funding for sports facilities is the Foundation for Sport and the Arts, which provides £40 million a year for sport. That is extra money.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): I have great respect for the Minister. No doubt what he is saying is a reflection of what is happening, but it is not the true picture. Over the past week, two letters have come to me from the Methodist Church and from the Greater London Central Scout Council. They complain bitterly that they cannot get the funds to do the work that they have long been doing. I hope that the Minister will address those real problems which affect many hon. Members.

Mr. Key: I shall indeed. In fact, I have just started to address them in my remarks about the Foundation for Sport and the Arts, and I shall return to them when I discuss the national lottery, which may be another source of help.

The grants awarded by the foundation range from large amounts of more than £1 million, to help to redevelop stadiums of national importance, to £500 to enable small clubs to replace equipment. The FSA has also provided substantial sums of money for coaching, sport in schools, sport for the disabled, the British Olympic team and paralympic team, and the Manchester Olympic bid, as well as making numerous grants to sports clubs and sporting bodies.

Let me tell the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) how a community that I know well—the village of Winterslow in Wiltshire—approached those problems. It needed a new village hall with some sporting facilities. In a most remarkable achievement, it raised nearly £250,000 among the 3,000 people who live in the village of Winterslow. That money was raised by help from the Foundation for Sports and the Arts, through the sports councils, local authorities, local fund raising and indeed a village referendum which raised £60,000 to be paid off over 20 years under the community charge regulations. There are ways in which small communities can raise large sums of money.

In the world of football, our facilities have been transformed, partly with the benefit of moneys made available by the reduction in pool betting duty in the 1990 Budget. That can be seen most clearly in the replacement of former terraced areas with seated accommodation and in the construction of new all-seated stands. In that, in addition to the invaluable role of the Football Trust, the Football Licensing Authority and the Football Stadia Advisory Design Council have also played an important part.

There are many other important but less obvious ways in which the safety of spectators has been increased since publication of the Taylor report. For example, great strides have been taken to improve the standard of stewarding provided at many grounds. In addition, the provision of ground plans on the rear of tickets and the painting of emergency exit gates in a distinctive colour are now taken for granted at many grounds.

There is much work still to be done. In the Taylor report there were recommendations for design to assist disabled people's access to our sporting grounds, and that has been a great success, too.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The Minister will appreciate the hard work that has been done by my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry), who, until recently, was the chairman of the all-party football committee, in his report on all-seated stadiums. Does the Minister agree that, paradoxically, all-seated stadiums cause great problems for some of the larger and more successful clubs? I instance, obviously, West Ham in Newham, which has a high proportion of standing spectators to seated spectators. The changeover is a financial problem, which is not susceptible to some of the solutions that the Conservative party might advocate.

Do we not need more consideration of ways in which we can retain standing accommodation that is equally as safe as seated accommodation? Of course, standing with one's friends has its own attraction. Will the Minister accept our thanks for his flexibility, but keep up the work and maintain the flexibility that he has already shown?

Mr. Key: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for those remarks. I am also grateful for the work of the all-party committee. We listened carefully to its advice. The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde and my hon. Friends who are members of that committee have more than once discussed the issue with us. I take the hon. Gentleman's point about the need for flexibility, but we must not be deflected from our aims of providing not only safer football grounds but an improved quality of ground. People are beginning to expect a higher quality. That usually means seating, and more comfortable seating at that.

Of course I have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman said. I am aware that there is still strong feeling on the issue, and I shall continue to listen to those representations, notwithstanding our determination to ensure that safety is a prime objective.

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): I hope to deal with safety in my speech. Will the Minister say something about the problems facing football clubs, including Southampton? The problem is not so much financial; the length of planning delays and the difficulties in planning procedures make it impossible for clubs to meet the demands of the Taylor report, even though they and the local city council have made every effort to do so. Will he talk to the Football Licensing Authority about exercising its discretion more widely where it is convinced that everyone is acting with good will but there are inevitable delays?

Mr. Key: Southampton has made its views clear on the issue. Only last month, I visited Fratton park to discuss with Portsmouth its problems, which are similar but slightly different in detail. It is true that, with the best will in the world, football clubs find it difficult to meet the deadline of 1994. Therefore, it is important that the Football Licensing Authority should be prepared to be flexible where there is a clear intention to complete the work but practical difficulties arise which are not of the making of the clubs, such as planning delays, to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

On 21 September, the chief executive of the Football Licensing Authority wrote to Brian Hunt, the director of Southampton football club. If the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) has not seen the letter, I am sure that he will be able to do so. The Football Licensing Authority said that it would be sensible and reasonable about the matter. It would try to ensure that the club met the deadline, but it would be flexible if it received answers to questions such as: has the club received detailed planning permission? Has the site been acquired? Has the design of the stadium and related facilities been finalised and approved by all relevant authorities? Has the necessary financial package been secured? Has the contract to complete the stadium been let? Has work started on the site or has a start date been settled? Has a firm date for completion been fixed? Are there safeguards against delays? Has the disposal of the existing site been agreed?

That is a reasonably flexible approach. I gave a copy of the letter to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde about a week ago. We agree that this is a reasonable approach to an undoubtedly difficult problem.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): We all appreciate the work that the Football Trust does both in implementing the Taylor report and in improving safety in sports grounds. One of the clubs in my constituency is Kidderminster Harriers, which is a Vauxhall conference league club of great distinction. One of the league's great desires is that it should have access to Football Trust funds to bring the stadiums up to the standards required for the frequently substantial crowd numbers at the league's matches. The average for Kidderminster Harriers is about 1,200 people a week. That is significantly in excess of the crowds at some of the third division football club matches.

Will the Minister tell us something about the progress of negotiations between the Football Trust and the GM Vauxhall conference league on that matter?

Mr. Key: First, I wish the Kidderminster Harriers a successful season. I am sure that they will have it, with the support of my hon. Friend. Will he let me have more detail of this problem, which I will pursue? If he writes to me, I shall be better acquainted with the facts and better able to support him in that difficulty.

Looking to the future, the national lottery will be an important source of funds for sport. Its establishment is a high priority for the new Department. We hope to be in a position to introduce legislation very soon to enable the lottery to be operational by the end of 1994. The detailed policy on allocation between the various good causes is still under discussion but undoubtedly sport will benefit from it. A range of facilities from state-of-the-art stadiums, to support for local projects and clubs will benefit. It is important that sport gears itself to take advantage of the funds that will be available.

It is important that we realise what wonderful facilities we already have in Britain. Of course there are facilities that need repair all over the country, from village cricket huts to stadiums. Nevertheless, we need to remind ourselves that, compared with many nations, we are well provided for. More than 1,100 indoor swimming pools, more than 1,600 sports halls, 490 athletic tracks, 78 ice rinks, 99 dry-ski slopes and 1,900 golf courses are available to the public in Britain.

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): Before he leaves the subject of the national lottery, will the Minister comment on a report in this morning's *Times* headed "Treasury concedes lower tax on lottery"? The report says:

> "Tax levied on the national lottery should be less than 20 per cent., the Treasury has conceded. National heritage ministers have won their case."

Will the Minister comment on whether that is an accurate report?

Mr. Key: I was always brought up to believe that one should never believe everything that one reads in the newspapers. If the hon. Gentleman is right, I shall be absolutely thrilled. However, I have not had time to read *The Times* this morning. In any event, I cannot comment on that speculation. We shall have to contain ourselves for only a few days longer to find out what tax will be levied on the lottery.

I turn now to the various measures that the Government are taking to promote sporting ethics and tackle abuse in sport. Our worries are not only domestic. There is often an international dimension to be considered. Indeed, on issues such as the fight against drug abuse, the international arena provides the real battleground, if we are to progress towards our goal of drug-free sport.

We are working through the Council of Europe, which has a proven track record in addressing doping and spectator violence and in promoting sports ethics. The recent changes in eastern Europe have posed a new set of challenges, and we shall continue to play our part in ensuring that these are also met.

We have taken the lead in developing the Council of Europe's code of sports ethics. It was launched in Rhodes in May 1992 at the conference of European Ministers with responsibility for sport. The basic principle of the code is that ethical considerations and fair play are integral, not optional, elements of all sports activities. The code focuses on the role that adults and institutions play in promoting the concept of fair play among children. Children have a right to participate in and enjoy sport—but adults have a responsibility to promote fair play and thereby ensure that those rights are respected.

It was significant that I was invited by the Council of Europe at that meeting of Ministers to introduce the debate on the code of sport ethics. People turned to Britain when it came to fair play in sport. The United Kingdom has also played a leading role in the preparation and implementation of the Council of Europe's anti-doping convention, which came into force in 1990, and we continue to encourage countries to ratify it. The convention provides the framework within which Governments, working closely with sports bodies, implement effective anti-doping policies.

The Government signed in 1990 an anti-doping agreement with the Canadian and Australian Governments, which provides for the mutual testing of athletes, both in and out of competition. I am glad to say that Norway has recently signed the agreement. We shall host a major international conference on doping in sport in September 1993, which is likely to involve more than 200 experts from doping authorities, sports bodies, the International Olympic Committee and Governments. That underlines our commitment to promoting international action.

We also finance the Sports Council's independent drug-testing programme. Budgeted expenditure in 1992-93 is £734,000. The programme has received worldwide commendation. It provides for testing to be carried out by trained and independent sampling officers; the random testing of competitors, both in and out of competition; and publication of adverse findings and

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action taken by governing bodies of sport. The programme is supplemented by an educational campaign aimed at schools, colleges and sports facilities.

I do not want to underestimate the scientific and medical difficulties and the niceties of defining drugs in sport, but one thing must be absolutely clear: the use of drugs to gain advantage is simply cheating.

The United Kingdom was instrumental in establishing the Council of Europe's convention on spectator violence and misbehaviour at sports events, and under United Kingdom chairmanship its standing committee took the lead internationally to identify a wide range of measures to bring about improvements in crowd control and safety. The Home Department is in the lead in representing the United Kingdom on that committee, but my Department continues to play an active part in its proceedings.

At the European level, we cannot afford to ignore the growing influence of the European Community in sport. Although the Community has no formal competence in sport, there are a number of areas in which sport is affected by Community activity—notably through legislation concerned with the completion of the single market. It is essential that sporting interests are protected within the Community, and we shall play our part to ensure that a constructive dialogue takes place on sports issues.

The Government's commitment to promoting the interests of United Kingdom sports internationally was demonstrated by the support that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, other ministerial colleagues and I gave to the British Olympic team in Barcelona. That underlined our backing for the bid to bring the games to Manchester.

I am sure that the House would like to join me in congratulating our medal winners and all members of the British Olympic team. The country was impressed, indeed thrilled, by the range of the team's achievements in athletics, swimming, and sports as diverse as archery, boxing, canoeing, cycling, hockey, judo and yachting——

Mr. Denham: What about rowing?

Mr. Key: Yes, the hon. Gentleman is right to mention rowing, which was one of the most spectacular of all the Olympic events.

The magnificent performances of Chris Boardman, Linford Christie, Sally Gunnell—that was a race that I shall never forget, as I was sitting by the track—the Searle brothers, with Gary Herbert, the coxless rowing pair of Steve Redgrave and Matthew Pinsent, will live with us all for a long time to come. It was a most dramatic and heart-warming spectacle for us all.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to Sir Arthur Gold, who stood down as the British Olympic Association chairman on Wednesday. He has provided a lifetime service to athletics, the Olympic movement and to sport generally. Of all his many achievements, I single out his personal crusade against doping as having one of the most significant long-term effects on sport. When the doping menace is eventually beaten, much of the credit will rest with Sir Arthur.

I cannot let this occasion pass without mentioning Sir Arthur's personal charm and his powers of quiet persuasion. He was a great ambassador for British sport.

Craig Reedie now has the job of preparing the BOA for the challenges of the 21st century, including the staging of the Olympic games in this country in the year 2000. All sports organisations must be flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances and the BOA is no exception. I am sure that Mr. Reedie will ensure that it plays its full role in promoting excellence and ensuring continued British success in the Olympics.

I was delighted to attend the Barcelona games for the physical disabled and blind athletes, and the Madrid games—the first ever paralympics for mentally handicapped athletes. There was a high standard of competition in those games. In the Barcelona games Britain came third in the medal table with 40 gold medals.

I do not hide the fact that I was particularly enthusiastic about the paralympics. I was overwhelmed by the standards achieved by our athletes and by the great sense of joy and fulfilment which was evident. If there was a difference between the able-bodied Olympics and the paralympics, it was that every hour of every day was tense, difficult and fraught at the former, while every hour of every day was a show of excellence by the athletes and darn good fun at the paralympics.

Finally, a word about the greatest prize in sport that a country can hope to have, and a prize that the Government are determined that we should win—the Olympic games, in Manchester. We have given substantial backing to the bid by committing £55 million of Government money. Much of that is being used to begin the process of creating new venues to stage the games in Manchester. Anyone who visits the fine communities around Manchester—not merely the city, but all the communities that will participate in the Olympic effort—cannot fail to be impressed by the way in which the Olympics have caught the imaginations of the people in the north-west.

When members of the International Olympic Committee visit Manchester next year, they will see construction of a velodrome and an indoor arena under way, and considerable progress on the preparation of the site for the main stadium complex. There could be no clearer evidence of the Government's commitment, and the commitment of the British people, to staging the Olympics. We are conscious that, when the bid is successful, it will require investment in human resources as well as physical facilities to ensure that we can maximise the long-term sporting benefits of hosting the games.

Nothing that I saw in Barcelona could not be done better by Manchester, including the weather. Events were rained off in Barcelona, but most of the time we lived in a sort of sweaty bath, which was most unpleasant for many of our athletes. I suspect that it will not be much better in Atlanta. There will either be hotter and more humid conditions out of doors, or events will take place indoors in air-conditioned facilities, and athletes will all get flu within a day or two. In Barcelona, a remarkable number of athletes, from all over the world, told me, "Roll on Manchester."

I said "when" and not "if" we win. We can win with the help of all those involved, including Bob Scott and his team and all the people of Manchester and the north-west. It is important that the country lines up behind Manchester in its bid. It is a bid for Britain, and the legacy will be invaluable. The people of Manchester and the north-west, including Blackpool and all the other communities that make up the north-west, will benefit in terms of sport and of economic regeneration. It will be a boost to the economy, putting the north-west of England firmly on the map and at the head of our nation's proud role of great cities. There will be a range of major new facilities, of the highest international standards. We shall all gain from it.

I have surveyed the sporting scene at some length, not least due to some helpful interventions from hon. Members on both sides of the House. I shall end on a subject about which I feel passionately. I have touched on the pinnacles of excellence in sport in this country. It is right that the Government and the House should nurture and promote the interests of excellence in British sport. The great British tradition of sport, which makes Britain envied throughout the world, is that it is amateur and local. That access to sport makes the sporting tradition of this country so unique.

I have had limited time to touch on some of the strategically important elements of our sporting life. I am sure that other hon. Members will wish to mention many issues. I should have liked to expand on the subject of children's play, countryside issues, horses in sport, inner cities, playing fields, sport for the disabled, water sports and many more issues. They may have to wait for another day.

10.27 am

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): When I was coming into the Chamber one of my colleagues told me, "Don't forget to thank the Minister who's bound to congratulate you on coming to the Dispatch Box." However, the Minister did not do so. Nevertheless, I congratulate him on making his debut in a sports debate.

Mr. Key: Of course the hon. Gentleman has my congratulations. I thought that I recalled distinctly that he had spoken on sport at the Dispatch Box before the summer recess, but we all congratulate him on appearing at the Dispatch Box today and look forward to constructive and detailed discussions because he has great knowledge of sport.

Mr. Pendry: I was not fishing for compliments, but I look forward to working with the Under-Secretary during the short time that he will be in that job. Judging by the problems facing his party these days it could be days rather than months or years. I look forward to sparring with the hon. Gentleman in the interests of sport. Speaking as a former boxer, I can tell him that any punch-ups we have will be healthy and will be conducted under the Queensberry rules.

Mr. Harry Greenway: The hon. Gentleman and the Minister are about the same weight.

Mr. Pendry: I shall come to that.

Having welcomed the Minister and his boss, I should like to speak about the Secretary of State's predecessor who, in his short tenure in his new Department, won much deserved praise, especially from the football world, for his willingness to listen to reasoned arguments and to exercise a laudable degree of flexibility in the light of changing circumstances. In my capacity as chairman of the all-party football committee, I and my fellow officers were recently able to convince him to relax the imposition of all-seater accommodation at our smaller football grounds. We met the Secretary of State and the Minister just a few days ago on a delegation and they also showed a flexible approach to clubs that wish to develop new modern stadiums and find themselves frustrated by an inflexible planning straitjacket. My hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) referred to that. A letter that I was supposed to receive one or two weeks ago did not arrive. I understand that it was in draft form. No doubt the letter to be sent to clubs is helpful.

As the Minister is aware, my views on soccer are well known and documented, and many of my hon. Friends wish to speak about football. I am sure that the Minister will respond positively to them and to the many arguments advanced from time to time by the sports world. We should not blame him for the mess that he has inherited in some areas. I assure him that the Opposition will continue to advance the interests of all our sports men and women in future debates.

I am sure that the Minister is not aware that the debate has historical significance. It is not just that it is his debut in a sports debate but that he is the first Conservative Minister to initiate a debate on sport and recreation in Government time. He can take a bow. There have been sports Bills, but there has never been a debate of this kind. It is a pity that it is taking place on a Friday, because many hon. Members who would have liked to take part have constituency engagements. I hope that those who are watching and listening will not think that the attendance reflects the view of the House on sporting matters. Perhaps I should not carp at the fact that the debate is being held on a Friday, because we are grateful for such a debate.

In the past no sports debate was complete without the towering presence of my noble Friend Lord Howell of Aston Manor as we must now refer to him. He will be sadly missed by all sports-loving Members, but at least he is just along the Corridor and I am sure that he will be ready and willing to assist any hon. Member who needs encouragement.

The Minister knows that the Opposition will do all that they can to promote sport and to elevate it in the political pecking order, because the potential opportunities for sport are boundless. For the sake of the people who look to him for a lead on sporting matters the Minister has a duty to grasp those opportunities. We want the Minister and the Secretary of State to fight sport's corner in Government. Despite what the Minister said, they do not have a good sports record on which to build. At the general election the Conservative party hardly mentioned sport, and time after time Conservative Ministers responsible for sport have spoken about how they want a better deal for sport, but time after time their words evaporated into thin air when it came to the crunch.

Many people rightly feel angry about the way in which the Government have recently treated sport. Too often it appears that the Government see sport as a convenient vehicle for planted photo opportunities or public relations, rather than as an important and vital area for investment, support and commitment. That must stop, and I hope that the Minister's optimistic views will not prove to be merely the start of another painful cycle of raising the hopes of our sports men and women and then dashing them. I warn the Minister that if that happens he will find us not as accommodating as we are on this occasion.

The Minister will be aware of the welcome given to the publication prior to the last election of my party's charter for sport. Sport recognised the commitment to securing a better deal for sport that our charter demonstrated and many looked forward with relish to helping to implement our positive proposals.

[Mr. Pendry]

To the Minister has fallen the task of implementing the findings of the review of sports policy undertaken by two of his predecessors. I hope that he will do not only that but much more, because the review is more memorable for the issues that it fails to address than what it proposes. However, I reassure the Minister that we agree on the review's broad thrust.

The proposal to reform the national structures of sport, including, as the Minister said, the creation of a United Kingdom sports commission and a separate English sports council is welcome. The Minister said that work towards establishing those bodies is progressing. In that context, I plead with him not to overlook the expertise of those who have fought for many years for voluntary sport. He implied that he did not overlook it. In his nominations for membership of the United Kingdom sports commission he should sympathetically consider the case for appointing a representative from the Central Council of Physical Recreation whose campaigning work on behalf of sport over many years is known and respected by many.

The Minister will understand our desire to press for further information about how he intends to press ahead with that work. What resources will be allocated to the United Kingdom sports commission and to the English sports council? This morning's issue of *The Daily Telegraph* quoted a figure which was thought to be inappropriate by many of the regional sports directors. There has been much criticism—not least by the Opposition—of the cuts in Sports Council grant. The Minister must assure the House that the total grant aid to the United Kingdom sports commission and the English sports council will be more than the current grant aid to the Sports Council.

We want to see some evidence that the reforms that the Minister has outlined will be given enough support to enable them to achieve more than a mere game of musical chairs with the national responsibilities for sport. We want clear evidence of how the reforms will bring benefits to sport. Before he finalises the precise arrangements, membership and responsibilities of the sports commission and the English sports council we expect him to return to the House so that we can examine the proposals and debate them in detail to ensure that they are the best way forward. Thereafter, the Minister must ensure that the House has a regular opportunity for a full debate on the state of sport and recreation. He has taken the first step by initiating this debate, and he and his boss should seek to secure an annual debate on sport—a state of the sporting nation debate as it were—to follow the publication of the annual report of the Sports Council and the United Kingdom sports commission, when it is established. If he fights for such a debate he will get the full backing of the Opposition. In the winding-up speech I hope to hear that the Minister is prepared to join us in arguing for such an annual debate. The Minister nods. I hope that that means he has given that commitment. One reason why such a debate is crucial is the increasing importance of the sports and leisure industry to our economy. A few days ago in a newspaper interview the Secretary of State described his Department's job as dealing with

"the ways people spend their time when they are not working".

We understand what he meant by that, but it is worth remembering that the task of looking after the interests of sport also includes a responsibility to one of Britain's major employers and thousands of workers. For many people sport is precisely what they do when they are working. The Sports Council estimates that some 476,000 people are employed in the sport and leisure industry. That is about the same as those employed in the paper, printing and publishing industry, and the postal service and telecommunications. Compared with other industries it is, luckily, healthy, but the Minister must be aware that the rapid decline in other industries presents implications for sport.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) spelt that out clearly. The topical example that he recognised is the fact that 75 football pitches, 60 bowling greens, just under 50 cricket pitches and about 40 tennis courts serving local communities are managed by the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation. It currently receives funding from British Coal, but not, it is feared for much longer. The operation may be able to continue as a charitable trust, but not without support. It will not be seen as a weakening of the unanswerable case for coal, which the Government clearly have not grasped, to argue that the Minister must pledge to do all in his power to provide support for that association.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to raise that matter again and say how many grounds are involved. On previous occasions when some of those grounds were lost to the coal industry, local authorities could use moneys obtained from the Government and their own purse to enable them to take over the grounds. We need an assurance that the pits do not close, but, if they do, that local authorities will be allowed money from central Government revenues to save those magnificent sporting facilities.

Mr. Pendry: My hon. Friend underlines the point and if the Minister wishes to intervene again, my hon. Friend and I would be grateful.

Mr. Key: The East Midlands Council for Sport and Recreation has had discussions with the regional arm of the CISWO, which has expressed concern about the future funding from the Coal Board and whether it will be able to continue to provide sports facilities. I am prepared to give an undertaking that I shall watch carefully to see how those discussions go.

Mr. Pendry: The Minister has a responsibility not just to observe those discussions but to get involved and ensure that those sporting facilities are funded. That is his job and we expect it of him.

I was glad to hear the Minister's commitment to introducing a system for the introduction of a national qualification for those employed in the sports industry. That is good news, but he must give a commitment to ensuring that a proper level of long-term funding and support from his Department will be forthcoming so that those qualifications have a secure base and a healthy future.

The hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe), who made his maiden speech only eight days ago, told me that he would have liked to have been here. His comments regarding the importance of sport for promoting health interested me and, no doubt, many other hon. Members. He rightly called attention to the need for an integrated approach to health promotion and the promotion of sport and leisure. The hon. Gentlemen will be a great asset to those of us who care for sport, but unfortunately he did not conclude by saying that that deterioration was due to the policies of the Government whom he supports. For example, the recent findings, to which the Minister has already referred, of the Allied Dunbar national fitness survey showed that one third of men and two thirds of women were unable to continue walking at a reasonable pace up a 1 in 20 slope without becoming breathless and having to stop. The survey also showed that more than 48 per cent. of men and 40 per cent. of women are overweight and the numbers have increased from 39 and 32 per cent. respectively since 1980. I shall not say that it has anything to do with the political change of Government, but may I gently suggest that the Minister and I could both do with shedding a few pounds. To show an example, I have only this week embarked on a major fitness drive in the Westminster gym. I hope that he will show equal determination to get a healthy shape and accept my challenge to meet me in the gym.

Mr. Key: It is true that the hon. Gentleman and I are no longer as young, fit or lithe as we once were. Nevertheless, may I warn him and the many hundreds of thousands of rather tubby middle-aged men out there that the most foolish thing they could do is to suddenly take some form of strenuous exercise that will do them nothing but harm. He is right to point out that we need to take gentle exercise appropriate to our age and condition and I entirely endorse that. However, I shall never forget that the fittest man I ever knew died on the squash court when he was 28.

Mr. Pendry: I am not sure whether the Minister will come to the gym with me or not. If he does, I promise that we shall go gently. We can at least see who mounts the most effective self-promotion of good health.

The Minister repeated the Government's commitment to bringing before the House legislation to introduce a national lottery. He must recognise that if the lottery is to succeed, it must be framed in such a way as to maximise the benefits that can undoubtedly accrue to sport. He must also recognise that there remain serious questions to address in arriving at the best possible structure for the lottery. I wonder whether the Minister has had a chance to look at a copy of the excellent report, "A Chance to Prosper", written by Jo MaCrea and published by Charles Barker, Public Affairs. I am sure that he would benefit from reading its contents, as would anyone interested in the lottery debate. Any debate surrounding the lottery must deal with the funding and taxation of sport in its entirety.

The Minister will know from reading our charter for sport that we promise to set up an inquiry into all aspects of sports funding and taxation, betting and sponsorship to ensure that a fairer proportion of the money taken out of sport by the Government goes back into sport. We do so both because we are determined to rectify the fact that, for every £1 that the Government invest in sport, they receive £9 in return and because we want to see a more rational and coherent system for the funding of sport. That is the context within which we shall consider the specific proposals that the Minister brings before the House. We shall want to consider his plans clause by clause, line by line, to ensure that the lottery really brings the greatest benefit to all areas of sport, including those currently receiving support from other forms of gambling.

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): My hon. Friend will be aware that the GAH group employed by the Department of National Heritage as consultants on the national lottery reported on 7 October—it is a private departmental report. I hope that, among the aspects studied in that report are the detrimental effects of the proposals for a national lottery on bodies such as the Foundation for Sport and the Arts and the Football Trust, notwithstanding the effects on employment and sport generally.

Mr. Pendry: My hon. Friend has illustrated my point —that we must consider carefully many aspects of any proposal that the Government bring before the House.

The Minister will be aware that the Sports Council would greatly appreciate clarification of the Government's thinking, as set out in the White Paper. In its response to the White Paper, the Sports Council says:

> "Accepting for the moment that the Government's argument that a lottery tax will be necessary if its revenues are not to fall, it is unclear how the Government would propose to act in the event of the tax serving to increase its revenues. It could be argued that any extra tax-take accruing from the lottery should be distributed among the good causes, for whose benefit the national lottery will have been set up in the first place".

So the Minister should clarify exactly what the Government's thinking was in that regard when they drafted the White Paper.

One of the country's most popular spectators sports is greyhound racing. The greyhound world was delighted when the Chancellor agreed to cut betting duty in the last Budget and said that greyhound racing should receive its share of that cut. Seven months later the bookmakers are still enjoying the fruits of that windfall, but, as I understand it, have yet to pass on any fraction of the revenue to the greyhound racing industry. I have written to the Home Secretary about the matter. Will the Minister use his authority to reinforce my request and ask the Home Secretary to bang heads together to ensure that all sections of the greyhound racing industry, which desperately needs funds, enjoy the fruits of the Treasury's generous gesture?

On a wider front, the Minister must realise that a coherent strategy for sport is required, not the piecemeal measures that have been the hallmark of Government policy to date. We achieved a first in our charter for sport when we detailed such a strategy at every level of sport and recreation, from a comprehensive review of national sporting organisations to addressing the importance of sport in the communities and schools serving the needs of everyone—schoolchildren, their parents and even their grandparents.

I should like the Sports Council to resurrect its all-to-play-for scheme for the 50-plus age group. There are literally hundreds of thousands of people in that category who need encouragement. They include the unemployed and those who have been forced to take early retirement, as well as those of normal retirement age. Government policies have resulted in the numbers piling up. The Sports Council and the Central Council of Physical Recreation —in whatever form they take in future—should particularly target such people. Sport and recreation will enrich as well as lengthen their lives.

[Mr. Pendry]

I am sure that the Minister will join me in encouraging the Sports Council on its annual report produced this week. It has gone a long way to achieving many of the important objectives that it set itself. I know that there are many other objectives that it would like to have achieved.

I know that other hon. Members wish to raise matters of specific concern, but I have a number of issues on which to press the Minister before I conclude. The Minister must explain what has happened to the consultative letter issued in December 1991 by his predecessor to chief education officers on the selling-off of school playing fields. Many people would argue that, far from being a determined effort to save those vital sporting assets, the letter was little more than a meaningless pre-election public relations exercise to cover up the fact that the Government had still not acted to halt the losses. The Minister must know that that is not good enough. He must tell the House when he intends to publish the responses to that letter and issue the circular calling a halt to the decimation of school fields, which continues to this day.

The CCPR has used Government figures to calculate that every day for the past two years, £100,000 worth of sports fields have been sold for development due to the financial desperation of local councils—a desperation which results from Government policies.

Mr. John Carlisle: While castigating the Government on the basis of their lack of direct intervention in the matter of playing fields—I have some sympathy with that argument—will the hon. Gentleman also castigate local authorities of both political colours, including Labour, that are not helping to save the playing fields? Those authorities' policies are not conducive to the promotion of sport. Such local authorities hide behind the funding arguments rather than considering the needs of the local community. Labour councils are as guilty of that as Conservative.

Mr. Pendry: It is rich for the hon. Gentleman to make such a comment. I do not know of one local authority, Labour or Conservative, that is taking such action willingly. They are forced to do so due to Government policies, and I discount the hon. Gentleman's argument. What sort of sporting future do Government policies guarantee thousands of schoolchildren who turn up for term without those priceless assets?

The Government made a commitment to undertake a survey of facilities for teaching swimming in schools. The Minister said that it was a Government aim. Is it possible to achieve that aim before we receive the results of the survey that I asked the Minister's predecessor to undertake 19 months ago? We are still awaiting the published results of the survey. I am sure that the Minister must now have some idea of whether he can honour his earlier commitment to match Labour's pledge to teach children to swim 25 m by the age of 11. We cannot allow the situation to continue and I look forward to hearing from the Minister about when the results will be published and the commitment met.

The Minister is in a predicament because he has to clear up the messes caused by his predecessors. We cannot blame him for those messes at this early stage in his sporting ministerial career, but I hope that he will address those problems when he replies to the debate.

Foremost among those problems is the shambles surrounding the wholesale destruction of the arrangements for community use of school sports facilities. As the Minister knows, the arrangements were destroyed by Government legislation. Despite the best efforts of myself, my colleagues and even some Conservative Members in the previous Session, the legislation still stands in need of urgent amendment.

That urgency was highlighted in the recent case involving the Great Barr school in Birmingham. As the Minister knows, more than £1 million was invested in the school sports hall by Birmingham city council for community use before the school decided to opt out. As a result of that decision, those vital sporting resources are to be denied the local community. That denial cannot be allowed to continue. I urge the Minister to do all that he can to halt that scandal.

I offer my co-operation in overcoming the farce if the Minister will sit down with me after the debate and arrange discussions between us so that we can draw up the necessary legislation to save the facilities and thousands like them. If he is not prepared to do that, at the very least he can say today that he is prepared to arrange for the appropriate Minister to receive a deputation from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves and an all-party delegation from the city of Birmingham to discuss the issue. I hope that the Minister will show a willingness to do that at the very least.

In case the Minister is tempted to make a vain effort to extol the supposed virtues of opting out, may I warn schools that if they opt out they will be unable to look to the Government for help to provide sports facilities. I have a copy of a letter dated 28 August this year sent from the Department for Education to the chairmen of the governors of all grant-maintained schools. It tells them frankly to forget any idea of the Government's giving them help to develop sport in their schools. It states:

> "schools . . . may feel disadvantaged by not being able to propose projects which they need.
>
> But . . . schools should not incur expenditure in preparing bids which have no chance of success.
>
> Projects in the following areas should not be submitted: swimming pools, sports halls, hard play areas, drama/performing arts facilities".

That is the reality for sport for children in opt-out schools. The Government have betrayed them.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: It is a bit rich for the hon. Gentleman to lecture us on that subject when part of the problem for grant-maintained schools, particularly those in Labour-controlled local education authorities, is that whereas previously they were able to co-operate with local education authorities and use some of their facilities such as swimming pools, now, on purely vindictive and ideological grounds, they are unable to do so. Baverstock school in Birmingham has been deprived of the use of sports pitches, swimming pools and even libraries due to the vindictiveness of Birmingham local education authority.

Mr. Pendry: It is not because the authorities are vindictive, but because they have been deprived of hard cash.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Pendry: No, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would like to expand his argument and I should like to intervene. He is talking nonsense, and I think that he knows it.

Mr. John Carlisle: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Pendry: No, I shall not as other hon. Members wish to speak.

On top of the problems that I have already mentioned, local authorities will face difficult times in the months ahead in sectors of sport and recreation. The leisure departments of council after council have contacted my office to complain about the current capping of the council's budget. As a result, councils that are striving to provide sports facilities are finding their development programmes hampered and cut back through no fault of their own—that answers the argument proposed by the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs). Many schools that would normally provide swimming and other sporting activities have found that, without free bus services and the like, they can no longer continue to do so. That is just one example among many, and I hope that, now that the Minister has his feet under the table, he will address the other areas of neglect.

I am proud to have been the Minister who introduced mandatory rate relief, at 65 per cent., for sports clubs in Northern Ireland. That policy has done much to benefit and promote grassroots sport in the Province, and I am positive that it would have a similar effect in this country if the Government would grasp it.

Is the Minister aware that, according to figures that I have managed to extract from the Government by way of parliamentary questions, more than 1,000 voluntary sports clubs in England and Wales were denied rate relief last year? Moreover, the situation is worsening, as my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) said. Government rating policy is hitting the very grassroots of sport and thousands of volunteers. The Minister has a duty to stand up for those people and give them a better deal.

Mr. Key: On charitable rate relief, if sports clubs decide to go for charitable status, they are subject to 100 per cent. rate relief. If they decide not to, it is up to the local authority to offer them 75 per cent. rate relief, with only 25 per cent. falling on the local charge payer.

Mr. Pendry: I often wonder whether Ministers live in the real world. At a time when local authorities are trying to get their budgets together, it is just not on to expect them to give such relief. The Minister should not skirt round the fact that we need mandatory rate relief.

If we do not provide that support for sport for our children, local sportsmen and women throughout the country will not be able to shine as brightly as the stars at Barcelona, in whose success the Minister rejoiced. Those of us who were privileged to go to Barcelona and see our athletes perform well—Sally Gunnell, Linford Christie and all those mentioned by the Minister—also recognise the achievements of the host nation, however. Until their games, the Spanish had won only four gold medals in the history of the games. In Barcelona, they won a grand total of 13. That is what can be achieved when a country is fired up to show the world its commitment to sport.

I hope that that lesson was not lost on the Ministers parading there. Five Ministers in all, including the Prime Minister, went to Barcelona, and a good deal of flag waving went on—especially in respect of Simon Terry, one of the medal winners to whom the Minister referred. Simon Terry won two bronze medals for Britain in the archery contest—the first medals won in that event in 84 years. Ministers' cheers rang hollow when that young man returned home to discover that, because he was not physically able to sign on for income support, he was denied payment. To this day, despite my numerous attempts to get the Government to compensate him, all that I have received by way of ministerial replies is what I can only describe as a kick in the teeth for an Olympic star. The then Minister for National Heritage, the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) wrote to the Secretary of State for Social Security at my request, but, when I met Simon a couple of days ago, he told me that, to date he had not had a penny.

I hope that the Government's stated commitment to the Manchester Olympic bid will not turn out to be so hollow. Episodes such as that which I have described do not assist those in international sporting circles in believing in our commitment to the Olympic ideal. I believe that the Prime Minister is personally committed to the Manchester Olympic bid—even if he was also once committed to a stable exchange rate, zero inflation and higher interest rates and if 31 of our coal pits were safe a month ago. Government wobbling is something about which I worry, so, 11 days ago, I wrote to the Prime Minister requesting a firm undertaking that, whatever nasties he has planned for the November public expenditure round, the £55 million promised to Manchester for the bid will be honoured in full. So far, I have received only an acknowledgement, but I certainly hope that the reply will be positive, because it is vital not just for sport in Britain but for the hard-hit north-west of England that the hon. Gentleman honours the commitment. Mr. Scott and his hard-working team must not be let down by the Government.

Before leaving the subject of the Olympic games, let me join the Minister in congratulating all those athletes who took part in the paralympic games, who won 40 gold medals out of a possible 128 and gained us third place overall among the nations competing. If we are to maintain those standards of sporting excellence, however, we must be prepared to give more support to the voluntary work of the British Paralympic Association and to all the coaches, administrators and managers who gave up their time to make such a valuable contribution. As a trustee of that association, I have a special reason for asking that.

In wider terms, the British Olympic movement does not do well under this Government. In particular, the British Olympic Association needs the kind of financial assistance given by other countries to their Olympic bodies. The BOA receives nothing, and desperately needs help to alleviate its tax burden. Surely, the Minister must be sympathetic to that.

The Minister has referred to those in sport who betray the Olympic ideal—those who cheat by taking drugs to enhance their performance. The drug problem in sport is a serious one and we ignore it at our, and at sport's, peril. I hope that the Minister will ensure that we have time to debate that growing problem in the not-too-distant future.

Philip Noel-Baker, who graced the House with his presence for 30 years, was one of our greatest Olympians. I was pleased to be present this week at the unveiling by Sir Arthur Gold of a plaque to commemorate his life. I

[Mr. Pendry]

endorse everything that the Minister said about Sir Arthur. Philip was a great man of peace and a great Olympian who, as my Member of Parliament for Derby, South certainly inspired me to take a more active part in sport politics. The unveiling of the plaque, arranged by English Heritage, was not, alas, attended by a Minister from the Department of National Heritage. I am sure that there was a good reason for that, but it was nevertheless unfortunate, and was noted.

I know that Philip, a passionate opponent of apartheid in South African sport, would be joining those of us who welcome a return of South African sportsmen and women on the world stage following the changes in that country in the direction of multiracial sport. More than any other action, the sports boycott has begun to bring about the desired changes in that country. There is still a long way to go, however, as was shown by the South African Rugby Football Union's reluctance to move as fast as those in other sports to develop their sport in the black townships and, indeed, to break with their use of the springbok emblem and other symbols of apartheid. I hope that those who do protest will do so peacefully but effectively and that they will be heard both in South Africa and in Britain.

I again thank the Minister for arranging the debate. I hope that he will listen with care to those who take part and will act on some of the positive and constructive points that are made. Those of us who care for sport in Britain must not abandon those who play and those who spectate in their millions. As Philip Noel-Baker once wrote:

"Sport is too precious to be expendable by politicians."

I can assure the Minister that the Opposition have no intention of allowing that to happen.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before I call the next hon. Member, let me draw the attention of the House to the fact that a number of hon. Members have expressed a willingness to participate in the debate. Perhaps those who are called early will bear that in mind.

11.7 am

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I shall certainly bear in mind your appropriate strictures regarding the length of speeches, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am afraid that it appears to be something of a tradition—not, regrettably, disproved by the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry)—for opening speeches in debates such as this to be rather long.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde. I thought at the start that he was making an excellent speech, and I am delighted to see him elevated to the Front Bench after so many years languishing on the Back Benches. Inevitably, the hon. Gentleman lapsed into his usual carping criticism as his speech progressed and as he got further into his brief. By the end, some of us were left with a sense of sadness that he had tainted his speech with an attack on my hon. Friend the Minister, who comprehensively argued the Government's case for sport with pride in the fact that, after 13 years of Conservative government, sport is very much in the forefront of politics.

We particularly welcome the appointment of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who is a keen sportsman, and, in particular, a cricket buff, which is of enormous advantage. We welcome above all my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's commitment to sport, which is clear both from his attendance of functions and from his close interest in what goes on and from his deep love of football and, especially, cricket. As a fellow member of the MCC, I hope that my right hon. Friend will note that he may shortly be asked to attend an extraordinary general meeting of that organisation called because of the sad—and, I think, wrong—omission from the touring team this winter of David Gower. Perhaps my right hon. Friend will use his new membership of the MCC to register a protest at the silly and foolish omission of one of England's greatest cricketers. But this debate, however wide, should not go into the basis for selecting the England cricket team.

I was privileged to be present for the annual report of the Sports Council this week and to hear its excellent chairman, Sir Peter Yarranton, and the director general, David Pickup, analyse what has been happening in the past few months and, more important, what will happen in the future.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde mentioned fitness. He gave some sorry figures, which one suspects might be getting worse. It occurred to me that perhaps the Department of Health should make more of a contribution to the funding of sport because physical fitness is so important to all of us. The Sports Council's figures are pretty horrifying, but it now seems to be taking on board its role in promoting the health and fitness of the nation.

At the Sports Council's meeting, the chairman rightly highlighted the basis of funding. Inevitably, this is a matter of some controversy, particularly at a time when the Government are trying to find savings. It was inevitable that the Opposition spokesman should plead for increased funds for sport, as does the Sports Council. I must tell them, however, that, at a time when Government expenditure is under severe restraint and every form of it is being considered closely—obviously, we do not know the result of the Chancellor's prognostications yet—sport will, regrettably, have to take its share of the burden.

What bothers me about the Sports Council's attitude is the continual cry for more money without addressing the real problem of how it is spent. Only recently, the Central Council for Physical Recreation expressed some reservations about the new format, which most of us welcome, and about the amount of money that is spent on forms of administration. We must carefully consider where expenditure is made, but what a welcome breath of fresh air it would be if a sports organisation said that it had saved money or had increased facilities with what money it had.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to pass a message to the Chancellor of the Exchequer that, if he feels it necessary slightly to reduce the amount that is being made available to sport, he will receive the support of Conservative Members, and the sports organisations concerned will have to trim their needs accordingly.

Much of the Sports Council's work, inevitably, is with local authorities. I acknowledge the close afffinity between the two and the reliance of the Sports Council on how local authorities spend taxpayer's money. No one underestimates the severe restraints on local authorities, for many and varied reasons, but there are additional means of attracting money into sport, such as through the private sector. Sadly, one of the savings that have already been made is the withdrawal of the Sports Match pound for pound basis, whereby businesses were invited to fund sporting activities and the Government put up £10 million.

Mr. Kay: Let me reassure my hon. Friend that there is no question of the Government's withdrawing the scheme. We simply said that it would have been irresponsible to go ahead with such an expensive scheme if we could not be sure that funds would be available in years two and three; the funds for year one were available. We said that we would delay the scheme until we could be sure that funds would be available. I hope to be able to make a further announcement, perhaps as soon as next week.

Mr. Carlisle: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's clarification of the position, because it was worrying many people. The thrust of my argument is that we are happy to expect trimmed Government expenditure, but schemes such as this, which offer the private sector incentives to participate, should be the last to be trimmed. The partnership between the private sector, the public sector, local authorities and the Government acting on behalf of the taxpayer has ensured that much-needed funds are attracted to sport.

The other source of cash that inevitably is contentious and has been the subject of some discussion among Conservative Members, but which the hon. Member Stalybridge and Hyde omitted to mention, is tobacco advertising and tobacco sponsorship of sport. I was pleased to learn only this week that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has rejected calls to extend the ban on tobacco advertising. This is not the place to go into the morals of tobacco money and sport, but the money that is allocated is well used. Some of the tobacco companies have been castigated for their activities when in fact they have put much-needed funds into areas where they are required.

The other part of the Sports Council's annual report was on the conduct of sport. Most hon. Members would say that the previous Minister's near-passion for fairness in sport and opposition to the use of drugs are to be supported.

It is pleasing that all hon. Members seem to agree on the future of the Sports Council and the sports commission. We look forward to more activity, and perhaps a closer account of how money is spent, and wish the new chairman, Sir Peter Yarranton, well.

The basis of a national lottery has been mentioned. I was delighted to hear from my hon. Friend the Minister —I hope that it was not a slip of the tongue—that we should hear within days about the Bill for a national lottery. The White Paper has received much attention and comment from various quarters. Inevitably, sport will support the provision of a sum, which admittedly will have to be shared with other organisations, of between £500 million and £1·3 billion—a very considerable sum of money. I hope that that will replace the taxpayers' contribution and will attract more money into sport rather than its having to rely on handouts.

One can understand the concern that has been expressed, particularly by the pools companies and others, about the effect of the national lottery on employment and on encouraging "soft" gambling. I suggest to the Minister that some compromise should be reached between the organisers of the national lottery and members of the Pools Promoters Association, perhaps by using them as agents. The pools system is part of our national heritage and is quite unique. It contributes considerable sums to sport through the Football Trust and the Sports and Arts Foundation. We must be careful to ensure that, if expertise is available, it is used. I hope that account is taken of that in the legislation.

The big question for sport is how that money will be allocated and how much of a slice of the cake it can expect. My hon. Friend the Minister and the Secretary of State will find themselves in a very difficult position. We are all aware of my hon. Friend's deep love of the arts, representing as he does the city of Salisbury, and his feelings will be torn about the basis of allocation.

The question that we are all asking—it may be answered in the next few days—is whether that allocation will be set out in black and white in the Bill, or will be left to be decided by the body that will run the national lottery. Much of what has been said so far today has proved that sport has a good case for having a large slice of that cake. The arts are important to us, but they have always received a favoured response from Governments of both political colours. If this money is available, sport must have more than its fair share.

Furthermore, that allocation should be set out in black and white in legislation, while perhaps allowing a certain flexibility as time goes on, so that sport knows where it is and can plan accordingly. If the sums come out in the way forecast, and if we can get the pools people with us, that will be of enormous benefit to sport and to sportsmen and sportswomen.

As has been said, one of the sports that have benefited enormously from the pools is football. I pay tribute to the time that the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde spent as chairman of the all-party football group. He was diligent and active and, although we crossed swords on one or two occasions, his chairmanship was a happy period and one which was good for football. Undoubtedly, the Taylor report will loom large above us for many years to come, given the stringent requirements—somewhat muted now by my hon. Friend the Minister—that it imposed on football clubs. Substantial sums will be required, so the football authorities must get their house in order.

The formation of the premier league has been somewhat of a disappointment. I represent in my constituency a club that, regrettably, has now fallen on hard times—it has fallen out of the premier league and now looks like falling out of the first division as well. I make a plea for the small clubs that are not benefiting from what must be described as the money-grubbing members of the premier league.

I am not at all surprised to see that attendance at premier league games has been disappointing. The level at which admission charges has been set makes it easy to understand why people have been staying away. Despite the slice of the television cake that the league has seized and the enormous amount of sponsorship money offered to it—so much that it turned down a considerable sum from other companies—the clubs in it have not acquitted themselves as we would expect.

I hope that, when things settle down and Sir John Quinton takes a closer interest in the running of the league, there will be benefits from it for all football, and not just for the clubs at the top. The House frowns on elitism in sport. We like it when it brings us national recognition and achievement, but if it is to the disadvantage of those at the

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grass roots and those who are in desperate need of assistance further down the line, something has gone seriously wrong. The imbalance between the Arsenals, the Liverpools and the Manchester Uniteds of this world and the Stalybridge and Hydes——

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): What about Blackburn?

Mr. Carlisle: Well, Blackburn is lucky enough to have a fairy godmother, which not many clubs have.

Clubs further down the line will suffer as a result of the premier league. The football authorities should look at rugby, in which we have had considerable success while it remains an amateur game. There has been success in financial terms, with the marvellous world cup, which raised an enormous amount of money.

The money filters down to junior clubs, which can take loans from the rugby union organisation and others at competitive rates. Furthermore, clubs are self-financing, because players pay match fees and expect to buy their own kit rather than having it provided. The spirit of rugby is self-help, and it would benefit football if it looked on the sport in that way.

One of the greatest sporting events that the country has seen for many years—the return of the springbok rugby side—will take place in the next couple of weeks. I take some pleasure in what the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde said about this event. It is a delight that our sporting relations with South Africa have resumed after the many years during which the politicans kept us out, rather than the sportsmen and sportswomen.

There is no doubt that the frustration and anger that were felt by people on both sides were rightly directed at the politicians, who unashamedly used sport for their own ends. That is why, on a busy day, what gave me the greatest pleasure was to see from today's Order Paper that the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) has withdrawn his motion calling for demonstrations against the tour and objecting to the visit of the Springbok rugby team.

Mr. Bryan Davies (Oldham, Central and Royton): Before the hon. Gentleman continues to propagate the myth that it was politicians interfering with sport, will he recall that the origin of the ban on sporting links with South Africa was the incident when the South Africans set out to pick the English cricket test team by trying to bar a coloured player?

Mr. Carlisle: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, and I have some sympathy with the view of the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde, that it was the sports boycott which moved South Africa down the anti-apartheid line—a move which most Conservative Members, and certainly I, have followed. The tragedy was that the sports organisations in South Africa made changes, but they were not recognised. Labour Members may remember the famous five Howell requirements that South Africa had to meet if sporting links were to be resumed. In fairness to Lord Howell, I think that he set them out as a sportsman rather than a politician. They were all achieved, but that was not recognised because, by that time, the politicians had taken over.

I must say, so as to refute the criticisms of the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde and others about the South African rugby football union, that they fail to recognise that, for many years, pre-President de Klerk and during the worst years of apartheid in South Africa, it was promoting, through its development programme, clinics in townships. I was privileged to attend several of them. The board was putting an enormous amount of work into fostering the talent of youngsters. Of course, there will always be those within that organisation who are unhappy with changed circumstances, but the broad thrust of South African sport is now based on equal opportunities for all, and that is to be welcomed.

What is sad about the criticisms of the past few days is that the Rugby Football Union has done all it can to accede to the requests by the African National Congress and others—for example, not playing the national anthem and not flying the national flag. Despite that, a hard core will be demonstrating against the springboks' visit. That is to be regretted, but I am pleased that reason seems to have prevailed and that the games will go ahead and will be played on the fairest and most equitable of plains.

I agree with both Front-Bench speakers that it is good to have a debate on sport in Government time on the Floor of the House. I wish my hon. Friend the Minister the best of fortune in his new task. He will have some difficulties, and he is a brave man to take it on alone. If I were looking for a little more Government expenditure, it would be to promote one among our ranks to assist him in what will be a difficult job. We have great confidence that the Government are addressing the many and varied problems that face us, and that that will be to the benefit of sportsmen and sportswomen.

11.28 am

Mr. Bryan Davies (Oldham, Central and Royton): I congratulate the Government—an experience which I will not repeat too often—on the fact that they have created a Department that gives sport a place at the Cabinet table. All who are in the Chamber recognise the importance of that initiative—an initiative which, had we been in the position of forming a Government, we would also have taken. It gives encouragement to us all. It gives an opportunity for the country to get a real grip on sports representation. We have been bedevilled by the multiplicity of sporting associations. When dealing with international bodies, that has often led to great difficulties.

We should recognise the importance of sport in a society that will increase its leisure opportunities. Regrettably, too much of that leisure for many is enforced at present by the Government's policies of encouraging and developing high unemployment. However, clearly leisure plays an increasingly important part in people's lives as the working week is reduced.

I represent a constituency whose first Member of Parliament was John Fielden. He battled in the 1840s for the reduction of working hours to 10 hours a day for a six-day week. One recognises the difference from our society today. Increasingly, people will seek to exploit their leisure opportunities more fully.

Sport has a crucial part to play in that respect and it is important that we recognise the role that sport plays in the development of the individual personality and in the development of self-confidence. In team sports, there is the development of relationships with other people towards a common endeavour. Unity of purpose and a sense of teamwork are some of the most valued aspects of any social relationships.

I know that I sound like Thomas Arnold and the 19th century public school image of sport. However, the value is more lasting than that. Translating it into the late 20th century is straightforward enough. Sport offers an essential democracy and equality of opportunity in terms of sporting achievement, if we get the preconditions right.

It is clear from our present sporting prowess that sport offers a significant opportunity for children from deprived backgrounds, from working-class backgrounds and from ethnic minority backgrounds to make their mark dramatically in our society. I cannot think of a single premier league football team that does not have a black player starring in it. Several rely greatly on the contribution of youngsters from such backgrounds. We have already heard tributes to the achievements of women in athletics in the Olympic games and elsewhere. Many have come from ethnic minorities.

I will deal next with the relationship between education and sport. I hope that the Minister will bear it in mind that I shall address my remarks to him because I recognise that there is an inevitable overlap between his Department and the Department for Education. It is important that we take the opportunity to sharpen the bargaining position of the Minister and his Department in relation to education.

Opposition Members emphasise our great anxieties about some aspects of the decline in sporting opportunities. This morning, we have had too rosy a picture and it has been said that all is well in sport. Many of us contend that there is much that leaves great cause for anxiety. We should tackle the problem at grass roots in terms of educational and sporting opportunity among the young.

My more general point is that there is no cause for complacency in society about the level of participation in sport. It may be high, but it is still far too low. Some 50 per cent. of adults engage in no sporting recreational activity. As the Minister freely confessed, some aspects of the nation's health would benefit greatly from increased participation in sport.

Dr. Spink: The hon. Gentleman talked about education and sport. Does he welcome the fact that the national curriculum now makes physical training a compulsory subject from the ages of five to 16? Is he not ashamed of the fact that his party was against the national curriculum only a couple of years ago?

Mr. Davies: The hon. Gentleman has attempted to pre-empt what I was going to say about aspects of the national curriculum, so I will cover his points in a moment. I welcome the fact that physical education is a compulsory part of the national curriculum for children from the ages of five to 16.

There is no cause for complacency in terms of the nation's achievements in sport. I have referred to the question of the nation's health. The nation's achievements in sport leave a great deal to be desired. It will not do for our country to pretend that there is a trickle-down effect in national sporting associations which guarantees the development of talent and achievement for the future.

The most obvious example is the fact that this country has staged for more than 100 years the most prestigious tennis tournament in the world. Wimbledon produces vast revenues, yet we are no nearer today than we were 30 years ago to any achievement of tennis excellence. The facilities available here are restricted overwhelmingly to private clubs. Public provision is still at a pathetically low level. In France, even the most modest village has several tennis courts of a high standard. We should recognise that the French drive 20 years ago to develop interest in tennis leaves our efforts pale by comparison.

There are no major team games in which we can be satisfied with our overall performance. There are widespread anxieties about the technical level of excellence of the England football team which is an important flag-bearer for England. There are similar anxieties about the Scottish side. It is not the case that teams representing Britain sweep all before them—far from it. When did we last win the soccer world cup? It was 26 years ago in 1966. We just struggled into the last four in more recent times. Our test cricket performances have fallen considerably below standard. Although England has reigned supreme for a short time in the rugby home championship, the moment we clash with teams from the southern hemisphere we are obliged to give way.

We should recognise that there are anxieties about our major team games. The Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) mentioned those who were successful in the Olympic games—and I congratulate them—but we cannot pretend that the nation regards the overall achievements of the British Olympic team as being outstanding. That has been the case for a number of recent Olympic games.

We need to think seriously about the roots of achievement and the Government must answer our case. There is a pronounced decline in school sport. There is provision within the national curriculum for physical education, but certain aspects of team games in sport have suffered enormously in recent years. They have suffered from the forced sell-off, because of constraints on expenditure and resources, of school playing fields which has greatly reduced the facilities of many of our local authority schools. Such a reduction in facilities would never be countenanced in the more elite parts of the private education sector. I have not heard of sales of the playing fields of Eton, for instance.

The Government also stand charged with having done a great deal of damage to sport in schools during the long wrangles of the 1980s over teachers' contracts and pay. That was a typical example of the Government's, knowing the price of everything and the value of nothing. They ended up with a narrow definition of teachers' responsibilities, thereby throwing away vast amounts of good will and voluntary effort which had sustained school sport for many years. The reduction in school sports can be directly attributed to the reduction in that contribution.

We cannot expect private institutions or clubs to take up the slack. They often find themselves having to enforce subscriptions which in turn deter less well-off youngsters. So what is lost at school is not made up for by private clubs.

I apologise if the Minister thinks that I am talking too much about education, but I must add that it is time that the nation thought seriously about the role of sport in higher education. I know that it has always been part of our elitist tradition—we did not mind Oxford and Cambridge showing a little indulgence from time to time when it came to entry qualifications so that their rugger sides and rowing crews would be of the requisite standard. But pressure from the meritocratic growth of society has

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lowered performance standards in these areas. Oxbridge no longer competes adequately with rugby clubs or county cricket sides. In any case, it was always a hopelessly restrictive and elitist model, based on a misconception of higher education.

What we ought to be thinking about is whether sporting achievement and performance can be truly realised in higher education. Why cannot there be many more courses that include sporting excellence and an understanding of sport? We of course should not go overboard like the American college system which includes quasi-professional sides playing football, but we certainly should ensure that youngsters with great potential for achieving sporting excellence can enter universities and higher education institutions to pursue courses that include opportunities for sport, while sustaining an educational component in their work. The tragedy for so many of our youngsters is that they face a brutal choice between pursuing sporting excellence, and following an academic career which will end their chance of developing sporting skills. We owe it to talented youngsters and to ourselves to nurture sporting excellence by ensuring that higher education institutions take responsibility for it.

My final response, therefore, to the hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) is that it is not enough to provide physical education for children between the ages of five and 16. Beyond that age, schools and other academic institutions should develop sporting excellence. The old 19th century myth persists: there are those who achieve through the intellect and there are those who achieve through physical prowess—as if the two did not complement each other. The person who is to be commended is the one who can demonstrate a capacity in both areas.

I see our sporting culture being weakened because of changes in television. I address these remarks directly to the Minister. There are great dangers in leaving televised sport to the market. Already this year, BSkyB and the BBC in collaboration have taken off our television screens —apart from "Match of the Day" highlights—most of our football matches. The televising of major premier league games has thus been restricted to a narrower audience. We should not accept the idea that crucial parts of the nation's sporting culture should be restricted to broadcasting on BSkyB which, by definition, will transmit only to a minority for the foreseeable future.

I know that the Minister will say that crucial events have been guaranteed for more universal appreciation, but I am worried about the list of those events. I should like the Government to show that they share my anxieties in the wake of recent developments in the broadcasting of football.

First, the list of sporting events protected from pay television is too short. We need to develop a wider appreciation of a range of sports. Appreciation of the open golf championships is growing apace, but they can be sold off to restrictive television. The sport is likely to go for the highest bidder, even though the Minister has said that golf is one of the fastest growing participatory sports.

I am even more worried about the fact that the cricket world cup last winter was shown only on BSkyB. Even the Prime Minister winced at that. Cricket lovers across the nation were shocked that neither the BBC nor independent television had access to those broadcasts.

Among the sporting world and the public at large who enjoy watching televised sport there is a widespread misconception: the restrictions control not satellite broadcasting but pay television only. It is, however, open to BSkyB, with the vast resources of the multinational media network that Rupert Murdoch controls, to operate a massive loss-leading exercise of grabbing major sporting events for restricted television. When the agreements covering some of these events run out for the BBC and ITV, and BSkyB successfully outbids our national television networks to show the cup final, the world cup final or the test matches, I warn the Minister that the nation will rise up in arms against such a misconceived development in television. The Government's ideological preconceptions are related to the law of the market. However, I warn them that they must not allow the law of market television to restrict access to our major sporting events.

I welcome the development of the national lottery in terms of the increased resources that will be made available. However, I share the anxieties that have been expressed about the impact on the football pools and the resources made available from the pools to the Football Trust and to the Foundation for Sport and the Arts. Unless there is some concession to the football pools in terms of a continuation of the betting duty exemption, and unless the pools can promote their services on the same basis as the national lottery, resources for football and the enormous costs of the implementation of the Taylor report will run into difficulties.

We are all united in our determination to secure the Olympic games for Manchester. I make no bones about the fact that I have an immediate constituency interest because Oldham will benefit as a listed site when the bid is successful. In that drive to success, I assure the Minister that the north-west will speak with one voice with the rest of the nation to ensure that the Olympic games come to Manchester. I did not today expect to hear praise from the Government for the quality of Manchester's weather. If the Government can take such a favourable view of the weather in the north-west, they can surely guarantee full support for the Olympic games bid.

11.51 am

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): It is a great privilege for me to take part in this debate, in which I want to refer to education and health. I congratulate the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry). I was delighted to hear that he was a boxer. Hon. Members can see that I was a boxer. Judging from the shape of the nose of the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde, clearly he was a better boxer than I was.

The link between education and sport is fundamental to a successful policy for sport, to the success of individuals in sport and to the success of our nation in all sporting activities. Children who are encouraged to take part in sport early in their lives generally tend to take part in sport later on in their lives, and that can only be a good thing. I therefore welcome the fact that the Department of National Heritage is working closely with the Department for Education in promoting sport in schools of all kinds.

As a member of the Education Select Committee, I am delighted that the national curriculum includes physical education, which will be compulsory for every schoolgirl and schoolboy from four to 16. That is as it should be, because PE develops a healthy body and a healthy mind. It also promotes a healthy awareness and understanding of the place of competition in sport and in life. Many sports help to develop a keen understanding of teamwork.

My constituency is on the Thames, and it includes Canvey island. I therefore welcome the fact that the Government have recommended that all pupils should be taught to swim by the age of 11. That will be a formal requirement from the autumn of 1994. My only criticism is to ask why that was not done years ago. The ability to swim will save the lives of children every week.

I also pay tribute to the Sports Council, which will spend £2·2 million in 1992-93 on developing sport for young people. That is a great initiative. However, I have another slight criticism. That level of spending is a little low in comparison with the massive sum spent on tobacco advertising. I welcome the work of the Sports Council and I congratulate it. I want to find ways to enable the council to do much more.

Hon. Members will forgive me if I refer a little to my constituency and mention the excellent sporting achievements of many disabled people in Castle Point. I have been deeply impressed by their efforts and achievements in sport. I congratulate the often unsung heroes of the Castle Point sports club for the disabled. What I enjoy most is the happiness, joy and fulfilment that sporting activity can bring to people of all levels of ability.

I also pay tribute to the champion coaching scheme, which promotes sporting opportunities after school hours. The scheme has enabled about 6,000 children and youths to enjoy the highest quality coaching. Its success will be consolidated by the allocation of an extra £1·3 million over the next two years. That is being made available by the excellent Foundation for Sport and the Arts to which the Minister referred.

Although recent developments in sport and education have been generally encouraging, there are some areas of concern, one of which was alluded to by the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies). He referred to extra-curricular sport, but his analysis was wrong. I welcome the great efforts of many teachers who, in after-school hours and on a purely voluntary basis, run extra-curricular sporting activities. However, I call for a return to the regimes that endured before the teachers' dispute in the mid-1980s, when even greater extra-curricular efforts were made by the teaching profession.

The present shortfall is the result of the actions of the teaching unions. It has nothing to do with the Government. However, let me unreservedly congratulate teachers on their dedication, caring attitude and professionalism which they show to our children. They often work well beyond the call of duty. Many teachers work longer hours than some hon. Members.

Sadly, the public perception is as misguided about the work load of teachers as it is about the work load of Members of Parliament. Will the Minister encourage the use of school facilities, including the facilities of grant-maintained schools, for the benefit of the whole community? I will press the Minister to take note of that point when the Education Bill is presented to the House.

I want now to refer to sport and health and the position of tobacco advertising and sponsorship—which, in reality, are the same thing. I take issue with my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle). The Department of Health produced a brief in June on the European Community directive on tobacco advertising, which concluded that if the directive were implemented, it would result in the prohibition of sponsorship of sport of all kinds. That would be no bad thing—indeed, it should have been done years ago. No cigarette advertisements have been allowed on television in this country since 1965, yet Sir Donald Maitland, chairman of the Health Education Authority, tells us that 64 per cent. of children between the ages of nine and 14 honestly believe that they see tobacco advertising on television. How can that be? Sir Donald Maitland said:

> "What they are seeing are sporting events sponsored by tobacco companies: cricket, snooker, tennis, rugby, motor racing, etc.
>
> There is currently an average of one hour's television coverage every day of sporting activity associated with the major tobacco brands. All of this coverage is on BBC Television."

Hon. Members will know that the ITV companies decided formally not to televise tobacco-sponsored sporting events. It is a totally accepted fact that tobacco advertising increases consumption.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Hon. Members will have read the Smee report this week. It states that, whereas people may be aware through sport that Marlboro, for instance, might be associated with motor racing, that will not encourage people to smoke. More to the contrary is the fact that, with advertising for tobacco products at sporting events, we see warnings that smoking kills. That is far more persuasive than any other advertisement.

Dr. Spink: I am indebted to my hon. Friend for that intervention, but he is a little naive. If he believes that all that money is spent by those companies in a philanthropic way rather than in order to promote the consumption of their products, he is not the man I think he is.

We must act now to remove the farcical link between sport, which is good and healthy, and cigarettes, which are unhealthy and filthy. If hon. Members would like to take issue with me on that matter, I suggest that they nip down to their local hospital, pop into the lung and heart wards, and talk to the families of the people on the machines there.

Of course, the Government's attitude is that voluntary agreements are the best way to control tobacco advertising and that the EC directive need not be ratified in order to complete the single internal market. I do not agree with that at all. It is irrational and irresponsible. I urge action to remove cigarette advertising in sport, including sport sponsorship.

I realise that there are massive vested interests, and that my move will be strongly resisted. I realise also that the Exchequer receives massive sums from cigarette taxation. However, the money saved from reduced absenteeism and the consequential increase in production across the nation, and the money saved from reduced health care costs would more than compensate the Exchequer for that loss. That is to say nothing of the human costs that tobacco inflicts on smokers, their families and their friends.

The link between smoking and sport is deeply paradoxical. Sport offers the wonderful gift of health. Smoking takes that gift away. I now call on Her Majesty's Government to remove the link between sport and smoking.

[Dr. Spink]

I recognise also the excellent work of Mr. and Mrs. Blissett and others from Canvey island, who are doing so much to help health and sport on Canvey island in my constituency. They are doing so by resisting the proposed foreign coal transhipment terminal for Canvey island, a matter on which I shall soon present a petition to the House. That terminal would do to people's lungs what smoking does: coal dust would put their lungs at risk and inhibit their sporting opportunities.

I question the moribund Labour policy on sport, which is to meddle and put shackles on all forms of sport. Labour Members would throttle sport by the dead hand of bureaucratic control—that is, if it is possible to throttle something with a dead hand. Of all the daft Labour policies, few are dafter than that of discouraging competition in sport in schools. That did for sport in some schools what Labour education authorities did for reading standards and religious education in those schools.

I want to end on a positive and optimistic note. I welcome the Government's sporting policy which, in contrast to Labour's, is to promote wider participation and higher standards in sport across all sports, across the whole nation, across the whole of people's ability ranges and across all age groups. That is to be welcomed. I want to celebrate the excellence at all levels which is achieved by all those involved in sport—none more so than the players of Leeds United.

12.5 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I begin by apologising to the House if I leave soon after the conclusion of my speech. I have a long-standing engagement in Inverness later today and, if the weather forecast is to be believed, I may have to resort to skiing to reach it. I have advised the Minister and the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry), and they have been characteristically understanding of my position.

As the spokesman for my party, I welcome the Minister and the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde. Their exchanges this morning were rather quieter than those that we have become used to in sports debates in recent years, but I doubt whether they will be anything other than constructive.

Mr. Pendry: I do not want to lull the hon. and learned Gentleman into a false stance, because I have said that the Minister is very much on trial. He is in his honeymoon period, so he deserves a little quiet at this stage in his parliamentary career as the Minister with responsibility for sport.

Mr. Campbell: The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde brings to his new responsibility a great depth of knowledge of sport, but I do not think that he brings the unshakable conviction in his own infallibility which his predecessor exhibited from time to time.

I hope that the formation of the new Department will cause us to have more regular debates on sport. Today's debate has already eloquently demonstrated that, in future, we may need to be rather more specific about the topics that we discuss. If legislation is introduced to promote a national lottery, in respect of which my agnosticism remains unshaken, clearly that will be a focused debate.

For example, the sport and industry of horse racing is in crisis. It must surely be necessary at some very early stage for the House to have the opportunity to discuss the state of horse racing and to take account of the implications for the economy if it were to go further into decline.

I hope also that the Minister will be rather more prominent than his predecessor, who has been transferred to the Northern Ireland Office. I began to believe that, with the exception of test matches, the Minister's predecessor had taken an advanced course in potholing, so discreet was he in his appearances as Minister with responsibility for sport.

As the Minister said, this debate is timely after yet another Olympic games. I should like to say a word or two about the structure of sport, about international events and then a little more about drugs, which is a topic in which I have very considerable interest. Before I do so, I join hon. Members who have paid tribute to the quite extraordinary contribution of Sir Arthur Gold to sport in Britain over, I suspect, about 50 years.

I first met him when I was an international athlete in the United Kingdom athletics team and he was the team manager. I have known him as a distinguished sports administrator since then. His contribution extends to not only domestic but international sport. His reward with the accolade of knighthood brought a great deal of pleasure to his many friends and acquaintances. Sport in Britain will certainly be the poorer for his decision to retire from the important position he held.

It is perhaps a demonstration of how small and intimate is the sporting community in the United Kingdom, that Mr. Craig Reedie—who will replace Sir Arthur Gold—and I entered Glasgow university together in 1959. We read arts and then law together. Indeed, he still gives me certain financial advice. If his financial advice to the British Olympic Association was as good as his advice to me, the BOA was in good hands.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) has left, because I wanted to take up with him the South African rugby tour. He displayed what I might describe not unfairly as a certain degree of insensitivity when he referred to the tour as the springbok tour. Precisely that description caused so much offence to people in the African National Congress. It conceives, not least as a result of the playing of national anthems, and the appearance that no visible change has taken place since the constitutional discussions commenced in South Africa, that the rugby authorities and the rugby community in South Africa are unwilling to recognise that substantial constitutional change is afoot.

The House should recognise the maturity and sound common sense of the ANC. It created the circumstances in which the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) was compelled to withdraw his early-day motion. The ANC has behaved with great responsibility in the matter. All it had to do was to endorse what was being said. We might well have seen scenes such as those that some of us remember from the previous South African rugby tour. I stand fairly and squarely behind the Gleneagles agreement, and have always done so. Whatever one feels about the argument, those scenes were an unfortunate feature of an international sporting event in this country.

I think that I heard the hon. Member for Luton, North —I shall examine the *Official Report*, with great care— acknowledge that the sport boycott had been effective in provoking constitutional change in South Africa.

Mr. Pendry: That is right.

Mr. Campbell: The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde corroborates what I say. If we are right, Opposition Members appear to have made a convert. Conversion is always welcome, however late it comes. However, in the case of the hon. Member for Luton, North, it occasions some surprise among those of us who have heard him speak on the topic in debates of this nature over the years.

We have long argued—I think that I speak for other Opposition parties in that—that sport needs to be an accepted priority for the Government. Clearly, we must enthusiastically welcome the creation of the new Department, and I should like to set it a task. I suggest that the Minister's first task should be a comprehensive audit of sports facilities in conjunction with local authorities throughout Britain, so that we can discover what facilities —whether private or public—exist and satisfy ourselves that they are being used to maximum advantage.

Reference has already been made to school facilities. In 1965, I attended my first meeting of the United Kingdom Sports Council. I was appointed by Denis Howell, as he then was. I remember an extended debate about dual community use of existing school facilities. We spent a long time discussing the deeply significant principle of who would pay the janitor if the facilities were made available to the public. The tragedy is, I suspect, that people still argue about who will pay the janitor. Often, that argument is the last obstruction to proper use of school facilities. After all, such facilities are paid for with public funds and are designed for public use.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that it is criminal that, during the long summer breaks, tennis courts and sports facilities in schools, colleges and universities are locked up and young people —indeed, people of all ages—are denied access to them? It is hardly surprising that we do so badly in sporting championships such as Wimbledon when people are denied access to such facilities.

Mr. Campbell: The hon. Gentleman makes a penetrating point. How many times do we drive or walk past colleges, universities or other institutions of higher education and see remarkable facilities unused, when, out in the street, children try to play with a ball while they dodge the passing cars? The hon. Gentleman makes a profound point, and I hope that the Minister will do his best to ensure that action is taken on a view strongly held on both sides of the House.

The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) raised an issue on behalf of the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation. He makes a strong point, not least because the communities served by the facilities are often geographically remote. The villages were built close to the coal. Sometimes, the facilities are the only recreational facilities in the community. If one started from scratch, it might be difficult, for many different financial reasons, to build equivalent facilities in those locations—indeed, one probably would not embark on building such facilities in those communities now.

If the facilities already exist, surely everthing should be done to preserve them. If local authorities cannot purchase them, is it not possible to consider some form of leasing or some imaginative use of public resources to ensure that the facilities continue to be available to the communities they serve?

I unequivocally welcome the creation of the United Kingdom sports commission. I hope that the Minister will not think me mischievous if I say that it makes more than a passing nod to federalism, a concept which does not always find favour among Conservative Members. Its success will depend on the extent to which its policies accurately reflect the needs of the United Kingdom as a whole.

I further argue that we should establish a United Kingdom institute of sport to complement the commission and create a coherent structure for the development of coaching, sports science and sports medicine. It could bring together the work of the Institute of Sports Medicine, the British Olympic Association, the National Coaching Foundation, the British Institute of Sport Coaches and the British Association of Sport Scientists.

As the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde said, we should never forget the importance of sport in the economy. It accounts for almost 400,000 jobs in the United Kingdom. It generates a £9 billion turnover annually. It also generates healthy revenue for the Government. Before I move on from a brief consideration of the financial significance of sport, I remind the Minister yet again that the case for charitable status for amateur sport remains wholly convincing. Those of us who believe that the Government should proceed in that way will continue to press the Minister and Treasury Ministers to bring about that modest relaxation. It would have an extraordinary galvanising effect on amateur sport throughout Britain.

I turn to international events. The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde gave an example of the young man who won bronze medals in the archery competition but was denied public funds. That is monstrous. I do not know whether the Minister was embarrassed, but I felt embarrassed on behalf of the United Kingdom and the House of Commons. We are all quick to praise sportsmen, and by association to derive some of the glory which attaches to their achievements. The young man is a record breaker not only because he has won medals which Britain has not won for 84 years but because he is aged only 17 and therefore something of a prodigy. It is monstrous that he was denied access to public funds for the period during which he represented his country. I hope that the Minister will do something about it.

Mr. Key: Whatever the rights and wrongs of the issue, one can be legalistic and say that, by statute, one is bound to take a certain course of action, and such actions were duly taken. No errors or exceptions were made in that case. Nevertheless, I share the hon. and learned Gentleman's sense of embarassment about it. He will be interested to know that I am in correspondence with my colleague at the Department of Social Security, and I shall meet him soon to discuss ways in which such issues may be handled more sensitively.

Mr. Campbell: I am grateful to the Minister for that intervention. If that is to be his attitude when such issues

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arise, he will receive a warm welcome and considerable support from Opposition Members interested in such matters.

On the question of financial support for individuals, it is assumed that all international sportsmen are at least able to support themselves by practising their sports, if they are not rich. The truth is that the position varies from sport to sport, and there are great variations within some sports at international level. How can a man or woman give of his or her best at international level, if they are worried about their financial circumstances? How can a man or woman hope to compete at his or her best at international level, unless they can afford the time or the commitment which international sport now requires? There is an interesting illustration. A member of the rowing eight needs the same commitment as someone who competes in an individual event, such as the Olympic 100 metres. I know that the accessibility of financial support is very different for those two people, who give the same time, effort and commitment.

I do not suggest that there should be public financial support for sportsmen, but we must try to create an environment in which such support can be made available for promising sportsmen, who will be the medallists of the future, as well as for the best sportsmen.

On support for international events in the United Kingdom, the last time that we debated sport, the then Minister treated as risible my suggestion that the Government should give massive financial support to Manchester. If the Under-Secretary looks at the *Official Report*, he will be able to read the response. Yet, within weeks, and no doubt partly due to the influence of an imminent general election, the Prime Minister announced support to the tune of £55 million. I welcome that support —one could not do otherwise—not least because I know Mr. Bob Scott. The bid that he has mounted, and the care and skill which he has demonstrated in carrying it through, has been remarkable, and he deserves the congratulations of the House. However, we need unequivocal support from the Government.

I witnessed the unhappy events of the last Commonwealth games in Edinburgh at close quarters, and I was also aware of the difficulties caused as a result of Sheffield hosting the world student games. There is no doubt that our international reputation was not assisted by either of those events, and we have much resistance to overcome.

I draw the Under-Secretary's attention to the fact that one merely has to consider the resources being put into the Atlanta bid to realise what we are up against. We have no Coca-Cola company to stand four square behind the bid and to offer to meet every deficit however it may arise. Perforce, we shall have to look to the Government to lead support for the Manchester bid, which is clearly worthy of support, not merely for the geographical area in which it is located, but for the United Kingdom, as hon. Members have said.

Drug abuse in sport concerns me greatly. As some hon. Members may be aware, I have several times tried to persuade the Government to legislate to make anabolic steriods controlled drugs, under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, and to make it a criminal offence to possess them or to have the intent to supply them. I have succeeded in persuading Ministers to some extent, because Home Office Ministers have made at least two public announcements that such legislation was to be promoted. Along with Colin Moynihan, I received a favourable reference in a leader in *The Times* about the success of the campaign in which we had both been involved.

I am sad to say that there has been no legislation. There has been a promise to introduce legislation to protect those under 18, but that would be insufficient. I believe—I say this advisedly—that the abuse of anabolic steroids is widespread in United Kingdom sport, both in organised sport and in informal recreation based on gymasiums.

The Sports Council and governing bodies, with Government assistance and encouragement, have a programme of random testing, within and outside competitions, which I welcome. I also welcome the idea that the education of young sportsmen and women is an essential component. However, I understand that sportsmen and women are willing to take the risk which the use, or abuse, of anabolic steroids necessarily involves.

Mr. Key: That is certainly a live issue, and the Home Secretary has lead responsibility for the legal control of drugs and has said that he is reviewing the position. My view is that anabolic steroids should become controlled substances. The evidence of the extent of their misuse and their harmful medical effects is sufficient to warrant their control under the Misuse of Drugs Act.

Mr. Campbell: Yet again, the Minister earns our support and thanks for his sensible and speedy acknowledgement of a matter which has occupied the minds of some Opposition Members for some time. I hope that he will not demur if I develop the reasons why our views are correct.

It is said that anabolic steriods are being supplied in virtually every gymnasium in the country, and because such recreation is informal there is no question of those people who have access to and take such drugs being tested. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves), who is unhappily unable to be here because of a constituency engagement, spoke to me in the Lobby last night. He has made a study of the subject and has acquired considerable information, which I am sure he will be happy to make available to the Under-Secretary if he has not already done so.

How can one tell that someone is abusing anabolic steroids? There are a number of tell-tale signs: first, a sudden and unexplained improvement in performance; secondly, a dramatic increase in muscle bulk; and thirdly, sudden unexplained bouts of aggression. Why do I believe that those drugs should be controlled under the 1971 Act? First, they are known to have the potential to damage health; they are known to carry with them the risk of cancer, especially of the liver. They are known to affect the sexual characteristics of both men and women and to give rise to blood clotting.

So far, we have no experience of the long-term effects of the abuse of anabolic steroids, but there is evidence of at least one death caused by steroid abuse, that of Tom Hawk, a body-builder, who, upon post-mortem examination, having died suddenly and without explanation, was found to have a grossly enlarged heart which the cardiologist responsible for the examination considered could be attributed to abuse of anabolic steroids.

There is also increasing evidence of psychological effects, of sudden bouts of aggression, and there is evidence that the drugs may be the cause of personality change. Dr. Priscilla Choy and her colleagues at the department of psychology in the university of London have carried out some of the most interesting and innovative work in that field.

These drugs are dangerous, but there is a risk that naive or ambitious sports men or women will believe that taking them is the only way to win. When the Olympic gold medal in the 100 metres is won by a cheat, drug abuse goes right to the heart of sport. I am afraid that there is hardly a sport in the United Kingdom in which power is the predominant factor that does not supply some evidence or in which there is not at least some suspicion of steroid abuse. I have believed for some time that legislation is necessary, and I welcome the Minister's intervention, making clear his personal position. Subordinate legislation should be enough and it is high time that such legislation was introduced. I look forward to the Government doing so.

12.30 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I take pleasure in participating in the debate and welcome the Government's action, and especially that of the Prime Minister, in setting up the Department of National Heritage which, for the first time, gives sport a place at the Cabinet table. I pay tribute to the former Secretary of State for National Heritage, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor). I was proud to be his Parliamentary Private Secretary for three years. He showed great dynamism in setting up the Department and, despite the qualities of the present Secretary of State, he is greatly missed by sporting organisations.

The inclusion of sport in the Department of National Heritage recognises its importance, because it is not a pigeon hole of our national life but integral to our economy and culture. We have heard that sport provides 476,000 jobs and about £10 billion worth of gross national product. It has an important role to play in the nation's health, as set out in the Department of Health document. A recent Mori poll found that 83 per cent. of people felt that sport was important for health. As hon. Members have said, sport is important in promoting a sense of social stability, cohesion and character development. The Mori poll also found that eight out of 10 people thought that sport was increasingly important in that regard.

It is also right that the Department of National Heritage should be responsible for tourism, because it has been calculated that 15 per cent. of tourists come here specifically to pursue sporting opportunities. Over the past 20 years the improvement in sports facilities and in participation has been impressive. The general household survey shows that in the past five years alone 29 million people—some 2 million more than before—take part in some form of sport once a month. That is about two thirds of the population, and the increase applies across the social scale and to the ethnic minorities.

Sporting facilities are probably at their best ever level. The west midlands has 158 sports halls, and in the past two years two sports halls have been built in my constituency, one in Kidderminster and the other in Bewdley. We have 412 athletic tracks and 116 swimming pools, which is a record. More significantly, over the past 10 years the number of artificial grass surfaces, which have led to a massive increase in the interest in sports such as hockey, has risen from 30 to 282. It is no coincidence that one third of the current capital budget for the West Midlands council for sport and recreation is committed to the provision of articial grass surfaces. That improvement is a good example of genuine co-operation between county and district councils, the Government, the Sports Council, voluntary bodies and the private sector. It is interesting to see that over the past 10 years the amount of private sponsorship money has risen from £129 million to £230 million a year.

In all, in terms of participation and facilities, the sporting sector is burgeoning, vibrant and improving. Equally, given the fact that the sporting sector has been characterised by a multiplicity of initiatives, one of its weaknesses is that it has no strategic body overviewing sports strategy throughout the United Kingdom. No fewer than 400 governing bodies are associated with the Central Council of Physical Recreation. The Sports Council, the UK sports commission to be set up shortly, the British Olympic Association, the Foundation for Sport and the Arts and a myriad county and district councils are all involved in the provision of sport.

It is interesting to see that the Sports Council shows that, although there are 150,000 sports clubs in the United Kingdom—about the same number as in France—the average number of members of those sports clubs is only 43 against double that in France and about seven times as many in Germany. That multiplicity of small clubs may lead to a weakness in co-ordinating sport strategy in the future.

I hope that the United Kingdom sports commission will confine itself to strategy, to facilitating development, rather than trying to produce it itself. I was slightly concerned to hear the Minister say that the split of funding between the United Kingdom sports commission and the English sports council was likely to be about £18 million for the United Kingdom sports commission and £22 million for the English sports council. I was under the impression that the sports commission would be a co-ordinating body rather than one that provided facilities. The £18 million must be looked at and more funds given to the English sports council.

A diversity of provision can be a strength and I was delighted to see recently, for example, that the Birmingham city council, the Sports Council, the National Coaching Foundation and governing bodies of sport are all involved in producing the West Midlands regional performance centre. In my constituency, the county and district councils, together with the Foundation for Sport and the Arts and the West Midlands council for sport and recreation, hope to build a sporting centre of regional significance. In Birmingham, we have recently seen initiatives, such as "Fit for the Job", which encompass initiatives by the Confederation of British Industry, Birmingham city council and the Sports Council.

Most important in terms of co-ordinating sports activities is dual use. Certain authorities are good at ensuring that leisure facilities are put in schools, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) mentioned earlier. In other authorities, dual use has not got off the ground and, as a result, there is an enormous waste of facilities. I urge the Government, through the Department of National Heritage and the Department for Education, to ensure that every local education authority follows the example of Birmingham city council, which I

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have criticised in many other respects. It has been in the forefront of providing dual use facilities. Recently, I visited the Cocksmoor Woods centre in Birmingham, which is probably a paradigm of its kind.

If grant-maintained status is to take hold—I am sure that it will—education access boards must take a more constructive view of the ownership of assets that would otherwise be transferred from local authorities to individual grant-maintained schools. The Opposition have a point when they say that we cannot expect a local education authority to invest large amounts of capital in dual use facilities in a school, only to see them shuffled off into a grant-maintained school without opportunities for access by the community.

There are three sectors in which co-operation between the myriad sporting organisations can be improved: finances and resources, marketing, and general attitudes towards sport.

My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) was correct to say that, whether we like it or not, the finances of both central Government and local government will be tighter than ever over the next few years. That is already evident in local authority expenditure on revenue account, which has dropped from £1·5 billion in 1985 to £1·3 billion in 1990 at constant prices. The same applies to capital expenditure which has dropped, albeit from a high level.

Although large numbers of new facilities were established in the 1970s and 1980s, many of them are now coming up for major repairs, maintenance and refurbishment. The Sports Council estimated that in 1988 the ratio of expenditure on new projects to that on repairs was likely to be 15:1; by this year the likely ratio will be 1·8:1, and no less than £1·3 billion will be needed over the next five years for spending on the refurbishment of swimming pools.

The only way to tackle such problems, given the stringencies on public sector financing, is by greater involvement by the private sector, not only in the provision of new facilities, but in refurbishing existing ones. I was pleased to hear my hon. Friend the Minister announce encouraging news about "Sports Match". It is important for local authorities to be allowed to use—albeit on a controlled basis—a greater proportion of their capital receipts for refurbishment, particularly in relation to investment by the private sector.

We must reconsider the tax treatment of sporting organisations such as the Rugby Football Union, Wimbledon and the British Olympic Association—which are effectively non-profit making organisations—given that the Government receive £3·3 billion a year from sport. There is also a case for a sports enterprise allowance in some parts of the country to be given to private companies that were prepared totally to refurbish sports facilities that would otherwise not attract private capital. That policy could apply in the same way as it does in our industrial strategy.

The national lottery will be important in future, and I have some sympathy with the argument of the Foundation for Sport and the Arts and other organisations that the lottery and existing pools organisations should compete on a level playing field. However, we cannot have a successful and vibrant national lottery if it is continually shackled by taxation and artificially close competition from existing organisations. If the lottery is to be successful, we must give it 100 per cent. support as it is a new concept in this country. It will be of tremendous benefit to the country and we should bear that uppermost in our minds when discussing its future.

The second sector in which there needs to be close co-operation is marketing. One of the items that the Sports Council identified as needing improvement in the marketing of sport was ensuring that policy documents issued from the Sports Council at national level reached local level. The message of "What's your sport" and "Ever thought of sport?" has not trickled down to the myriad sports clubs and individuals as it should. There is a case for greater co-ordination of marketing at local level between tourism information centres, centres run by the Arts Council and those run by sporting organisations. It is important that the Foundation for Sport and the Arts should become involved in promoting international events with local sporting organisations. It is even more vital that, through sports scholarships, by emphasising the importance of the sports links scheme and as a result of improvements in the national curriculum, we encourage greater investment in sport in schools.

My final point relates to attitude. One of the most important speeches that I have heard recently was that delivered by Judy Simpson, who used to be an Olympic athlete, and who conveyed to people the message that sport was not only good for health but fun and an opportunity to meet people. Athletes can ram that message home. Judy Simpson emphasised the importance of health—indeed, she made the speech on a health day that I had organised.

I regard as appalling the findings of the Allied Dunbar national fitness survey, which was alluded to by the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) in a very good speech. That survey showed that 80 per cent. of the population believe themselves to be fit, yet a third of men and two thirds of women cannot continue to walk at a reasonable pace on a one-in-20 slope. That suggests that the nation is suffering from delusion on a massive scale. When we add to that the fact that 50 per cent. of women aged over 55 regard sustaining a reasonable walking pace—three miles per hour—for several minutes on level ground as severe exertion, it is hardly surprising that we have the worst cardiac problems in Europe.

The Health Education Authority and district and local authorities, including my own, are trying to get the health message across. It is crucial that the Department of Health should set specific targets for exercise among different age groups in the community to reduce significantly the incidence of cardiovascular problems. That activity must not be confined to older people but must encompass younger people, not least because an horrific survey by Exeter university showed that 50 per cent. of girls and a third of boys of school age did not do enough exercise to avoid cardiovascular problems later in life. The health message is crucial, and the Government as a whole—not just the Department of National Heritage but the Department for Education and the Department of Health—must take that on board.

Sport encourages the team spirit and, if properly supervised, encourages the spirit of fair play. Given my attitude to so many of the activities of Birmingham city council, it may seem incongruous that I should commend its department of recreation and community services on its community sports club project whose purpose is to try to encourage the development of team sport and team spirit over that of the casual sport encouraged by many of the policies to which we have referred this morning.

In sum, the problems of sport are problems of growth, success and co-ordination. If we involve the private sector more in funding in the ways that I have described, if we make the lottery a success, if we co-ordinate sports, arts and tourism marketing activities, and if we push the health message, we shall have a more sportsmanlike, healthy and active population, which can only be to our advantage.

I recognise the crucial role that the Department of National Heritage has to play in all this. That is why I was so delighted to be asked by the previous Secretary of State to serve as his PPS. I will remain closely interested in the Department's activities and I wish its Ministers the very best of success.

12.48 pm

Mr. Jim Callaghan (Heywood and Middleton): Having served on several Committees with the Minister, and being aware of his dedication and hard work on those Committees, I congratulate him on his promotion. I am sure that, with the same dedication and hard work, he will be an excellent Minister for Sport.

I took particular interest in the beginning of the Minister's speech, when he said that, as a teacher, he had done much sterling work on behalf of children. He nudged my memory banks, because I, too, was a teacher many years ago. It was my privilege to run three schoolboy football teams voluntarily for many years. It was hard work, but it was extremely rewarding for a variety of reasons, one of which was when a youngster achieved international recognition.

My deep concern each year was the lack of good facilities. My boys played on a local authority park situated some miles away from the school. The changing facilities comprised little more than a cubicle in a converted whitewashed cowshed. There was no electricity —I used candles for light during the dark months—and no hot or cold water, but the cubicle did have a bin toilet and a wooden trough urinal. Hon. Members will recognise that facilities were excellent!

I felt ashamed, particularly in wintry weather, that I had to send the boys home caked in freezing mud. My frequent protestations to the local authority about the state of the facilities resulted in their being closed down. We were punished for protesting.

Years later, it was my privilege to visit South Korea with the Select Committee on Transport. I asked whether it was possible for members of the Committee to see the facilities provided by the South Korean Government for the Seoul Olympic games. The authorities quickly agreed to the request. On one of our days off, they took us to the Olympic campus. I was staggered and amazed at the superb facilities provided. I realised that I had been overtaken in my ambition to obtain light and water in my whitewashed cowshed for my schoolboy footballers. Obviously I had not aimed high enough. I asked what use was now being made of the magnificent stadiums. I was informed that the facilities had been used for a variety of subsequent asiatic games, but it was also pointed out that in the middle of the campus was a large college of education, similar to Loughborough, in which hundreds of students were studying to be sports instructors. As a result, the facilities for sport were in constant daily use. With that in mind, and as a Mancunian born and bred, I am delighted to support Manchester's Olympic bid for the year 2000 and to bring to the Minister's notice the consequent bid of Hopward Hall college in my constituency for Olympic 2000 satellite venue status.

For the third time in succession, Britain is bidding to host the Olympic games. Manchester, the British candidate, has the backing of the Government, national and international business and local authorities. For the first time, a bidding city, Manchester, has the active support of the Government, who have committed £55 million to develop the venue. I thank them for that. As a result, Manchester will have two major facilities under construction by September 1993—a £50 million complex comprising a major indoor arena seating 18,000 people and a £9 million covered velodrome. The 121-acre east Manchester site for a £12 million complex will have been acquired and reclaimed by the time the bid is ready. It will comprise the Olympic stadium, which will seat 60,000 people and will be capable of an increased capacity of 80,000 seats.

Decisions on other venues that are strategically distributed across the north of England will be made later, and that is the point of my speech. As the International Olympic Committee decides in September 1993 on the nomination to host the 2000 games, Manchester must submit a fully documented bid to the IOC by then. The Manchester bid is based on the development of an Olympic ring, with as many venues as possible within a motorway ring around Manchester. Therefore, the bid will be considerably enhanced by the evidence that facilities to host the Olympic games exist or that future development is committed in the area.

Hopwood Hall college, which is located in my constituency and set in the most beautiful and magnificent grounds, has accordingly produced a feasibility study on the college becoming a nominated satellite venue before the scheduled visit by the international Olympic representatives. If the Minister wants a copy of that feasibility study, which is supported by three Members of Parliament—one Labour, one Conservative and one Liberal Democrat, who attended meetings during the summer recess—I shall gladly let him have one.

Hopwood Hall college is a local authority tertiary college, formed in September 1990 and funded by the Rochdale metropolitan borough council. The campus is situated south of Middleton in my constituency, close to the M62 at junction 19 and has a frontage to the A664, leading to the M66 motorway ring around Manchester. The campus is three miles from Rochdale and six miles from Greater Manchester city centre. A new station on the Manchester railway line is proposed at Slattocks, which is within walking distance of the college.

The college's draft business plan sets out a number of strategic objectives for the campus. It must develop a new sports centre to satisfy Olympic standards specifications and achieve selection as a small area satellite venue. There will be a training complex for the 1996 European football championships which will provide the facilities necessary to secure the continued involvement of Bobby Charlton Enterprises in delivering residential and one-day courses in soccer skills.

Hopwood Hall college is designated within the Manchester venue strategy to host the Olympic judo competition and some of the preliminary rounds of the

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Olympic handball competition. The college can satisfy the Manchester Olympic bid committee on the after-use of the venue, and that the venue is practical and does not have grandiose, unrealisable plans. The venue is easily accessible to spectators, competitors and officials in terms of travelling times from the major venues, the athletes' village and the major hotels and airports. The college venue is of the highest quality, both in terms of the competition and the ancillary facilities such as training and warm-up areas, medical and first aid suites and meeting rooms.

I could go on and list all the superb facilities already in the campus, but that would take up too much time. However, I shall say that the overall technical requirements of the Olympic handball competition are that we need one handball playing hall, with a connected warm-up hall, seating for 7,000 people, changing rooms for teams and officials, medical and dope testing rooms. For the judo, we need a competition hall seating 8,000 spectators.

The predominant users of the complex after the games will be the college, with surplus capacity being used by the community, clubs and organisations that have their own operational requirements and resources. Effective programming of use will realise spare capacity which, in turn, will provide the opportunity for bodies such as Bobby Charlton Enterprises, sports clubs and the community at large to utilise the facilities to deliver the services that are demanded of them. The research done into the feasibility of the satellite venue has been carried out by York Consulting Ltd. of Leeds and its research has shown a significant demand from clubs and organisations in the north Manchester area. Some 400 football teams, for example, are registered in the area. The Oldham Owls disabled sports club seeks to establish a permanent home base for its sports and social activities. It believes that its requirements can be satisfied by the facilities to be provided at the college.

The college will be able to provide facilities for tennis, bowls, basketball, volleyball and martial arts. The proposal is for a feasible, flexible facility which will be used on a long-term basis for the college's core purposes of education and training, but which will also have the capacity for use by a wide range of users, such as the 9,000 students and members of the community, engaged in a wide range of sports.

The Minister said of the Manchester bid:

> "A successful bid, well executed, would be a great boost to the regional economy and urban regeneration in Manchester and the north-west. I have, for example, seen estimates that suggest that the event could add £0·5 billion to the United Kingdom invisible exports . . . Partnership is a common theme of our whole approach to investment and regeneration . . . We expect local commitment, participation, value for money and well-constructed ideas that are capable of implementation."—[*Official Report*, 4 July 1991; Vol. 194, c. 540.]

The Hopwood Hall college bid for the satellite venue status meets all those requirements.

On 22 June 1992, the Secretary of State for Education agreed an additional capital resource of £2·5 million to enable the local education authority to discharge all outstanding liabilities relating to the purchase of the Hopwood Hall site and to the convenanted refurbishment of the college buildings. On Friday 17 July 1992, the Queen officially opened the college.

Accordingly, I can do no better than to invite the Minister to follow in the Queen's footsteps and to visit the college. I shall introduce him to the principal, Mr. Wailes, to Mr. Ronnie Todd, the resources manager, and to Mr. Peter Jackson, the sports development officer. All of them, together with York Consulting Ltd., have contributed so much to the college's bid for satellite venue status.

I am sure that the Minister will be impressed when he tours the college campus. To coin a phrase, the college intends to go for gold. There are no medals for coming second. I ask the Minister please to pay us a visit.

1.2 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I am delighted that sport has now been energised and given a top priority by the Government. It has had a lead from the Prime Minister and I was delighted to see that sport has now been raised to Cabinet level, as has been mentioned this morning. Much has been achieved and a long catalogue could be recited, but much still needs to be done.

There is bad news about national fitness as was pointed out by the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) who referred to the Allied Dunbar report. They could have added a few more facts. One in three of all men and two thirds of all women were unable to continue walking at a reasonable pace—3 mph—up a one in 20 slope without becoming breathless and having to slow down or stop. They could also have said that 8 per cent. of men and 13 per cent. of women are obese. In a survey on 16 to 24-year-olds, 70 per cent. of the young men and 91 per cent. of the women were living lives below the activity level necessary for a fit and healthy life.

If we cast our eyes around the Chamber, could we in all honesty claim that we maintain a proper fitness record? I had better come clean. My own record is one of running up and down stairs in the House, a spot of gardening, mothers' tennis, and sailing boats and turning them upside down. Perhaps I have a long way to go.

In no other country can there be such a gap between the theory of a fit and healthy populace and the actual practice —we are crying out to get something done. Never has more brain power, never have more pens pushing paper, been devoted to telling us how we can become fitter, but we still need to do more and continue our efforts to encourage health and fitness. We must persuade our citizens that they need to exercise at least 20 minutes three times a week if they want to increase their fitness. At first sight that seems rather demanding, but we must bear in mind that our starting point is very low and that we still have a long way to go. Many people could quickly move up the activity ladder from the lowest rungs by taking more brisk walks, using stairs, not lifts, walking to the shops instead of going by car, and spending more time doing heavy work in the house and garden.

Active living begins in childhood—hence the importance of sport in schools. Interestingly, during the past four years successive reports have established that most 16-year-olds do not even have one exercise period a week. Most school leavers do not take part in organised exercise, certainly nothing the equivalent of a 20-minute walk.

I congratulate the Government on recognising the importance of sport in schools. I declare an interest as a member of the Education Select Committee. I am delighted to see that the Education Department is liaising closely with the Department of National Heritage. Physical education is now a foundation subject in the national curriculum. I was pleased to see that in 1990 the Select Committee moved this issue up the political agenda, notably stressing the importance of children learning to swim and taking part in team games, which have now become compulsory up to the age of 16.

We need to bear it in mind just how important these sports in schools are. They induce not only physical but mental health. A child who does well on the sports field but is a low academic achiever will feel his morale lifted. He will feel better and that will reflect in his school work. It will raise self-confidence all round. We all know that if people believe that they can do something, they can. By lacking faith in themselves, many people fail to achieve, but sport enables non-academics to flourish. That is most important for children who think that they are failures and who may become problematic later in life. Sport can identify and develop special talent. It can divert potential hooligans by channelling their energies constructively in the sports hall.

Above all, let us remember the moral aspect of sport. Team sports teach leadership, responsibility, respect for rules and fair play, and good behaviour. The expression, "Be a good sport," has great value. We should not underestimate the importance of teaching manners in schools.

Although games and physical education lessons are now part of the core curriculum in school hours, it is a pity that we have such a struggle to provide enough back-up sport, with teachers helping with competitive matches between school teams outside school hours—when children play soccer, rugby and cricket after the school day or at weekends. As has already been said, those problems are compounded by the selling of school playing fields for development. There has been a decline in the number of state school teachers who are willing and able to maintain a commitment to teach sport outside school hours. I must take issue with the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies). He complained that teachers' pay and contracts had become overdefined and that they were unable to devote their energies and resources to extra-curricular activities. I must stress that it was the teachers' unions who boxed them in, not the Government.

I must also pay a tribute to the magnificently dedicated teachers who uncomplainingly and without seeking reward devote an enormous amount of time to help sport outside schools. There is also a minor cultural problem in that we must get children away from television sets and from their sedentary lives. We must make them accept that sport is a natural way of life.

Physical education is a subject in its own right. It is important that we recognise that physical education is now part of the core curriculum, but we must ensure that it is properly timetabled so that we know how often it is happening and what the pupils are doing. I hope that the independent inspectorate for schools will consider that matter very carefully and not accept sweeping statements like, "Oh, yes. The children are doing sport." Commitment and action are sometimes far apart.

I want to stress an education issue which stretches into sport. The Education Department supports the idea of specialised schools and vocational studies. However, no mention has yet been made of the fact that schools could add sport to the list of studies including languages and technology. I hope that the National Heritage Department will press for a greater recognition of the importance of sport as a special subject.

We should also bear it in mind how we balance physical education in schools. There is a tendency in the teaching establishment to believe that time spent on sport is wasted because pupils are not concentrating on academic subjects. Academic work is as important as sport and pupils should be able to devote equal time to both.

Dr. Spink: Does my hon. Friend agree that a healthy body can produce a healthy mind? The link between good achievement in sport and good academic achievement is not lost.

Lady Olga Maitland: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Swedes have devoted an enormous amount of effort to ensure that children with academic inclinations spend as much time on sport as they do on their studies. Sport is given a higher priority.

If we want more sport in schools, it must be paid for. That is a difficulty because every nation has its priorities. We must consider how to encourage teachers to play a role in out-of-school hours. I believe that it would make a lot of sense to give teachers a special payment in that regard.

Local authorities play an important part in sports provision. However, there is a danger that some local authorities may go overboard on sport at the expense of essential social services partly because people who need such services—the elderly, sick, vulnerable and handicapped—do not have the voice or numbers to state their own case. It is very important that local authorities have a balanced view of their priorities and how they should be funded.

I endorse the comments by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), who called for a national audit of local authority sports facilities. That is the nub of the matter. Are local authority sports facilities properly monitored? Are we getting value for money? Is there access for all to school facilities whether they be grant-maintained or under the local management of schools system? Are we making sure that the waste of resources is being monitored? Are new schemes properly costed? Do local authorities want to spend first and worry later? Will a scheme or facility be properly used and is it what the local community wants or needs?

I certainly would encourage the joint venture commercial schemes that my hon. Friend the Minister mentioned and also the need to monitor compulsory competitive tendering. Above all, I support the call for an national sports authority to co-ordinate all sport. Things have become far too haphazard because there are many rival authorities.

We have talked about business sponsorship of sport. Sponsorship is important—sport cannot live on thin air —but it is haphazard, although I welcome the Government's Sports Match initiative and the Institute of Sports Sponsorship.

In my constituency of Sutton and Cheam, we have the excellent Sutton United football club. It has rightly achieved recognition. I shall soon attend one of its games —I might even have the opportunity to do a kick-off. What has been exciting and encouraging about the

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football club is that it is well-managed, there is no hooliganism and it has organised its own sponsorship. It approached Securicor, a locally based company, when it did particularly well in 1989 and won a famous victory over Coventry City in the FA cup series. As a result of that, a deal has been struck. That is a one-to-one relationship. I should like more pro-active Government involvement to help companies and sports in local communities.

Sport has many roles, but one role that has not been mentioned is the role in the political world of healing sectarian passions. I have just returned from a visit to Northern Ireland. In Ulster, sport is the one sane activity which has been going on steadily over the past 20 years. International sportsmen have attended the Ulster games. The one piece of good news in Northern Ireland is sport. There is always a winner, and it is always Northern Ireland.

Mr. Pendry: I am sure that it was not lost on the hon. Lady when I mentioned that one of the reasons for that is that there is mandatory rate relief, which I have been asking the Government to consider for many years. That is one of the reasons—as a former Northern Ireland Minister, I agree with the hon. Lady—why there is so much sporting activity there, which is very good for the Province.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comment. I am stressing not just the important financial input in sport in Northern Ireland but the spirit of the people. Although society might be divided, each culture has its sports, of which it is proud. In the same way as Yorkshire is famous for cricket, the Catholic community in Northern Ireland has sports at which it is successful such as Gaelic football, hurling and a sport which is new to me called Camoge—a women's stick-and-ball game halfway between hockey and lacrosse. Those sports are taught in Catholic schools. Protestant schools have their own sports at which they excel. They tend to be the English-oriented sports such as rugby and cricket.

It is encouraging that when the name and voice of Northern Ireland are at stake, everyone, whether Catholic or Protestant, routs for Northern Ireland. That is an exciting factor. When the football team headed by Billy Bingham plays against Denmark at Windsor Park stadium in Belfast the Protestants, and indeed the whole Province —even though the team is mainly Catholic—will root for the team. That is good news.

When other events such as county sports between the northern counties and those in the republic take place it is exciting to see that both the Protestants and the Catholics in Northern Ireland crowd around their television sets and watch, for example, the Down team triumph and beat in Gaelic games its rivals in the south. Sport in Ireland is important. It is important to recognise that sport can bring people together. We can explore that factor further in the future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. May I remind hon. Members that five hon. Members hope to catch my eye in the time available. I hope that they will bear that in mind and keep their speeches short.

1.21 pm

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): I hope that hon. Members will forgive me for referring to a constituency matter that I mentioned earlier. I know that the Minister will take a personal, as well as a minsterial, interest in it. Many of his constituents sensibly choose to watch premier league football in Southampton. I should like to explore some of the problems that surround the conflict between the planning process and the efforts of clubs and local authorities which genuinely seek to meet the demands of the Taylor report. The Southampton football club, the Saints, has been located for many years at the Dell. The Dell is a city-centre ground with no car parking facilities. It is now very difficult to improve that site to provide modern spectator facilities.

When the Taylor report was produced, the football club and the city council responded enthusiastically to the challenge in that report. They worked together to draw up plans for a new community stadium on the northern fringe of Southampton at Stoneham. The aim of the exercise was to provide not simply modern facilities for the Southampton football club but a wide range of other sporting facilities such as running tracks and other leisure facilities for the people of Southampton and the surrounding area.

The plans were drawn up after a careful exercise by the city council to select a site, and discussions were initiated to raise city council funding, private funding and funding from the Football Trust as well as funding from the club itself. The difficulty is that those ambitious and good plans have not progressed anything like as fast as either the club or the city council would have liked. The reason for that is the basic failure of the strategic planning authority in Hampshire, the Hampshire county council. It displayed an obstructive attitude to the proposals from the beginning. When the proposals were launched the first response of the county council was to condemn them, then refuse to discuss them.

There was at last an agreement between Hampshire county council, Southampton city council and Eastleigh borough council, which covers part of the site, to have a joint expert study by officers to look at all the possible locations for a new football stadium. That official report, which was supported by professional planners from each of the three authorities, endorsed the Stoneham site as by far the best available. Since that date, the county council has ignored the report and, equally, failed to identify and back any alternative site for a replacement stadium. The Dell was identified as the worst possible site that one could find in Southampton. Because of the lack of strategic planning guidance, Eastleigh borough council—perhaps egged on by lurid and fantastic notions about the behaviour of football fans—also objected to the proposals.

The club and the city face the difficulty that they will not be able to get planning permission before the public inquiry. I am convinced that the planning arguments are so strong that they will win permission, but that is too far down the line to enable the club to meet the 1994 Taylor requirements.

The club has therefore been forced to introduce proposals, costing up to £2 million, to redevelop its existing site, which is an unsatisfactory solution. Although the club is putting a brave face on it, there must be some doubt whether it will be financially viable with reduced capacity at its existing stadium.

Southampton football club is not exactly a family-run club, but it has retained many of the merits of such a club, and has that feel. It is not one of the premier league clubs dominated by egocentric business men with millions of pounds to pour in. It is an achievement to be a premier league club, but the financial position that the club is likely to be put in must place a question mark over Southampton's retaining its position in the league.

I appreciate the problem facing the Government. Most constituents who write to me do not like the Taylor report, but the Government would be on a political and moral hiding to nothing if they did not back the report and another stadium disaster occurred. I understand why the Government do not want an open door on prevarication and backsliding by clubs which do not have any intention of meeting the report's challenges, but that is not the position in Southampton—as I am sure the Minister recognises—as the club has done everything reasonably possible.

The Minister referred to a letter from the Football Licensing Authority, which was attempting to be helpful. Without detailed planning permission it is impossible to press ahead, to acquire the sites and put together financial packages. Discussions can take place, but contracts cannot be signed if one does not have planning permission—some compulsory purchase may be involved in acquiring the Stoneham site.

Although it would like to meet the targets in the Football Licensing Authority's letter, the club feels that it must depend on a short-term project at the Dell, in the hope of reviving the Stoneham project later.

Will the Minister and his colleagues consider the matter afresh to find out whether there is some route—through the structures of the Football Licensing Authority, or through direct intervention by Ministers—to give the club a helping hand? No one is asking for the dangerous exercise of allowing all clubs to escape the Taylor requirements, but if the efforts made by Southampton could be recognised, if support could be given to the planning process, and if the Football Licensing Authority could be encouraged to give the club a dispensation—provided that it presses ahead with the planning application and a timetable on other elements in the authority's letter—it would be enormously helpful.

I am grateful to other Ministers, and especially to the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities, who visited Southampton recently and has been helpful on a secondary planning matter concerning the capacity of the local road network. I do not regard the issue as party political. Because of the importance of the football club and its role in the premier league, will the Minister look at the Southampton file afresh and try to find a way through the situation, which is not the responsibility of the club or of the local city council?

1.28 pm

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth): The Government gave sportsmen a clear message of support and commitment when they appointed the first Minister with direct responsibility for sport. I take this opportunity to congratulate the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) on his recent promotion to the Opposition Front Bench. I am sure that he will have an enjoyable and useful role to play.

I speak as the Member in whose constituency is the home of the Bees, otherwise known as Brentford football club, and as an armchair athlete who, no doubt like many other hon. Members, participated in this year's Olympics by yelling at the television to encourage our British Olympic team. I am sure that all hon. Members will join me in congratulating the British team who participated in the Barcelona Olympics. I also congratulate the Government on their positive stand and support for Manchester 2000. That will be a magnificent opportunity for Britain to shine on the world stage as hosts for the premier sports event of the millennium.

Manchester and the north-west will benefit from the major investment. I understand that about £55 million has been committed to the construction of an Olympic arena and many other sports venues and facilities. That massive investment will enable a new generation of budding athletes to have access to world-class facilities and will provide them with every opportunity to participate and win. I encourage everyone to support in every way the Manchester 2000 bid.

I commend the Minister's initiatives for improving the existing structure and funding for sport, and I welcome the setting up of a sports council for England which is long overdue. It will concentrate the minds of English sportsmen and women and foster and promote the provision of sports facilities in England.

Unlike the Labour party, I do not believe in the formation of bureaucratic and non-workable bodies to control sport. When Labour launched its document on sport the then shadow sports Minister, who is now in another place, made it clear that he would like to see Labour encourage a greater ministerial role on sports councils. That is in spite of the Opposition's call to keep sports representative bodies free from political bias. Labour's proposals threaten the voluntary and apolitical nature of sport as we know it.

Government grant in aid to the Sports Council has risen by about 30 per cent. in real terms to about £50 million in the past 12 years while local authority spending has grown by 5 per cent. in real terms from £362 million in 1987 to £456 million in 1990. We have also been told that sport will be one of the major recipients from the national lottery.

The private sector is invaluable to a wide range of sports, with sponsorship running at about £200 million per year. Another £40 million is generated every year for sport following the 2·5 per cent. cut in pool betting duty. There is also the business sponsorship scheme for sport. It was launched in September and sponsors money pound for pound up to a maximum of £75,000. Labour has announced that it would set up a major review of sports finance and sponsorship, levy, betting and taxation to ensure that a fairer proportion of the money taken out of sport is put back in. That is a laudable aim, but I share the concern of many of my hon. Friends who feel that that could well be seen as a threat to commercial sponsors, even if it is not, especially if sponsorship were subject to a special tax.

As I have said, Brentford football club, a first division team, is in my constituency. Therefore, football ground safety is of special concern to my constituents and myself. It is imperative that the recommendations in the Taylor report be implemented. We must at all costs avoid another Hillsborough.

[Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva]

I understand that second and third division clubs are bring allowed to retain some standing accommodation, but I should like to see safety as the paramount factor at all football league stadiums. For that reason I was quite concerned at the opposition to, and the condemnation of, the compulsory change to all-seater football grounds. I urge all who oppose that to join the call for safety first at all stadiums and support Lord Justice Taylor's recommendations.

It is encouraging to see that the Department of National Heritage is working in close conjunction with the Education Department on sport in schools. It is also encouraging to know that physical education is now compulsory under the national curriculum until the age of 14 years, and until the age of 16 years in 1995. I also support the Government's recommendation that all children be taught to swim—as I was when I was young —up to the age of 11 years. The champion coaching scheme should be consolidated and enhanced and I welcome the injection of £1·3 million into the scheme. I should like to see children given every opportunity to participate and excel. They should have an opportunity to choose from a wide range of sporting activities. They should be given an opportunity to take sport beyond school hours and have coaches and facilities to give them the training and choice, if they so wish, to become athletes and represent their country, possibly at the Olympics in Manchester in the year 2000.

1.35 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): The debate has been wide ranging, but, as an earlier speaker said, if we are to have such debates they should concentrate on specific sports; some sports have not been mentioned.

We have heard much about the amount of money that the general public puts into sport and the hundreds of thousands of people who are employed in sport. Without doubt, vast sums of money are now available, but, taking football as an example, I wonder whether that money is really for the benefit of all football clubs in the country and not solely for that of those in the premier league. The top clubs will always be the attraction, but the real lifeblood of football is the clubs now in the first, second and third divisions—teams such as Doncaster, Fulham and Chester. They may never be champions or get to Wembley, but local people relate to such teams.

It has not been mentioned much in this debate, but we often hear it said in the House that there is an enormous amount of violence in this country. Much of that violence and vandalism is done by young people. With much closer co-operation between local authorities and local football teams within communities, much of it could be stopped. However, the great problem is that many clubs do not have the necessary money because they are not an Arsenal, Tottenham or Liverpool. I hope that the Minister will look into that problem.

A sport that has not been mentioned this morning is boxing, which is followed by many people. How boxing is organised I frankly do not know, and I do not know whether the Minister knows. Whatever one may think of the sport, one often reads that boxers who have a great deal of ability and who, based on their record, should be given an opportunity to fight for British, European or world titles rarely get that chance because, sadly, they do not belong to the right syndicate that controls boxing.

I do not expect the Minister to reply to my points in detail now, although I should like him to find out and let me know exactly who controls boxing in this country.

Mr. Pendry: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Cox: No, with respect, I shall not give way.

Why are the managers, promoters and advisers often the people who organise boxing here? If boxers do not belong to their syndicate, they do not get a look in. That happens time and again. Will the Minister find out who controls British boxing and who appoints those who control it?

We all go into pubs and chat to people about sporting events. People say to me, "Tom, how do such things happen?" Why do boxers with the most appalling records come from other parts of the world to fight British boxers? The resulting fights are fiascos, as we have seen with fights arranged for Frank Bruno. We have a right to know who arranges and controls boxing in this country.

Mr. Key: I should very much welcome a quiet chat with the hon. Gentleman. I have explored that difficult problem with the British Boxing Board of Control. Like the hon. Gentleman, I am still a little confused about who runs British boxing.

Mr. Cox: I should willingly take up the Minister's offer, and I am sure that he would be only too willing for my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) to attend the meeting, as he could help us.

Seeing you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Chair gives me pleasure. The subject of boxing has not been touched on in the debate, but I know that the sport of which you have a great love and in which you are involved, not only now that you are Deputy Speaker of the House but when you were a Back-Bench Member, is rugby league. From having served with you on Committees dealing with local government issues I know that you are deeply involved with Wakefield, as well as your constituency of Pontefract and Castleford—which both have rugby league clubs. I am sure that had you been on the Back Benches today you would rightly speak of the sport of rugby, which you support and of which you have such a wide knowledge. Sadly, that has not been discussed.

Many of us will have watched last week's match at Wembley on television; and there is to be a great match in the north of England this week. I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be there; I only wish that I could be there with you. We do not have the opportunity to mention boxing and rugby league in debates such as today's, but I hope that we shall in future.

I do not criticise the Minister for painting the best picture of what is happening in sporting activities in this country, but there is another side. We shall have to wait and see whether the national lottery helps the position. Sadly, organisations that are now committed to working with young people are not receiving help. We know that young people love sport.

I sent a letter from the Methodist church dated 12 October which states:

> "For three years we have sustained correspondence, completed grant aid application forms and, in some cases made visits to the new Authorities"—

local government ones.

"After all this work, in common with many similar bodies, we have only minimal offers of grant amounting to around £300 from any of these sources. Nearly all are unable or unwilling to take on, in whole or in part, this level of financial support."

The financial support mentioned amounts to about £7,000 a year, which is not a large sum.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde that many local authorities that would like to help young people's sporting associations cannot do so, due to the legislation imposed on them by the Government. If we are talking of sport and trying to stop vandalism and crime, we must listen to such organisations. To his credit, the Minister paid tribute to the hours and hours of work that those associated with voluntary organisations give to this country, but if there is no willingness by our Government to make money available to such organisations, the youngsters and those who run the groups lose interest. The resources necessary cannot be raised by jumble sales and the sale of raffle tickets, although such methods can help.

I welcome both the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde to their Front-Bench posts. I hope that we shall have further such debates, but I beg the Minister to consider seriously having debates in future on specific sporting subjects.

1.44 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): It is a pleasure to follow my close neighbour the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox). At one point, I thought that he was about to invite you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to engage in some sparring on the Floor of the House. I take the hon. Gentleman's point about boxing. Amateur boxing, in the best sense—as undertaken by boys' clubs and the like—is a tradition of the part of south London that we jointly represent. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will have noted the hon. Gentleman's point.

As I have explained to Madam Speaker, I could not be here for the beginning of the debate, although, thanks to the wonders of modern technology, I was able to see and hear the two Front-Bench speeches and thus to enjoy the challenge to my hon. Friend the Minister to meet the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) in the gym. I am not sure that I would wish to encourage such delights. My challenge to hon. Members is that they should first take part with me in Oxfam's forthcoming fast. That might make us fitter and more able to participate in gymnastics or in sporting activities more energetic than rising to our feet from these Benches.

My old sports—rugby and squash—are, alas, sports with which it is unwise to continue for too long, and these days my sporting activities tend to consist of walking in the Lake district or, more locally, wherever my border terrier chooses to take me.

Sport is important to the health and education of our society, and the role model provided by our fine sportsmen and women is important in encouraging good citizenship. One has only to think of my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe), Gary Lineker and Daley Thompson and the success stories of the recent Olympics. No one will forget our oarsmen's moment of triumph as they stood on the rostrum, the face of the cox —not the hon. Member for Tooting—creased with emotion, while the British national anthem was played. I am sure that that great moment will have inspired many young people to take up rowing.

My hon. Friend the Minister referred to sportsmen and women with disabilities and to the paralympics and paraplegic games. We should do whatever we can to encourage people with disabilities to take part in sport. That objective was for long neglected, but, in recent years, the opportunities have been much more evident and with the opportunities come the achievements that we salute. Disabled people should have the opportunity not just to participate but to spectate. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will continually remind sports bodies that they should provide access for people in wheelchairs. We need to be able to bring people to grounds and stadiums where there have traditionally been a lot of steps, narrow turnstiles and so on. Access to our great sporting grounds is as important to people with disabilities as their ability to participate in sport.

Some 35 million of our citizens participate in one sport or another. That is a great record. As the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde said, sport is also a great creator of jobs. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman gave the figures, but 467,000 jobs are now provided by sport in this country—an increase from 376,000 in 1985. Sport has a good record in providing jobs as well as a great deal of pleasure.

Sport provides £3·5 billion for the Exchequer, half of it in income tax and national insurance. For every £1 that sport receives in grants, it repays £7 to the taxpayer. For that reason, we need constantly to keep an eye on the tax burden on sport. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will be constantly aware of that in his talks with the Treasury. Where possible, the burden should be lifted or alleviated, and I am thinking particularly of the voluntary, non-profit making clubs and the amounts that they have to pay.

Funding for sport will be boosted enormously by a national lottery. I am an unashamed supporter of that concept, which I hope will soon enable us to contribute to sport, the arts and heritage. The existing foundation has not been as good as we should have liked, not least because the pools promoters sought to finance sport and arts through the foundation by imposing a levy on punters rather than by taking money from their profits. The lottery will be a better way of raising finance, which will be over and above what the pools companies provide through their contributions and taxation.

Hon. Members have referred to school sport, on which the debate has rightly focused. I think that the Opposition now recognise the mistakes that some Labour-controlled local authorities made, especially those in London, and the damage that was done by their hostility to competitive sport. I know that the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde has a good record on fighting within his party to restore sport to schools. Nevertheless, there was a damaging period when it was excluded.

The Government included physical education in the national curriculum, which gave new opportunities to achieve health among the youth of our nation. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will talk to the Department for Education about the surveys that the Secondary Heads Association and the National Association of Head Teachers have conducted, which show a sad decrease in sport in our schools at weekends and after school hours. The last survey found that 71 per cent. of 14-year-olds had

[Mr. John Bowis]

less than two hours' physical education a week. Two hours should be the minimum and I hope that it can be restored as the norm. Some 89 per cent. of primary school teachers are involved in teaching physical education, but only 8 per cent. have any qualifications or training. In-service training must be considered carefully.

I endorse what has been said about playing fields. Without the right facilities, particularly in schools, we cannot expect young people to have the opportunities that we wish for them. We must consider the question of selling playing fields, the circulars that have come from the Department in the past, and the grant-maintained schools. I believe that the Education Bill, which deals broadly with grant-maintained schools, has been given a First Reading today, so it may not be long before there is an opportunity to clarify this.

I endorse what the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) said about drugs. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to look at the drug list, because there is some doubt about what drugs are on the list. Athletes take medicines for specific complaints—often in good faith—only to find that, unbeknown to them or their trainers, they are banned. We want to stop the cheats, but we must do so openly and fairly.

The hon. Member for Tooting and I share an interest in various football clubs, not least Wimbledon, which, thanks to difficulties in obtaining planning consent from Merton council, is experiencing ground problems. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will try to encourage people to get together to discuss the opportunities for the club; otherwise there will be a danger of its being homeless, stateless, rootless and supporterless.

Last week, Wimbledon appeared live on television for the first time ever. That is thanks to the new television agreement with the premier league clubs and shows how that agreement can help the less fashionable clubs in the way that previous agreements did not. That is worth reporting.

I also pay tribute to the police forces of the country. An often-forgotten contribution that the taxpayer makes to sport is the funding of police in the areas around football grounds. They sometimes have a difficult task and should be saluted on performing it well.

I remind my hon. Friend the Minister of a private Member's Bill that I promoted some years ago to do with public safety information. It arose out of the Bradford fire tragedy, when it appeared that information had been made available by the emergency services to the club and to the local authority, but the public were unaware of it. We must always bear in mind the public's right to know if they are going into a place of risk, particularly if it is a sporting venue. It may be that a family sending children would not have done so had it known of the risk, thereby saving their lives. We must always keep this issue under observation.

Lastly, I join other London Members of Parliament, London having been an unsuccessful bidder for the Olympic games, in wishing Manchester good luck.

1.56 pm

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): I congratulate the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) on their Front-Bench appointments. I am sure that we all look forward to debates on how to advance the cause of sport in Britain. I should be only too pleased to join hon. Members in a few rounds at the gym, if that challenge is generally open. I should also be only too pleased to challenge any Conservative Member who wished to join me in a game of squash. Bearing in mind what the Minister said about the dangers of that game, that may be the only way that we are likely to get the Government's majority down, as these promised Back-Bench rebellions never happen.

I shall concentrate on two issues, the first of which is the excellent sporting facilities that we have in Sheffield, which were built for the world student games, the future for them and what we can do with them. The second is football grounds and their safety.

The Minister's view of the quality of sporting facilities in this country is somewhat rosy. The reality is that in most sports, our major facilities do not bear comparison either in quality or in numbers with those of most other countries in Europe. For example, in Belgrade there are more Olympic-standard swimming pools than there are in Britain. That is repeated in many other sports. The examples for tennis were given by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies).

I take exception to the Minister's comments about what local authorities are able to do in the current financial climate. He mentioned that capital receipt rules had made the development of sporting facilities by local authorities more difficult. He did not say that, on top of that, since 1979 there have been successive and severe cuts in local authorities' borrowing abilities, particularly in the other services block, which is meant to provide resources for sporting development. He did not mention that leasing availability has been restricted by the most recent legislation.

The Minister did not mention another factor. Where local authorities have sought to enter into partnerships with the private sector, recent legislation has meant that when local authorities gave guarantees to enable the private sector to proceed on terms that it found acceptable, the guarantees effectively made all of that capital expenditure count as part of the local authorities' borrowing allocation and credit approval. That is another recent Government restriction. On top of that, capping is a major inhibiting factor in local authority spending on sport. Quite rightly, local authorities have to give priority to spending on education, social services and other key services when their resources are being steadily eroded.

The example given of the village in Wiltshire and what it did is a great credit to the people in the area. However, what they could do with their resources cannot be repeated in inner-city Sheffield constituencies, where 30 per cent. or more of the people face unemployment. Those who are in employment often earn low wages and simply do not have the extra resources to contribute to such projects. They have to rely on local and central Government to find the money.

I turn now to the facilities available in Sheffield which were built for the world student games. The games had some financial difficulties, mainly caused by the inability to raise sponsorship money in what was becoming a difficult financial climate. However, the games did not default on their responsibilities, unlike the Edinburgh Commonwealth games a few years before. In sporting and organisational terms, the games were a success, and both Sheffield and British sport gained a great deal of credit. We received a great deal of praise from competitors and sporting administrators from other countries for what was presented to them

The facilities were recognised not merely as the best in Britain, but as being as good as anything available throughout the world. Great credit was paid to the Ponds Forge swimming complex which is as good as anything in the world. The Don Valley stadium is certainly the best athletics stadium in Britain and the indoor arena is the best indoor arena. I was disappointed that when the Minister gave a resumé of the sporting facilities available in Britain, he did not mention one of the Sheffield sporting facilities, although they are acknowledged as being of international quality.

I hope that we can enter a new period of more co-operation between Sheffield and the Government on these matters. We should consider how we can use the facilities for the future, because international events will come to them. The European swimming championships will come to Sheffield next year.

I greatly welcome the Government's support for the Manchester Olympic bid and I wish Manchester every success. It is important to Britain and to British sport. In the meantime, other things will happen in sport in Britain, many of them in Sheffield. I hope that the Government will consider how they can help by working together with local people in the city to maximise the benefit of the existing facilities for the benefit of Sheffield and of Britain.

Already the fact that the city sees sport as part of a package of economic regeneration has benefits in terms of employment. We have talked a lot about jobs directly involved in sport. The spin-off from sporting development can be significant in helping areas to regenerate when they have lost much of their basic industry.

In the mid-1980s, Sheffield had unemployment of more than 4 per cent. above the national average and rising. We obviously have problems today; everyone is suffering from the recession. At least unemployment in Sheffield is now only 2 per cent. above the national average, not 4 per cent. as it was a few years ago.

The facilities are not only available for international events; the community is now using them. More than 1 million people used the swimming facilities within a year of their opening. The Minister referred to the Milton Keynes ice arena and to the success of the ice hockey team there. By comparison, the Sheffield Steelers ice hockey team attracts 8,000 people a week to watch ice hockey games, which is far in excess of any other ice hockey team in the country. Again, the team uses one of the facilities built for the games. All the facilities have been designed so that disabled people can participate in support and can watch sport in comfort, which is extremely important.

Sheffield, together with the local sporting organisations, seeks development programmes so that young people can become more expert in sport. One classic example in which I am sure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are interested, is the development of rugby league in Sheffield and the success of Sheffield Eagles. Success has come not only at the professional club. There has been a real development programme in which the city council, the Sports Council and governing bodies have come together to try to work at sports development. The development programme for rugby league, encouraging young people through the schools to start playing a sport that has not been traditional in the city, has been a great success.

In Sheffield, we believe that we are the city of sport. We now want to see how we can further the development programmes and bring together some of the best athletes and sports people in the country. We want to see how we can give them the benefits of our great facilities. We are therefore trying to launch a project known as Sport Sheffield. We would like the Government to support it and get involved in it.

The idea of the project is to bring national sporting squads to the city to use the facilities and to work with the university, which is offering its help and expertise in sports and sports medicine, about which we have heard a great deal today. They will work with our tertiary colleges with the support of the Sheffield business community and the chamber of commerce. Already active discussions are taking place with the regional sports council. The Sports Council is on the project group, as are other governing bodies, especially those in charge of diving and volley-ball. We want to launch a pilot project in which those will be the two lead sports. Already 70 per cent. of the Olympic diving squad has been to Sheffield because of the facilities there. Now we want to put in a bid to the Sports Council for funding of the project which we believe is of great importance not only for the proper use of the facilities but because it will enable people, by benefiting from them, to make British sport competitive with sport in other countries.

We want to involve the British Olympic Association, the National Coaching Foundation, the British Association of Sports Sciences and the British Association of Sport and Medicine. We must not just sit back and admire the facilities that we have built in Sheffield. They are for the benefit of the local community and for British sport in general, providing national centres of sporting excellence. I hope that the Government will display their commitment to this important process.

My other main topic concerns football, football grounds and their safety. I agree with the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) about the development of the premier league. Its only success has been to put prices up. I cannot see what football fans have gained from that. The league was born of the greed and ambition of a handful of people and a small number of clubs. I regret the fact that football has fragmented. I should like football to unite under one governing body that would look after not only premier league and other professional clubs but the amateur game too, so that football could be seen as one game.

The premier league clubs may have made a wrong move by thinking to benefit from the money coming in from BSkyB. In the end Channel 4 stole a march on the whole proceedings. It saw a gap in the market and put on Italian soccer on Sunday afternoons. The vast majority of sports fans and of avid followers of football to whom I have spoken say that they would not buy a BSkyB dish when they can watch AC Milan play Fiorentina and see the difference between that style of play and what passes for football here in a game, say, between Wimbledon and Crystal Palace—a more direct way of playing. The premier league has done nothing to benefit football as a spectacle, and I hope that the Government will look into that.

I have been to every football ground in the country bar one, so I have seen a few of the problems and some of the deplorable facilities in our grounds. I welcome the Government's commitment to assisting football with improvements to those grounds, but the Government

[Mr. Clive Betts]

turned a deaf ear to the pleas of football for many years before they decided to help. That did nothing to help develop football or the quality of facilities for spectators.

Now we are thinking about safety. I was at Hillsborough that terrible day when the disaster occurred. I was the leader of the city council at the time and I took a particular interest in the licensing of football grounds. In response to the Government's proposals and the Taylor report, and in disagreement with some hon. Members who have spoken today, I must say that I do not regard the provision of seating and the provision of safe facilities as necessarily synonymous. I know that that view is not shared by all in the House, but I spoke to Lord Justice Taylor after he had made his report, when he came to meet politicians and football administrators in South Yorkshire. He said that if he had known that there was a move in football to remove the appalling so-called safety fences, which I believe were a major cause of the Hillsborough disaster as people could not get on to the pitch from the enclosure, he might not have been so firm in his recommendation for seats at football grounds.

I welcome the Government's commitment to flexibility in respect of second and third division clubs. I should also like to see flexibility for premier and first division clubs. The rules for safety in standing areas are now more strict and more appropriate. There is a requirement for proper barriers, safety checks and a counting-in procedure. The problem at Hillsborough arose because there was no counting in for separated parts of the ground. Clubs are now obliged to carry out that clear Taylor recommendation. I believe that we should go further and also insist that fences in front of grounds should be removed as a major safety improvement.

I have seen seating areas at football grounds that are potentially more unsafe than many standing areas. Because of a shortage of money, clubs place seats on existing terracing. When people sit on them, they cannot see. As soon as the ball approaches a corner flag or the goal, they stand up. I have seen spectators standing on their seats for the last 10 minutes of a game to see what was happening. That is dangerous and it is happening at many football grounds.

The tragedy at Hillsborough occurred in a standing area although, as I have said, I believe that the problem involved the fences and the lack of a counting-in procedure. The Ibrox tragedy had nothing to do with the viewing area. It occurred when people left the ground. The tragedy at Bradford occurred in a seated area. It is no good simply to say that getting rid of standing areas is essential for safety at football grounds. Most grounds on the continent are not all-seater. There are standing areas at most continental grounds and those grounds seem to be able to cope.

I believe that the money would be better spent on safety per se rather than on a simple requirement to abolish standing areas. With regard to the consumer interests, the Football Supporters Association has stated that it does not believe that standing areas should be removed automatically from all football grounds. We should start to listen to people who go to matches every Saturday afternoon and enjoy their football in a way that may be anathema to people who have never stood on a kop behind a goal and enjoyed that particular atmosphere. It should not be beyond our power to enable those people to enjoy football in absolute safety.

I should like the Minister to commit himself to exploring, with all the people involved in Sheffield, ways forward to use our superb sporting facilities as centres of national excellence. I also ask for a reconsideration of the requirement that football grounds in the premier and first division should be all-seater ones. I do not believe that that is necessarily the best way to make grounds safer and better places for people to watch football.

2.12 pm

Mr. Pendry: With the leave of the House, I want to intervene for a few minutes. I am sure that the Minister would agree that it is better for all hon. Members to take part in a debate than to have long winding-up speeches. It is important that the Minister should have the longer time to reply because he has been asked many questions.

I am sure that the Minister will have realised by now the wisdom of promoting this debate. A great deal of popular acclaim has been heaped on him. My gosh, I have never known a Tory Minister be praised as much as the Minister has been in this debate. In fact, I am beginning to suspect some of my colleagues.

We have heard some very constructive speeches and I would normally want to refer to some of them and to the points that were made. However, I will not do that because it is important that the Minister should reply to the debate. The hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) was more constructive than ever. If ever there was an occasion when a sinner repenteth on the question of sports boycotts, it occurred today and long may that continue.

I want to refer to only one point. My hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) would not allow me to intervene when he wanted to know who should control boxing. As a steward of British Boxing Board of Control, I was about to answer his point. However, it will be sufficient for me to participate in the meeting with my hon. Friend the Minister and educate them both.

It has been an extremely good debate. Long may we have debates of this kind. I once more congratulate the Minister on initiating it.

2.14 pm

Mr. Key: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to reply to the debate.

When my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) first addressed the House as Secretary of State for National Heritage, he made it absolutely clear that he intended that the purpose of the Department of National Heritage should be to improve the quality of life for everybody wherever they are, and to improve access to sport, and that he would always do his best to ensure that it did not become a matter of party political wrangling. He stood true to those objectives, as do my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I.

This has been a remarkable debate. It has also been well informed. It proves again that the House of Commons is the best university in the country. There is always somebody who is a great expert on whatever happens to be under discussion at the time, and that has certainly been true of this debate.

Fourteen hon. Members, including myself, have contributed to the debate. The hon. Member for

Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) made a very challenging speech and I shall attempt to answer the questions that he raised. My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle), who spoke wisely about expenditure in sport, has spent all his time in the House as an expert on sport. The hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies) made a distinguished speech. I shall try to pick up some of his points, particularly those about television and sport. My hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) spoke enthusiastically, energetically and passionately about smoking and health, as well as about other issues, including swimming, which are important to his constituency.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) also spoke. We perfectly understand his disappearance to Inverness. We sympathise with him in his long travel and hope that he arrives there. If it is on skis, what a wonderful entry it will make for him. The hon. and learned Gentleman made important points, some of which I responded to at the time. My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) spoke with great enthusiasm about the lottery, and I was grateful for that.

The hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Mr. Callaghan), with whom I spent a happy time on the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts from 1984, spoke with passion about Hopwood Hall college and the role that that institution hoped to achieve. He laid down a challenge which will be hard to resist when I am in the north-west, which I am glad to say I regularly am. I shall certainly bear in mind his kind invitation and weigh carefully the arguments that he laid before the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) spoke with great sprightliness about physical fitness, and she is a fine example to all of us, if I may say so, on that subject. She also spoke with passion about education being about not only mental education but moral and physical education as well. The hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) spoke about the Saints. I give him the assurance that he seeks. I will indeed have another look at whether there is anything that I can do, possibly in conjunction with my hon. Friend the Minister in the Department of the Environment with responsibility for planning. We will see how we might be able to help.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva) spoke warmly of the Bees and wider issues. I am grateful to him for having such a broad knowledge of the issues which confront the Government and indeed all those concerned with sport.

The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) spoke passionately, too, about boxing. When I was 10 years old, I won the school boxing cup. If you look closely at my nose, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will discover that it has a slight bend at one point. However, that was caused not in the boxing ring but in the swimming bath by hitting the bottom rather too fast.

My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) mentioned the importance of policing at all our sporting events. It does not matter whether one goes to football matches or to grand prix races, one finds that the police are always there with the other emergency services. If it were not for them, and often for the services of the St. John Ambulance Brigade and of other voluntary organisations, sporting events would be more dangerous and less easy to control. I join my hon. Friend in thanking all those dedicated men and women for their contribution to sport.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) spoke with great knowledge about Sheffield and its sporting contribution. I must say in response to his challenge to join him, whether in the gymnasium or elsewhere, that from looking at him he clearly has absolutely no stamina and I would go many rounds further than him in almost any sport. But that is enough of that.

The hon. Gentleman made important comments which I shall deal with later. I am well aware of Sheffield's investment in sporting facilities. I have seen them and they are impressive. Sheffield is fortunate to have them. The Sports Council is working on initiatives to designate certain cities as cities of sport which would be equipped to host international sporting events. I urge the hon. Gentleman to encourage Sheffield city council to make its views known to the Sports Council if it has not already done so. We cannot ignore the issue. We have many fine international sporting venues and we need to take the initiative forward constructively.

We have had a constructive debate. It has been a breath of fresh air in ventilating an issue about which so many people feel passionately. I sometimes have to point out to my colleagues in the Government that, whereas they scan the column inches, we scan the number of pages which deal with all the issues that confront the Department of National Heritage every day. Therefore, I look forward to many more debates on sport.

I noted the comments of the hon. Member for Tooting about the need to have debates on specific sporting issues. Of course, it will be up to the business managers to decide whether we should have an annual debate on sport, but they will have noted the success of today's debate. I shall make it clear that I wish to have more debates on sport. It is significant that today's debate was the first debate on sport that the Conservative Government have initiated in Government time.

Funding has occupied a great deal of time. I paid tribute earlier to the role of local authorities. Several hon. Members called for additional resources. As my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North said, it is too easy to call for extra money. We need to be sure that the money currently devoted to sport is well used. As I said, compulsory competitive tendering has helped local authorities. City challenge has also targeted money to inner-city areas. My predecessor published a document on sport in inner cities. I recognise that it is crucial, for social reasons and to the health of people who live in the inner cities, that we do what we can to encourage sport and the provision of sporting facilities.

Of course, I am aware that the best local authorities are good. I have met them; I have been there; I have seen it. However, there is some way to go before we have a general assurance of value for money. That is not a party-political comment. I have seen the good and the bad under all types of political control and none. We must be sure that clear objectives are set to which resources are applied economically and efficiently.

My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North also referred to the need to control administrative costs in sport. We shall examine carefully the future control of administrative costs in the new United Kingdom sports commission and the sports council for England. That will occur as part of the current national structural reforms.

I welcome the broad support of the House for the current reforms. It may help if I make a few remarks about the role of the United Kingdom Sports Council. The

[Mr. Key]

council was not conceived as a supranational talking shop with a nebulous co-ordinating role. It has clear functions to lead on United Kingdom-wide strategic issues, especially performance and excellence, to encourage rationalisation of sport and the voluntary sector and to promote the United Kingdom's interests internationally.

The precise split of the resources of the present Sports Council between the successor bodies is a matter on which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State awaits proposals from the Sports Council. We expect the United Kingdom sports commission to have the resources necessary to do the job properly, based on the functions which the Government have specified in the policy document "Sport and Active Recreation".

The Manchester bid for the Olympic games has been widely welcomed on both sides of the House. In view of the comments of several hon. Members, I give a further assurance, if any such assurance were necessary—I guess that it is as we approach the public spending round—that resources are available for the Olympic velodrome and arena and for the acquisition and preparation of the stadium site. Let us not be in any doubt about that.

On tax issues, although we welcome the valuable contribution made by sporting bodies, successive Governments have believed that it would not be right to single them out for special privileges which equally worthy organisations do not enjoy. Many sports organisations are unincorporated associations, which means that they pay no tax on income from subscriptions and many funding-raising activities, nor do they pay any tax on gratis donations. That tax treatment recognises that many of their activities are not undertaken for commercial reasons.

To extend tax exemption to activities carried out on a commercial basis, even though profits are intended to be used for the benefit of sport, would raise wider questions of fairness to taxpayers. Furthermore, it would put sports organisations in a more favourable position than charities, which are exempt on trading income only, in limited circumstances. Any change in capital allowances is a matter for Treasury Ministers to consider.

The Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde, mentioned Great Barr grant-maintained school in Birmingham. Sadly, it has become apparent that agreement is unlikely to be reached between the school and Birmingham city council about the dual use of facilities on that site. The matter has been referred to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education for determination. I am sure that the House will understand that in those circumstances I cannot comment on the merits of the case. The standard procedure for determination incorporates a period of consultation with the local authority and the Education Assets Board.

Mr. Pendry: Will the Under-Secretary assure the House that he will have an input into that determination with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education?

Mr. Key: Yes, I shall raise that issue with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Schools when I see him in the near future. Each case must be considered on its merits. There is no standard timetable, but I shall inquire from my hon. Friend about the progress being made.

On playing fields, I appreciate the case for automatic eligibility and that playing fields should remain for the benefit of the community in perpetuity. The case-by-case approach means that each application can be considered on its merits. Nearly 3,000 playing fields or recreation grounds in England are registered as charities. We must continue the case-by-case approach.

I have been asked what the Government are doing to help the National Playing Fields Association and the Sports Council to prevent the loss of recreational land. The Sports Council's grant-in-aid settlement from the Government in 1991-92 included £500,000 to enable the establishment of a register of recreational land. Work is in hand on the register, with the Sports Council, the National Playing Fields Association and the Central Council of Physical Recreation as co-sponsors. The register should be up and running by May 1993.

In addition, planning policy guidance note No.17, issued by the Department of the Environment, emphasised the importance that the Government place on the need for recreational land and open spaces. It asks local authorities to take full account of the community's need for recreational space, to consider the long-term need for playing fields before allowing them to be developed, and to consult sporting bodies when planning for sport and recreation.

On the sale of television rights, I was asked why the Government have not intervened to prevent live premier league matches from being shown exclusively on BSkyB. Although live screening is restricted to BSkyB, more football is probably being shown on terrestrial channels —including live matches—than ever before. The BBC has the right to show extended highlights of premier league matches in "Match of the Day." Live FA cup and European cup matches and highlights of international matches are also shown on terrestrial television. For those who are interested in international football, Channel 4 regularly televises Italian serie A matches on Sunday afternoons.

The Broadcasting Act 1990 sets out the framework for the coverage of listed sporting events, which may not be provided on pay-per-view terms. Some hon. Members suggested that that should be extended. The events that are covered are cricket test matches involving England, the Derby, the FIFA world cup finals, the FA cup final, the grand national, the Olympic games, the finals weekend of the Wimbledon tennis championships and any days that the championship overruns, and the Scottish FA cup final. The list does not include live coverage of football games apart from the FA cup final, the Scottish FA cup final and the world cup tournament; nor has there ever been any suggestion that it should.

The community use of sports facilities, the dual use issue, is being addressed in the Education Bill which has just been placed before the House. I hope that that anomaly can be cleared up without delay. There is no doubt——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

EUROPEAN LEGISLATION

Ordered,

That Mr. Jimmy Wray be discharged from the Select Committee on European Legislation and that Mr. Jimmy Boyce be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

M20 (Junctions 3–5)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

2.30 pm

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling): I fear that this week I am not the favourite son of the Department of Transport—perhaps not in any week—because yesterday I voiced my concerns about the Department's rail policies as they may affect my constituents and today my attention is directed to roads with special reference to the widening of the M20 between junctions 3 and 5. My hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic, who is in his place, has, I am sure, a glowing account in his brief of the Department's conduct of that widening scheme. I shall start by giving him a view from the Tonbridge and Malling end of the telescope.

The Department's critical mistake occurred when the scheme was announced in the May 1989 White Paper "Roads for Prosperity". The announcement was not accompanied by any detail of how the scheme would be carried out. As a result, the maximum possible blight was created. The Department should have carried out its own internal design work. If it had done so even a relatively cursory examination would have led it to the conclusion that it eventually reached—that the widening scheme would have to be carried out essentially within the boundaries of the existing line of the motorway as it is heavily built up on both sides. If the Department of Transport had announced that at the outset, the incidence of blight would have been fractional compared with what has taken place.

Having announced its intention to widen without specifying how, the Department found that it had to serve hundreds of statutory blight notices along the length of this section of motorway. Following the service of those notices the Department acquired, or is in the process of acquiring, about 300 properties along the motorway. At least three quarters of those properties would not have been acquired if a different procedure had been followed. As a result I estimate that about £25 million of taxpayers' money has been unnecessarily spent.

I referred that expenditure to the Comptroller and Auditor General and I am glad to say that Sir John Bourn is currently examining the Department's handling of public money in connection with this widening scheme. I look forward to his conclusions. Unhappily that is not the end of the story and the acute difficulties continue, because the Department is trying to get its money back. It is trying to get its money back by securing vacant possession of the hundreds of houses that it now owns and, by getting vacant possession of houses that are the subject of short-term lettings, it is creating a serious homeless problem which has considerable ramifications for the local housing authority.

I sincerely hope that lessons for the future have been learnt from that scheme. One lesson that I beg the Department to learn is that when it proposes widening schemes in future, they should be done on a basis that minimises the statutory blight created.

My hon. Friend will be aware that when statutory blight is created, particularly if it is on a large scale, secondary blight will often be created alongside the area of statutory blight. That is exactly what has happened in my constituency. Those living immediately adjacent to the blighted area find it impossible to sell their homes because people are understandably reluctant to buy property immediately adjacent to many properties owned by the Department of Transport—properties which may not be well maintained and in which maintenance standards may be falling, and property that is all on short-term lettings.

The Government have dealt with the problem in their Planning and Compensation Act 1991. I wish to make a positive comment on that point. My constituents were afraid that the Secretary of State for Transport would not make proper use—or would make no use whatever—of his discretionary acquisition powers under section 62. I am glad to say that that fear has proved to be wholly unfounded and, as I know from the written answer that I received earlier this week, the Secretary of State has now authorised the acquisition of 18 properties under section 62 and is considering acquiring a further 32. Therefore, he is dealing in a proper, compassionate and sensitive way with some heart rending cases of people who are facing chonic ill health—in some cases terminal illness, mental breakdown, marriage breakdown and so on—and who have been unable to move house when they were desperate to do so. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will continue to exercise his discretionary powers in a compassionate and sympathetic way with the remaining cases.

I wish to put four specific points to my hon. Friend. The first is in the critical area of homelessness that is now being created by the Department of Transport endeavouring to get vacant possession of those hundreds of houses now in the Department's ownership. The difficulty being created is the difference of legal view between the Department of Transport and the housing authority under the Tonbridge and Malling borough council regarding the statutory homeless position that has arisen. I have raised the matter with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State who, in a recent letter to me, said:

> "it is by no means certain that displaced tenants will necessarily place a rehousing liability on the local authority even if they apply to them for accommodation".

The legal view of the Tonbridge and Malling council—a view shared by the Housing Corporation and officials within the Department of the Environment—is that some statutory liabilities under the homeless persons legislation will certainly fall on the Tonbridge and Malling borough council. They will be short-term rehousing liabilities and, almost certainly, a degree of long-term responsibility for rehousing. That being so, I would regard it as unacceptable if central Government sought to stand aside from the homelessness problem and its financial implications for which they are wholly responsible.

Central Government, through the Department of Transport, created the blight in the first place. Central Government acquired the houses, and have decided to let them. Central Government have sought vacant possession of the houses and have asked the tenants to go. Those tenants are left facing homelessness as a result. It is fairly and squarely a central Government responsibility and, in my book, it is also fairly and squarely a central Government financial liability. I say to my hon. Friend the Minister and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in the starkest terms that I expect central Government to discharge their financial responsibilities towards Tonbridge and Malling borough council.

Secondly, there were difficulties with the management of the properties in the early stages. A small minority of unsuitable and disruptive tenants were put into the

[Sir John Stanley]

Department of Transport houses. I thought that those management difficulties had largely been overcome, but I am not sure that they have.

I recently received a letter from a constituent complaining strongly about the menagerie of animals being kept by the Department of Transport's tenant in the adjacent house. I took it up with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. When he replied, he confirmed that four dogs, one of which had to be put down as it was dangerous, and two hunting ferrets had been kept in the property. My constituent, who lived next door, had a nine-month-old baby and both the dogs and ferrets had been escaping into her property. I do not think that it is particularly satisfactory to have a nine-month-old baby and ferrets close together, and I trust that my hon. Friend the Minister will look closely at the need to tighten up and get a grip on the management of the large number of Department of Transport properties.

Thirdly, when the road widening scheme was originally announced in 1989, Department of Transport officials said that they hoped that the scheme would be completed before the channel tunnel opened in 1993. We are now only a few months away from 1993, and nowhere near even starting the construction of the road widening scheme.

In 1991, my hon. Friend's predecessor, Mr. Christopher Chope—who is sadly no longer a Member of Parliament—said that it was hoped to start construction of the widening scheme in 1995, and to complete it two years later. Is it still intended to start construction in 1995? I earnestly hope that it will start soon, particularly as I have many constituents with a legal case for injurious affection compensation against the Department of Transport under the Land Compensation Act 1973 for depreciation in the value of their houses caused by the scheme. Under the provisions of that Act it is not possible to secure compensation until one year after the new highway scheme comes into operation. Therefore, the longer the delay in commencing the scheme, the longer it will take my constituents to receive compensation to which they are legally entitled.

Fourthly, I raised the environmental aspects of the widening scheme in the two previous Adjournment debates on the subject that I have requested. When I raised the matter in the debate on 17 January this year, the then Minister, Mr. Christopher Chope, assured me:

> "the road will be constructed to a very high standard and the most modern noise attenuation measures will be included in the scheme."—*Official Report*, 17 January 1992; Vol. 201, c. 1291–92.]

I warmly welcome that commitment, but may we have more detail on how it will be discharged? As I said, the road passes through residential areas and noise quietening will be of the utmost importance.

In June, I wrote to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport urging that consideration be given to the use of porous asphalt for the surface of that section of the motorway. By mid-October, I had not received a reply, and so wrote him a further letter. I do not know whether he has replied in the past day or so, but, to the best of my knowledge, no such reply has yet reached me. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister has an answer for me this afternoon. I hope that the Department will consider seriously the use of porous asphalt. It is a quiet and safe material, and I warmly welcome the Department's change of policy in relation to its use.

Can my hon. Friend give me any more details today about what form of

> "most modern noise attenuation measures"

will be use in connection with the widening scheme, and an assurance that, when those measures are developed and ready for discussion by the Department, there will be full and proper consultation with the local authority and local people?

I seek four specific assurances from my hon. Friend. First, I seek a clear assurance that central Government will discharge their financial responsibilities towards the housing authority in relation to the inescapable homeless persons expenditure that will follow from the Department's gaining vacant possession of the properties alongside the M20. Secondly, I seek an assurance that the management of the properties will be tightened up—and, I hope, improved. Thirdly, I hope that my hon. Friend will give me an assurance about the timetable and an assurance that the widening scheme will be proceeded with as quickly as possible so that my constituents can gain their injurious affection compensation. Finally, I hope that he will assure me that the earlier commitment that the

> "most modern noise attenuation measures"

would be adopted will be fully implemented.

2.47 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Kenneth Carlisle): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) on securing this Adjournment debate. The fact that it is his third such debate shows his care for his constituents, his deep concern about the matter and his determination that we should pursue all possible efforts to ensure that the road is built as carefully as possible for the benefit of his constituents and the travelling public. I take his comments very seriously, particularly those about blight and the way in which we tackle and plan such roads. Wherever we can learn lessons, we must do so. The widening scheme was one of the first proposals of its kind and since it was devised we have been learning lessons and applying them to schemes that we are now introducing. I am nevertheless grateful to my right hon. Friend, and I respect his efforts on behalf of his constituents. He is quite right to pursue the matter.

I want first to give a general view of the roads in the area because it is important to see the matter in a strategic context. My right hon. Friend will be aware of the Government's commitment to a fully improved M20 which, with the proposed A20 route, will provide the main high-quality road artery connecting the channel tunnel, Folkestone and Dover, the M25/M26, London and the rest of the United Kingdom road network.

Much progress has been made. The "missing link" of the M20 between Maidstone and Ashford was completed and opened to traffic in May 1991. Work on the road between junctions 5 and 8 started in July 1991 and is well on target for completion before the channel tunnel opens in 1993. Good progress is being made on all three contracts for the construction of the new A20 between Folkestone and Dover, which also will be completed in time for the tunnel opening.

That leaves the Department's proposals for widening the M20 between junctions 3 and 5, which were announced in October 1991. As my right hon. Friend knows, publicity brochures were widely circulated in the locality of the proposed works and a local exhibition of plans was held. The comments that were received by the Department are being taken into account in the detailed development of the scheme, which is now under way. Subject to statutory procedures, we hope to start work in 1995. It will take two years to build. We still hope to stick to that timetable.

I understand my right hon. Friend's frustration about the time taken to bring the scheme to this stage, and I truly sympathise with his constituents who have suffered uncertainty during this period. One of the great problems of building roads is that it creates blight and uncertainty. It is one of our prime tasks and duties to limit that as far as possible and to offer compensation where we cannot do so.

We must, however, take time in preparing our roads. We must investigate properly the right design for a motorway widening scheme and must develop the project with much care and attention to detail, especially where it goes through an urban area. Many schemes and options were investigated, including a number of ways of widening the road and even a new off-line solution. My right hon. Friend rightly said that where it is proposed to build a road through an urban area it behoves us to be more precise at an earlier early stage. That is a useful suggestion.

Most of the options that we considered would have required substantial land acquisition, and in the end the preferred scheme requires the loss of only a few homes along the motorway. Nevertheless, because of the uncertainty that then existed about how the widening would be implemented, it was only right that people living within the 67 m band, who needed to sell their houses but could not do so because of the blighting effects of the scheme, should have been able to require the Department to acquire the properties from them under the planning and blight rules. Not to have allowed that would have penalised unfairly the many local householders who had genuine reasons for wanting to move during the period when the scheme options were being evaluated.

Some regard the 67 m band as too restrictive, but a line must be drawn somewhere, and however one frames the rules, there will always be cases that fall just outside them. We tried to be as generous as possible in interpreting the rules.

My reply today to the two questions tabled by my right hon. Friend explains that, to date, we have acquired 264 dwellings under the statutory blight provisions. A further 28 are in the process of acquisition, following acceptance of blight notices. Acceptance of blight notices within the 67 m band effectively ceased on announcement of the scheme's proposals last October, but section 62 of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 embodied discretionary powers which, for the first time, enabled us to acquire at this stage property within and outside the 67 m planning blight zone which we expect to be seriously affected by the widening.

Those new powers enable the Department to assist certain carefully defined categories of householders who wish to move but who are not eligible for consideration under the planning and blight provisions. As I announced in the House in January, the Department is now able to consider individual applications for acquisitions under the new powers and we have already agreed to acquire some 18 properties. Further applications are being considered on their merits and will be dealt with as quickly as possible. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his support for that compensation and these proposals.

My right hon. Friend was rightly concerned about the future of the houses currently in the Department's ownership which will be surplus to requirements for our proposed scheme and about arrangements for the rehousing of the tenants living in them when their tenancies expire. I confirm that the majority of the properties that have been acquired will not be needed for the scheme. My officials have been considering the timing and method of disposal of these surplus properties. I appreciate the concern of the local housing authority, Tonbridge and Malling borough council, that it could be faced with a major rehousing problem. I can give my right hon. Friend the assurance that the Department is in close liaison with the council about the programme of disposals. Following a number of meetings with officials of the council, the Department of the Environment, the Housing Corporation and the district valuer, the Department is working up a strategy to minimise the potential for homelessness.

My right hon. Friend referred to the letter dated 30 September that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State wrote to him and said that the Department and the council were in some conflict in their understanding of the situation. I believe that my right hon. Friend's letter clearly sets out our view, but if there is still misunderstanding, that is unsatisfactory and we need to sort out exactly what the position is, and we should do that. Our aim is also to avoid homelessness wherever possible.

As to disposal of surplus vacant property, we have already made an encouraging start despite the downturn in the housing market. Purchasers have been secured for 25 properties, two of which have already been sold. A further batch is under offer and if not sold will be put up for auction in December. Our objective is to dispose of our remaining stock in a phased, orderly manner extending tenancies where necessary to avoid homelessness and to secure value for money.

I take what my right hon. Friend said about suitable tenants because there is, as always, a problem and we need to work hard to ensure that the right people go into the houses as tenants.

My right hon. Friend also asked about noise reduction measures for the widened motorway, with particular reference to the use of a blacktop porous asphalt rather than a concrete surface. As a result of my announcement on 29 July on road surface noise, we shall not be using a concrete surface. We may use a blacktop surface, but I take what he said about porous asphalt. We can do far more than we have to surface our roads in a way that makes them quieter and to make more barriers against noise. I feel that it is one of my prime duties to make progress on this. However, we are slightly concerned about porous ashalt where roads are heavily used by traffic, especially by heavy goods vehicles, because we are worried about the lifespan of porous asphalt under such conditions. I shall certainly look at this carefully, but I cannot give any commitment.

As to other measures to reduce noise, we have employed landscape consultants who are looking to landscape the road carefully to make it as attractive as possible within that narrow corridor. We shall be looking at every way possible to reduce noise. We are examining various barriers such as those used on the continent to see

[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle]

whether we can devise an effective scheme to reduce noise. There will be help with insulation where houses meet the regulations. There will be much time to consult and consider how we should proceed.

I hope that I have answered the points raised by my right hon. Friend. I respect the efforts that he makes on behalf of his constituents with great tenacity. We shall do our best to learn all the necessary lessons. We are keen to consult local peole wherever possible. I know that he will keep me in touch with their views. We shall do everything possible to engineer this road quietly but in a way that will enable it to cope with the heavy traffic without too much disturbance to his constituents.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.

Written Answer to Question

Thursday 24 September 1992

EDUCATION

Education Expenditure (London)

Mr. Thomason: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how the cost of education provision has changed within inner London in comparison to those costs for outer London between the financial years preceding, including and succeeding the abolition of the Inner London education authority.

Mr. Forth: The latest year for which information on local education authorities' actual spending is available is 1989-90. That was the last year of the Inner London education authority. In the three years to 1989-90, London LEAs' net recurrent expenditure on education was as shown in the table.

LEAs' net recurrent expenditure[1] on education

Year	*Inner London £ million*	*[2]Outer London £ million*
1987-88	1,103	1,202
1988-89	1,086	1,417
1989-90	1,085	1,485

[1] Net recurrent expenditure includes total expenditure other than capital financing costs, less income other than from specific Government grants. Information is taken from LEAs' returns to the Department of the Environment of their actual spending.

[2] Excluding the following LEAs, which did not complete returns: 1987-88, Ealing and Haringey; 1988-89, Haringey; 1989-90, Haringey and Hounslow.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 25 September 1992

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Genetically Modified Organisms

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how he intends to respond to ethical concerns over the use of genetically modified organisms as food.

Mr. Gummer: I have asked the Reverend John Polkinghorne, president of Queen's College Cambridge, to chair a study into this and various related issues. The other members of the group will be Professor Derek Burke, vice chancellor of the University of East Anglia, Professor Brian Heap, director of research at the AFRC Institute of Animal Physiology and Genetic Research, Mrs. Harriet Kimbell, vice-chairman of the Consumers Association, Mr. Richard Callaghan, controller of ASDA's technical division and the Reverend Arthur Peacocke, formerly warden of the Society of Ordained Scientists.

The study's terms of reference will be:

to consider future trends in the production of transgenic organisms; to consider the moral and ethical concerns (other than those relating to food safety) that may arise from the use of food products derived from production programmes involving such organisms; and to make recommendations.

Recently, we have seen significant developments towards the use of genetic modification in food production. This technology has the potential to benefit farmers, food producers and consumers by extending the range, quality and types of food available. However, the Government are also aware that these developments raise ethical and moral concerns.

Therefore, we thought it right to give early consideration to these issues. The new advisory group will consider likely future trends in the use of genetic modification in food production and the concerns that might arise from the consumption of food from such programmes, and recommend how those concerns might be addressed.

I believe that the issues with which the committee is concerned need to be widely debated and I know the study team will be inviting views from all interested groups and individuals. I have asked the study team to report to me within a year.

ENVIRONMENT

Property Services Agency

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to offer PSA Projects for sale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[pursuant to his reply, 22 May 1992, c. 273]:* I hope to exchange contracts with the selected bidder for PSA Projects shortly. Parliamentary approval of new expenditure on the main sale expenses will be sought in a winter supplementary estimate for the Property Services Agency of the Department of the Environment: PSA Services Vote—class VIII, vote 12. However, since completion may take place before the House has voted to approve the supplementary estimate, any money needed to enable the vendor to complete the sale will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund.

County Hall, London

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what factors will be considered in deciding the future of county hall; and when the matter falls to be determined.

Mr. Howard *[pursuant to his reply, 24 June 1992, c. 197]:* I have today written to the chairman of the London residuary body withdrawing the direction that I issued to that body on 22 July, prohibiting it from taking any steps in relation to the sale or disposal of county hall without first obtaining my consent.

That direction was issued for the purpose of giving the London School of Economics and Political Science the opportunity of submitting a bid for the county hall site. It was, however, one of the conditions that I agreed with the director of the LSE, before issuing that direction, that any proposal to acquire county hall should be endorsed by the Universities Funding Council as required by the rules that govern universities' property transactions. The Universities Funding Council has written to the LSE today that it did not feel able to endorse its proposal. The Government have therefore concluded that any bid by the LSE for county hall would involve a significant and unacceptable call on public funds.

Written Answers to Questions

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Written Answers to Questions

Monday 19 October 1992

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Cultural Heritage

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage under what criteria areas of cultural heritage are to be classified as being areas of European significance, under the proposed article 128 of the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Brooke: Criteria will be agreed over time at meetings of the Council after the normal process of consultation among EC member states, the Commission and other interested parties has taken place.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what financial provisions, and how much, he has made within his Department in order to look at the potential for deregulation of each of the regulatory measures for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Key: There is no specific financial provision for deregulation in the Department of National Heritage for the current financial year. This Department is fully committed to the Government's deregulation policy and will keep this under review in the policy areas for which it is responsible.

National Lottery

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what evidence his Department has gathered on the effects of national lotteries in other countries on public funding of the arts, sports and charities.

Mr. Brooke: Many countries have lotteries and the effects on public funding vary accordingly to the policies of those countries' Governments. The position set out in the United Kingdom Government's White Paper, "A National Lottery: Raising Money for Good Causes" was that

> "the Government will not make any case by case reduction in conventional expenditure programmes to take account of awards from the lottery proceeds".

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what research his Department has undertaken or plans to undertake into the effects of a national lottery on *(a)* donations to charities, *(b)* small lotteries and *(c)* low income families.

Mr. Brooke: The Department has commissioned consultants to carry out research and advise on a number of aspects of the national lottery, including the matters raised by the hon. Member.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the dual viability of the proposed national lottery and the premium bond prize draw; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The products offered by these two schemes are very different. Premium bonds are a savings instrument. We expect both schemes to be viable.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish the contents of submissions he has received on the subject of the national lottery; and if he will place copies in the Library.

Mr. Brooke: I have no plans to do so.

Television Licences

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will review the code of practice governing the behaviour of television licence officers in respect of the carrying out of their work with full regard for courtesy and crime prevention.

Mr. Brooke: Under the Broadcasting Act 1990 responsibility for issuing TV licences and enforcing the licensing requirement was transferred to the BBC with effect from 1 April 1991. The question should accordingly be re-directed to the secretary of the BBC.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to review the regulations surrounding concessionary television licences for those resident in accommodation for short and long-term physically and mentally disabled persons.

Mr. Brooke: We have no plans to review the regulations governing the concessionary licence scheme.

"A Vision for Vauxhall Gardens"

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to "A Vision for Vauxhall Gardens" to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Key: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the Exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 16 to 20 November 1992.

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the total sum given by cigarette manufacturers in sponsorship for *(a)* sport and *(b)* other cultural activities in the latest year for which figures are available; and what proportion *(a)* and *(b)* represent of the total sponsorship from non-government sources in each case.

Mr. Brooke: Sponsorship of sport in the United Kingdom by the tobacco industry was worth £7·630 million for the year ending 31 March 1991. The total value of sports sponsorship is estimated to be in excess of £200 million a year.

Annual business sponsorship of the arts, including corporate membership, was more than £57 million on 1990-91, the latest year for which firm figures are available. Neither the Department nor the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts holds information on spending on arts sponsorship by the tobacco industry.

EDUCATION

Adult Guidance Service

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the adult guidance service.

Mr. Forman: Guidance for adults is provided in a variety of ways, including by LEA's as part of the careers service and in the form of free-standing services. LEA's are building up links with TECs in the provision of these services. We hope that LEA services will play an important part in the Government's assessment and guidance credits initiative, announced in the White Paper "People, Jobs and Opportunity".

Discretionary Grants

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will require local education authorities to make education discretionary grants with regard to the further education of residents within the local education authority's area at a college or university outside its area, in cases where the course undertaken by the student is not available within the authority's own area.

Mr. Forman: It is for local education authorities to decide their own policies when exercising their discretionary powers. My right hon. Friend has no power to require authorities to exercise their discretion in particular ways.

National Curriculum Technology

Mr. Malone: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) whether, after the review of national curriculum technology has been completed, the definition of construction materials as contained in the present order governing national curriculum technology shall still apply;

(2) if he will consider the widening of the definition of construction materials contained in the present order governing national curriculum technology.

Mr. Forth: The independent review of national curriculum technology aims to clarify the learning requirements for the subject. It would be inappropriate to comment until my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and for Wales have received the review group's report and published joint proposals for consultation. A full statement will be made in due course.

Spelling Standards

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to make the grant of mandatory awards for university students conditional upon individual achievement of satisfactory spelling standards.

Mr. Forman: No. My right hon. Friend has recently reminded the higher education institutions of their responsibility to require appropriate entry standards—including standards in basic skills—and to make those clear to schools and potential students.

Departmental Objectives

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Education pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Harwich of 15 July, *Official Report*, column *726* when he expects to complete the review of these objectives of each branch and division within his Department; and if he will set these objectives out separately for each division and branch in the *Official Report* when his review is complete.

Mr. Forman: I have written to my hon. Friend. A copy of my reply is available in the Library.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what financial provisions, and how much, he has made within his Department in order to look at the potential for deregulation of each of the regulatory measures for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Forman: Deregulation issues are dealt with within current resources: the Department is responsible for very few regulations affecting businesses.

Rudolf Steiner Waldorf Education

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received regarding the funding of Rudolf Steiner Waldorf education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has received 120 letters from hon. Members and 20 letters from others interested in Steiner education. A deputation led by Mr. Brien Masters, chairman of the Steiner Schools Foundation was also received by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education—my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman)—in September. Steiner schools offer a distinctive approach to education and one which is clearly valued by parents and supporters of the schools. They thus contribute to the richness and diversity which is the hallmark of independent school provision in this country. There is, however, absolutely no justification for supporting this particular group of independent schools from public funds either now or in the future.

Schools, Greenwich

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to be able to approve the application for capital approval for extra forms of entry for St. Thomas More and St. Paul's schools in the London borough of Greenwich.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State expects to be able to announce his decision on these proposals within the next few weeks.

School Budgets

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will set out for each local education authority the percentage of the aggregate schools budget represented by *(a)* the potential schools budget, *(b)* GM-related expenditure and *(c)* the general schools budget in the most recent year for which information is available.

Mr. Forth: The tables set out, for each authority, the aggregated schools budget as a proportion of the potential schools budget, and other information relating to the extent to which resources are retained for spending by the authority and the extent to which resources are allocated to schools on the basis of their pupil numbers. Figures for spending on local authority schools of a type which governors of grant-maintained schools have to make themselves could only be calculated for all local education authorities at disproportionate cost. I will write to my hon. Friend with a detailed explanation of the factors involved.

Table: The extent of LEAs' delegation to schools (1992-93)

1 *Local education authority (LEA)*	*2* *PSB delegated to schools* 1992-93 per cent	*(1991-92) per cent*	*3* *PSB not delegated per pupil 1992-93 £*	*4* *Central administration as proportion of PSB* 1992-93 per cent	*(1991-92) per cent*	*5* *Central administration per pupil 1992-93 £*
All LEAs where LMS in operation before April 1992						
1 Berkshire	89·11	(87·68)	190	2·18	(2·78)	40
2 Sefton	88·78	(87·86)	210	2·41	(2·71)	40
3 Bolton	88·52	(88·31)	210	1·49	(2·06)	30
4 Stockport	88·34	(88·69)	220	2·23	(3·15)	40
5 Sunderland	88·31	(88·40)	200	2·14	(2·15)	40
6 Rochdale	88·31	(88·46)	200	2·32	(2·37)	40
7 Bexley	88·27	(81·32)	210	2·88	(5·06)	50
8 Cheshire	88·26	(87·35)	200	1·83	(1·71)	30
9 Barking	87·85	(85·20)	230	3·22	(3·27)	60
10 Northamptonshire	87·62	(86·01)	220	1·66	(2·23)	30
11 West Sussex	87·38	(87·67)	220	2·25	(2·09)	40
12 Devon	87·31	(87·14)	220	2·73	(2·53)	50
13 Cambridgeshire	87·22	(87·45)	230	2·10	(2·03)	40
14 Manchester	87·19	(88·03)	240	2·94	(3·54)	50
15 Northumberland	87·17	(88·16)	200	2·68	(2·37)	40
16 Hertfordshire	87·14	(86·19)	240	3·75	(3·81)	70
17 Bury	87·08	(85·31)	230	2·29	(2·00)	40
18 Warwickshire	87·03	(86·72)	220	3·07	(3·19)	50
19 Suffolk	87·01	(87·56)	240	1·23	(0·78)	20
20 Brent	86·91	(83·51)	290	4·04	(4·26)	90
21 Croydon	86·83	(81·00)	290	2·97	(4·15)	60
22 Leeds	86·79	(86·26)	250	3·31	(4·22)	60
23 Cumbria	86·72	(85·41)	240	2·27	(3·02)	40
24 Hampshire	86·56	(86·11)	250	2·39	(3·16)	40
25 Enfield	86·39	(84·68)	270	2·89	(3·69)	60
26 Lincolnshire	86·34	(85·46)	250	2·29	(2·21)	40
27 Shropshire	86·31	(86·09)	270	1·83	(2·00)	40
28 Norfolk	86·24	(84·37)	260	2·36	(3·35)	40
29 Ealing	86·14	(82·92)	280	2·95	(5·86)	60
30 Havering	86·09	(85·09)	270	2·08	(1·93)	40
31 South Tyneside	85·98	(85·94)	240	1·90	(2·06)	30
32 Oxfordshire	85·91	(84·68)	280	3·48	(2·85)	70
33 Isle of Wight	85·76	(83·75)	270	1·90	(1·92)	40
34 Solihull	85·76	(85·59)	270	1·15	(1·93)	20
35 Wirral	85·75	(85·73)	250	1·39	(2·59)	20
36 Surrey	85·68	(84·61)	270	3·79	(4·85)	70
37 Walsall	85·68	(85·50)	260	3·11	(3·40)	60
38 Westminster	85·63	(84·88)	370	4·44	(5·59)	110
39 Somerset	85·61	(85·48)	280	2·29	(2·69)	40
40 Calderdale	85·58	(85·46)	250	3·73	(2·39)	60
41 Kingston	85·57	(84·35)	310	3·51	(4·11)	80
42 Sandwell	85·56	(82·74)	280	2·37	(4·51)	50
43 Kirklees	85·46	(84·96)	260	3·34	(3·65)	60
44 Hereford/Worcester	85·46	(83·99)	270	2·45	(3·18)	40
45 Staffordshire	85·41	(84·84)	250	2·75	(4·10)	50
46 North Yorkshire	85·39	(84·16)	270	1·95	(2·37)	40
47 St. Helens	85·39	(84·53)	280	3·56	(3·65)	70
48 Leicestershire	85·37	(84·28)	280	2·62	(2·89)	50
49 Durham	85·30	(82·16)	260	2·28	(4·79)	40
50 Buckinghamshire	85·29	(86·58)	270	2·98	(3·55)	60
51 Barnsley	85·27	(85·91)	240	2·40	(2·88)	40
52 Bedfordshire	85·23	(83·29)	280	2·93	(3·66)	60
53 East Sussex	85·23	(85·37)	270	1·95	(2·20)	40
54 Barnet	85·20	(83·68)	310	4·22	(4·96)	90
55 Humberside	85·20	(84·60)	280	3·08	(3·01)	60
56 Isles of Scilly	85·12	(83·17)	530	3·85	(6·41)	140
57 Essex	85·08	(85·08)	270	2·87	(3·52)	50
58 Nottinghamshire	85·06	(83·96)	270	3·15	(3·41)	60
59 Dudley	85·06	(84·47)	270	3·30	(3·64)	60
60 Richmond	85·03	(82·58)	300	4·10	(4·82)	80
61 Redbridge	85·03	(83·13)	270	2·68	(5·10)	50
62 Cornwall	85·02	(83·95)	260	2·64	(3·52)	50
63 Newcastle	84·89	(82·38)	280	3·45	(5·09)	60
64 Hounslow	84·83	(83·26)	310	3·04	(4·46)	60
65 North Tyneside	84·78	(84·55)	290	2·40	(3·99)	50
66 Salford	84·74	(86·03)	280	4·29	(2·64)	80
67 Tameside	84·74	(83·80)	260	1·96	(2·16)	30

1 Local education authority (LEA)	2 PSB delegated to schools 1992-93 per cent	 (1991-92) per cent	3 PSB not delegated per pupil 1992-93 £	4 Central administration as proportion of PSB 1992-93 per cent	 (1991-92) per cent	5 Central administration per pupil 1992-93 £
68 Bradford	84·74	(86·68)	280	3·41	(3·55)	60
69 Rotherham	84·70	(85·43)	290	3·54	(3·76)	70
70 Sutton	84·70	(85·15)	280	3·56	(3·84)	60
71 Trafford	84·69	(83·94)	250	2·48	(3.68)	40
72 Bromley	84·67	(84·88)	300	3·51	(5·70)	70
73 Kent	84·54	(85·84)	270	3·78	(4·61)	70
74 Liverpool	84·47	(82·92)	290	3·97	(4·65)	70
75 Derbyshire	84·46	(83·97)	260	1·94	(3·04)	30
76 Cleveland	84·45	(83·37)	280	3·54	(4·64)	60
77 Wiltshire	84·42	(83·26)	290	3·47	(3·18)	60
78 Knowsley	84·41	(83·24)	290	4·76	(4·99)	90
79 Hillingdon	84·38	(83·91)	290	3·81	(6·17)	70
80 Lancashire	84·32	(82·74)	290	1·63	(3·46)	30
81 Merton	84·31	(84·86)	330	2·97	(3·33)	60
82 Oldham	84·30	(83·14)	290	2·50	(4·53)	50
83 Birmingham	84·26	(83·41)	290	3·66	(3·85)	70
84 Doncaster	84·20	(84·00)	300	2·19	(2·29)	40
85 Dorset	84·16	(85·16)	270	3·26	(3·72)	60
86 Wigan	84·11	(83·03)	300	3·65	(4·18)	70
87 Sheffield	84·08	(85·92)	300	3·48	(3·26)	70
88 Wakefield	84·05	(84·28)	280	1·66	(1·49)	30
89 Gateshead	83·91	(83·92)	300	1·57	(2·99)	30
90 Haringey	83·84	(83·77)	370	3·78	(4·78)	90
91 Avon	83·56	(82·78)	310	3·60	(3·87)	70
92 Gloucestershire	83·19	(84·47)	290	3·13	(3·37)	50
93 Coventry	83·01	(82·76)	330	5·06	(4·37)	100
94 Harrow	83·75	(82·45)	350	4·94	(5·05)	100
95 Waltham Forest	82·09	(80·22)	390	5·10	(6·60)	110
96 Newham	82·07	(79·46)	360	3·37	(5·94)	70
97 Wolverhampton	80·94	(81·55)	370	5·19	(5·33)	100
Averages	85·57	(84·89)	270	2·84	(3·44)	50
Inner London LEAs where LMS in operation from April 1992						
1 City of London	87·05		360	9·67		270
2 Islington	85·19		390	4·53		120
3 Wandsworth	84·16		390	3·69		90
4 Camden	83·20		420	4·04		100
5 Hammersmith-Fulham	81·70		480	3·84		100
6 Lewisham	81·09		440	5·66		130
7 Hackney	79·77		490	5·27		130
8 Lambeth	79·68		510	6·40		160
9 Greenwich	79·63		470	7·98		180
10 Southwark	79·12		480	7·10		160
11 Tower Hamlets	77·16		590	5·66		150
136						
12 Kensington-Chelsea	76·13		760	9·00		290
Averages	80·59		480	5·78		140
National Averages	85·31	(84·89)	270	2·99	(3·44)	60

Footnotes to table showing the extent of delegation.

1. All 109 local education authorities (LEAs) in England have LMS schemes in operation and are required to publish budget statements showing planned expenditure, under section 42 of the Education Reform Act. The LEAs are ranked, according to the percentage of funds delegated to schools, with those delegating more at the top of the ranking order. Schemes for the 12 inner London LEAs other than Westminster came into operation later than the rest, on 1 April 1992. These LEAs are listed separately.

2. The potential schools budget (PSB) consists of the major part of the general schools budget (GSB)—ie the GSB less planned expenditure on certain excepted items: capital expenditure; expenditure supported by central government grants; and expenditure on school meals, home to school transport and transitional exceptions (eg grounds maintenance). The amount which the schools themselves decide how to spend, as a proportion of the PSB, is a percentage used as an indicator of the extent to which LEAs have delegated resources to their schools. A new requirement from April 1993 (1995 for the 12 inner London authorities listed separately) is that this percentage should be a minimum of 85 per cent. The percentage for the previous year 1991-92 is given in brackets. Where a figure is not given in brackets the LMS scheme was not in operation during that year.

3. The proportion of the PSB held back by each LEA (ie not delegated to schools) expressed as a cash amount per pupil—rounded to the nearest £10. LEAs are not required to state the price base used in their estimates and no adjustment has therefore been made: comparisons between LEAs should consequently take into account that a different price base may have been used. Pupil numbers have in most cases been taken from LEAs' section 42 statements.

4. Planned expenditure on central administration—one of the discretionary exceptions included in the PSB—expressed as a percentage of the PSB. The previous year's percentage is given in brackets. Following the publication of accounting guidance by CIPFA this year, LEAs may have changed from last year their method of calculating central administration expenditure. In addition, not all LEAs have followed CIPFA's quidance this year. Consequently, there may not be a consistent basis for comparisons between years and between LEAs.

5. Planned expenditure on central administration expressed as a cash amount per pupil—rounded to the nearest £10. The qualifications on price base and the basis of LEAs' calculations of central expenditure (see notes 3 and 4) apply to these figures as well.

NB The percentages stated may differ from the percentages calculated by individual LEAs because of the effects of rounding.

Table: Percentage of aggregated schools budget (ASB) based on pupil numbers (1992-93)

	1 *Local Education Authority* *(LEA)* *All LEA where LMS in operation before April 1992*	*2* *Pupil-led funding as a percentage ASB*	
		1992-93 *Per cent.*	*(1991-92)* *Per cent.*
1	Isle of Scilly	93·22	(93·21)
2	Dudley	89·63	(90·00)
3	South Tyneside	88·68	(88·33)
4	Wigan	86·84	(86·40)
5	Lincolnshire	86·82	(88·51)
6	Gateshead	86·72	(87·04)
7	Tameside	86·62	(85·33)
8	Bexley	86·46	(85·39)
9	Barking	86·45	(88·36
10	Bolton	86·42	(86·16
11	Oldham	86·24	(84·69)
12	Northumberland	85·56	(86·07)
13	Newcastle	85·16	(81·66)
14	Bromley	84·90	(84·43)
15	Brent	84·75	(86·00)
16	Northamptonshire	84·72	(82· 62
17	Sefton	84·58	(83·79)
18	Redbridge	84·32	(84·00)
19	Trafford	84·25	(84·40)
20	Knowsley	84·22	(83·50)
21	Rotherham	84·05	(82·87)
22	Stockport	83·99	(80·31)
23	Harrow	83·56	(83·49)
24	Kingston	83·54	(76·67)
25	Barnsley	83·52	(81·98)
26	Leicestershire	83·46	(83·19)
27	Hereford/Worcester	83·42	(81·95)
28	Kent	83·28	(84·93)
29	Sunderland	83·24	(82·25)
30	Devon	83·08	(82·78)
31	Suffolk	83·01	(82·29)
32	Rochdale	83·00	(80·00)
33	Enfield	82·97	(80·40)
34	Calderdale	82·88	(83·19)
35	North Yorkshire	82·66	(82·02)
36	Bury	82·62	(81·42)
37	Coventry	82·48	(83·57)
38	Cambridgeshire	81·94	(81·00)
39	Avon	81·93	(82·91)
40	Manchester	81·79	(82·14)
41	Isle of Wight	81·71	(81·85)
42	Cheshire	81·34	(80·16)
43	Cornwall	81·33	(83·75)
44	Cleveland	81·19	(80·33)
45	Westminster	81·17	(83·32)
46	Solihull	80·95	(81·70)
47	Lancashire	80·94	(79·60)
48	Waltham Forest	80·92	(81·66)
49	Wiltshire	80·90	(81·56)
50	Richmond	80·89	(79·79)
51	Sutton	80·83	(80·53)
52	Cumbria	80·64	(78·83)
53	Ealing	80·63	(80·53)
54	Nottinghamshire	80·53	(76·34)
55	Durham	80·47	(80·20)
56	Wirral	80·39	(79·55)
57	Dorset	80·38	(79·94)
58	Bedfordshire	80·23	(78·50)
59	Leeds	80·10	(80·26)
60	Humberside	80·02	(80·42)
61	Liverpool	80·00	(80·00)
62	Shropshire	79·76	(77·86)
63	Kirklees	79·41	(77·27)
64	Newham	79·32	(79·85)
65	Gloucestershire	79·25	(80·64)
66	Warwickshire	79·10	(79·02)
67	St. Helens	79·00	(76·50)
68	Berkshire	78·92	(79·31)
69	Haringey	78·91	(77·37)
70	Hounslow	78·76	(77·82)
71	Salford	78·67	(82·02)
72	Staffordshire	78·67	(79·34)
73	Sheffield	78·64	(77·30)
74	Derbyshire	78·48	(75·32)
75	Hillingdon	78·45	(77·93)
76	West Sussex	78·23	(82·29)
77	Somerset	78·17	(79·09)
78	Walsall	78·14	(77·87)
79	Bradford	78·12	(77·66)
80	North Tyneside	78·00	(78·00)
81	Surrey	77·91	(76·58)
82	Hampshire	77·90	(76·35)
83	Oxfordshire	77·59	(77·60)
84	Birmingham	77·55	(78·69)
85	Merton	77·45	(77·99)
86	Barnet	77·29	(76·86)
87	Essex	77·07	(76·56)
88	Havering	76·61	(75·09)
89	Doncaster	76·50	(76·66)
90	Norfolk	76·43	(75·31)
91	Hertfordshire	76·43	(75·33)
92	East Sussex	76·41	(76·29)
93	Buckinghamshire	76·32	(79·06)
94	Croydon	75·66	(80·22)
95	Wakefield	75·63	(75·76)
96	Wolverhampton	75·33	(74·88)
97	Sandwell	75·01	(79·03)
	Averages	80·54	(80·17)

	1 *Local Education Authority* *(LEA)* *Inner London LEAs where LMS in operation from April 1992*	*2* *Pupil-led funding as a percentage ASB*	
		1992-93 *Per cent.*	*(1991-92)* *Per cent.*
1	Wandsworth	85·04	
2	Islington	84·00	
3	City of London	82·11	
4	Kensington/Chelsea	81·64	
5	Southwark	80·84	
6	Hammersmith/Fulham	80·68	
7	Camden	80·66	
8	Lewisham	77·64	
9	Lambeth	77·51	
10	Hackney	77·27	
11	Tower Hamlets	76·70	
12	Greenwich	76·56	
Averages		79·55	
National Averages		80.49	(80·17)

Footnotes to table showing the extent of pupil-led funding.

1. The LEAs are ranked according to the proportion of funds allocated to schools on the basis of pupil numbers and ages, with those allocating a greater percentage of pupil-led funding at the top of the ranking order.

2. The aggregated schools budget (ASB) is that part of the potential schools budget which is delegated to the school level. The current requirement is that at least 75 per cent. of an LEA's ASB is based on pupil numbers and ages. From April 1993 (1995 for the inner London authorities which only started LMS this year) the minimum percentage will be raised to 80 per cent. (but that will include any pupil-led funding allocated in respect of special needs which does not currently count towards the 75 per cent. minimum). The percentage of pupil-led funding in 1991-92 is given in brackets. Where a figure is not given in brackets the LMS scheme was not in operation last year. All figures are derived from LEA's published budget statements, but

the percentages stated may differ from the percentages calculated by individual LEAs because of the effects of rounding and other adjustments.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that local management of schools' budgets fairly takes account of the extra costs to a school with long-term stable staffing.

Mr. Forth: Within the national local management of schools framework, LEA schemes may provide for small school budget shares to reflect actual staff costs for as long as the LEA considers necessary. LEAs may also extend the transitional period to larger schools which face exceptional difficulties because of higher than average salary costs. We have said that we will review the policy of funding teachers' salaries within LMS schemes. However, it remains our view that governors should be responsible and accountable for the financial implications of their decisions.

Examination Statistics

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a list of local education authorities in England in rank order by the percentage of pupils achieving five higher grade GCSEs in the last year for which information is available, showing in each case *(a)* that percentage and *(b)* the rank order position and percentage for each of the previous four years.

Mr. Forth: The attached table gives details of the estimated percentage of school leavers achieving five or more GCSE/O/CSE grades A-C in rank order. The latest available data based on a 10 per cent. sample of school leavers aggregated over three years—1988-89 to 1990-91—in order to reduce sampling errors. The aggregated figures for the earlier years are also shown.

School leavers statistical file 1990-91 revised 3 July 1992
Maintained schools only
Percentage of school leavers with five or more GCSE/O/CSE grades A-C

	1988-89 to 1990-91		*1987-88 to 1989-90*		*1986-87 to 1988-89*		*1985-86 to 1987-88*	
	Per cent.	*Rank*	*Per cent.*	*Rank*	*Per cent.*	*Rank*	*Per cent.*	*Rank*
Buckinghamshire	43·5	1	41·2	2	36·0	5	33·4	6
Surrey	42·9	2	40·7	3	38·0	4	36·4	3
Harrow	42·8	3	44·1	1	38·6	3	38·3	2
West Sussex	42·2	4	39·6	4	35·5	6	32·5	8
East Sussex	40·5	5	36·5	9	31·4	13	27·4	23
Hertfordshire	39·6	6	36·1	10	31·9	11	30·3	12
Barnet	39·5	7	39·0	5	38·9	2	41·5	1
Sutton	39·4	8	37·0	8	39·1	1	34·9	4
Stockport	38·9	9	34·9	11	28·6	25	24·9	43
North Yorkshire	38·1	10	37·6	7	34·5	7	32·8	7
Solihull	38·0	11	33·4	16	31·7	12	30·8	11
Somerset	38·0	11	31·4	29	27·1	39	24·5	46
Gloucestershire	37·9	13	34·3	13	31·2	14	29·1	17
Trafford	37·5	14	32·8	20	30·7	15	31·1	10
Kingston upon Thames	36·8	15	34·2	14	32·2	10	34·1	5
Hampshire	36·8	15	32·8	20	29·6	21	27·7	21
Wigan	36·4	17	34·6	12	30·2	18	29·4	15
Northumberland	36·0	18	33·4	16	30·7	15	29·8	13
Cheshire	35·5	19	33·3	18	29·1	23	28·3	19
Richmond upon Thames	35·4	20	38·0	6	32·4	8	29·6	14
Bolton	35·3	21	31·9	26	28·7	24	26·0	36
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	35·3	21	33·8	15	30·1	19	27·2	24
Warwickshire	35·1	23	30·9	31	28·5	26	26·6	28
Havering	35·0	24	28·6	46	24·4	57	23·3	52
Sefton	34·8	25	33·3	18	28·5	26	26·4	31
Dorset	34·7	26	31·5	28	27·6	35	27·2	24
North Tyneside	34·4	27	30·3	33	27·5	36	23·3	52
Bromley	34·3	28	31·7	27	29·9	20	32·0	9
Shropshire	34·3	28	32·4	23	30·3	17	27·7	21
Wirral	33·7	30	32·5	22	27·8	31	25·9	39
Cambridgeshire	33·6	31	29·8	37	28·0	29	26·0	36
Enfield	33·5	32	31·4	29	26·9	41	24·8	44
Hereford and Worcester	33·4	33	32·1	25	29·2	22	28·5	18
Wiltshire	32·8	34	30·1	36	25·9	45	23·9	48
Devon	32·7	35	29·5	40	26·3	44	24·4	47
Merton	32·5	36	28·7	45	24·6	54	23·4	49
Berkshire	32·5	36	32·4	23	32·3	9	29·3	16
Essex	32·5	36	30·9	31	27·4	37	26·3	32
Kirklees	32·4	39	28·2	49	25·6	46	25·1	42
Bexley	32·2	40	30·2	34	28·5	26	27·8	20
Leicestershire	32·2	40	28·4	48	25·1	51	23·4	49
Avon	31·9	42	30·2	34	27·8	31	26·1	35
Rotherham	31·8	43	28·6	46	23·0	63	19·5	73
Kent	31·5	44	28·9	43	27·3	38	26·5	30
Lancashire	31·5	44	29·4	41	26·8	42	25·6	40
Norfolk	31·4	46	27·8	51	24·5	56	22·7	55
Oxfordshire	31·2	47	29·8	37	27·7	33	26·2	34
Cumbria	31·0	48	29·6	39	28·0	29	26·9	27
Hillingdon	30·7	49	27·3	54	22·7	65	20·0	70
Tameside	30·7	49	29·1	42	27·1	39	24·7	45
Staffordshire	30·7	49	26·6	60	24·9	52	23·4	49

	1988-89 to 1990-91		*1987-88 to 1989-90*		*1986-87 to 1988-89*		*1985-86 to 1987-88*	
	Per cent.	*Rank*	*Per cent.*	*Rank*	*Per cent.*	*Rank*	*Per cent.*	*Rank*
Calderdale	30·6	52	27·8	51	21·5	75	20·0	70
Northamptonshire	30·3	53	27·8	51	22·8	64	21·7	61
Isle of Wight	30·2	54	28·1	50	19·5	83	17·1	86
Lincolnshire	29·9	55	26·6	60	25·2	49	25·2	41
Cleveland	29·6	56	27·3	54	26·5	43	27·1	26
Bedfordshire	29·3	57	27·3	54	24·9	52	26·0	36
Dudley	29·1	58	28·9	43	25·5	47	22·3	59
Derbyshire	29·1	58	26·9	57	24·6	54	22·4	58
South Tyneside	28·2	60	26·8	59	22·2	68	18·3	79
Durham	28·1	61	26·3	63	23·4	59	21·0	66
Hounslow	28·0	62	25·2	67	25·2	49	21·5	63
Suffolk	27·6	63	26·6	60	24·2	58	22·7	55
Redbridge	27·5	64	25·3	66	25·5	47	26·6	28
Sheffield	27·3	65	25·9	64	22·2	68	20·1	69
Bury	26·8	66	23·1	76	27·7	33	26·4	31
Walsall	26·7	67	25·5	65	23·4	59	20·9	67
Brent	26·6	68	23·3	75	20·6	78	19·1	75
Newcastle upon Tyne	26·5	69	22·3	80	21·6	74	17·4	84
Leeds	26·4	70	24·3	71	22·0	71	21·3	65
Sunderland	26·1	71	24·1	72	21·8	72	18·7	77
Nottinghamshire	26·1	71	24·7	69	23·4	59	21·6	62
Croydon	25·9	73	22·9	77	22·1	70	22·7	55
Barnsley	25·8	74	26·9	57	19·7	82	16·9	87
Rochdale	25·7	75	24·5	70	20·9	77	18·7	77
Salford	25·3	76	24·9	68	23·2	62	21·8	60
Doncaster	25·3	76	23·6	73	21·7	73	18·7	76
Gateshead	25·2	78	20·7	85	20·4	80	19·8	72
Ealing	24·9	79	21·5	82	22·5	67	19·2	74
Wakefield	24·5	80	20·3	87	17·5	87	17·6	83
Manchester	24·4	81	20·2	88	16·4	90	15·9	90
Coventry	24·0	82	21·3	83	21·2	76	20·7	68
Humberside	23·1	83	23·4	74	22·6	66	21·5	63
Birmingham	22·7	84	22·7	79	19·1	85	18·3	79
Oldham	22·2	85	21·7	81	18·1	86	15·5	91
Wolverhampton	21·8	86	21·2	84	19·9	81	17·8	82
St. Helens	21·1	87	22·9	77	20·5	79	23·2	54
Haringey	20·9	88	19·8	89	16·6	89	17·3	85
Waltham Forest	20·9	88	17·7	91	12·7	94	11·3	95
Liverpool	19·7	90	20·7	85	19·4	84	17·9	81
Bradford	19·1	91	17·8	90	16·9	88	16·0	89
Sandwell	19·0	92	17·4	92	15·5	92	14·6	92
Inner London Boroughs'	18·6	93	17·4	92	15·9	91	16·1	88
Knowsley	16·6	94	11·6	96	8·5	96	10·0	96
Newham	14·5	95	14·3	94	14·9	93	14·3	93
Barking and Dagenham	12·4	96	13·6	95	11·3	95	11·8	94
Total	30·9		28·6		25·8		24·4	

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a list of local education authorities in England in rank order by the percentage of pupils achieving three A levels in the last year for which information is available, showing in each case *(a)* that percentage and *(b)* the rank order position and percentage for each of the previous four years.

Mr. Forman: The attached table gives details of the estimated percentage of school leavers achieving three or more A/AS level passes in rank order. The latest available data are based on a 10 per cent sample of school leavers aggregated over three years (1988-89 to 1990-91) in order to reduce sampling errors. The aggregated figures for the earlier years are also shown.

School leavers statistical file 1990-91 revised 3 July 1992
Maintained schools only
Percentage of school leavers with three or more A/AS level passes

	1988-89 to 1990-91		*1987-88 to 1989-90*		*1986-87 to 1988-89*		*1985-86 to 1987-88*	
	Per cent.	*Rank*	*Per cent.*	*Rank*	*Per cent.*	*Rank*	*Per cent.*	*Rank*
Buckinghamshire	21·8	1	18·5	1	15·6	2	13·5	3
Barnet	21·3	2	18·1	2	18·0	1	17·7	1
North Yorkshire	18·6	3	16·9	3	13·8	3	12·9	4
Sutton	18·3	4	13·3	11	13·8	4	14·4	2
Stockport	16·7	5	14·0	8	12·4	8	10·5	17
Wirral	16·5	6	15·2	4	12·8	6	11·1	11
Cheshire	16·4	7	14·2	6	11·6	15	11·2	10
Northumberland	16·2	8	14·7	5	12·5	7	11·4	9
Kingston upon Thames	16·1	9	12·3	17	11·6	15	10·7	14
Cambridgeshire	15·6	10	13·0	13	10·3	21	7·9	41
Hertfordshire	15·4	11	13·7	9	11·8	13	9·9	19
Solihull	15·2	12	12·0	20	11·7	14	11·7	7
Enfield	14·7	13	12·3	17	10·1	24	8·9	29

	1988-89 to 1990-91		*1987-88 to 1989-90*		*1986-87 to 1988-89*		*1985-86 to 1987-88*	
	Per cent.	*Rank*	*Per cent.*	*Rank*	*Per cent.*	*Rank*	*Per cent.*	*Rank*
Trafford	14·7	13	12·4	15	12·4	8	12·3	5
Berkshire	14·6	15	14·2	6	12·9	5	11·5	8
Warwickshire	14·5	16	13·0	13	11·9	11	10·6	16
West Sussex	14·3	17	12·4	15	10·6	18	9·5	21
Sefton	13·6	18	1[illegible]3	17	10·4	20	11·0	13
Gloucestershire	13·6	18	12·0	20	10·6	18	9·3	25
Cumbria	13·3	20	11·7	23	11·0	17	10·1	18
Surrey	13·3	20	13·1	12	11·9	11	12·0	6
East Sussex	12·9	22	11·1	29	10·1	24	8·7	32
Leicestershire	12·8	23	11·5	27	10·3	21	9·6	20
Bromley	12·7	24	13·4	10	12·2	10	1[illegible]1	11
Bedfordshire	12·7	24	9·6	43	9·0	36	[illegible]6	34
Hereford and Worcester	12·7	24	11·7	23	10·1	24	9·4	23
Kent	12·7	24	11·1	29	9·6	30	9·4	23
Bolton	12·5	28	10·7	31	9·1	34	9·3	25
Cleveland	12·5	28	10·4	35	9·1	34	8·4	37
Rotherham	12·3	30	11·6	26	9·3	32	7·9	41
North Tyneside	12·1	31	10·6	32	8·2	46	7·3	51
St. Helens	12·0	32	10·1	39	9·2	33	8·5	35
Calderdale	12·0	32	11·3	28	9·0	36	8·9	29
Kirklees	12·0	32	11·9	22	9·8	28	9·0	27
Redbridge	11·7	35	10·6	32	10·2	23	10·7	14
Leeds	11·6	36	9·3	47	8·3	45	7·8	44
Essex	11·4	37	10·0	40	8·6	40	7·7	45
Lincolnshire	11·3	38	9·5	44	8·9	38	8·4	37
Bexley	11·1	39	10·3	36	7·9	50	8·5	35
Manchester	11·1	39	9·9	42	8·6	40	7·5	48
Wigan	11·1	39	10·2	37	9·7	29	9·0	27
Shropshire	11·1	39	10·5	34	9·4	31	8·8	31
Staffordshire	11·1	39	9·5	44	8·6	40	7·6	46
Dorset	10·8	44	8·6	54	7·2	59	6·8	59
Croydon	10·7	45	9·5	44	7·2	59	7·4	49
Hampshire	10·6	46	9·1	49	8·0	48	7·3	51
Oxfordshire	10·4	47	10·2	37	10·0	27	9·5	21
Isle of Wight	10·3	48	11·7	23	8·6	40	6·2	66
Salford	10·1	49	6·8	75	8·2	46	7·9	41
Tameside	10·1	49	10·0	40	8·7	39	8·1	39
Nottinghamshire	10·1	49	9·3	47	8·0	48	7·0	56
Ealing	10·0	52	8·1	63	7·7	53	6·1	70
Wiltshire	10·0	52	8·3	60	7·0	64	5·8	73
Birmingham	9·7	54	8·5	57	6·7	68	5·8	73
Avon	9·6	55	8·8	52	7·7	53	7·0	56
Hillingdon	9·5	56	7·7	69	6·1	77	5·6	75
Merton	9·5	56	8·3	60	7·5	56	7·6	46
Havering	9·4	58	7·2	74	6·3	75	6·7	60
Newcastle upon Tyne	9·3	59	7·4	73	6·1	77	5·3	82
Walsall	9·1	60	8·9	51	7·9	50	7·4	49
Sheffield	9·1	60	7·6	71	7·2	59	6·3	63
Derbyshire	9·1	60	9·0	50	7·8	52	7·1	54
Devon	9·1	60	7·7	69	6·7	68	6·3	63
Doncaster	9·0	64	8·5	57	8·4	44	7·3	51
Norfolk	8·7	65	7·5	72	6·5	72	6·1	70
Lancashire	8·4	66	7·8	68	6·3	75	6·2	66
Bradford	8·3	67	6·4	78	5·9	79	5·2	83
Humberside	8·3	67	7·9	66	7·2	59	6·9	58
Northamptonshire	8·3	67	8·4	59	6·7	68	6·6	61
Suffolk	8·3	67	8·2	62	7·4	57	6·2	66
Dudley	8·2	71	8·7	53	7·0	64	6·1	70
Oldham	8·2	71	8·1	63	7·2	59	5·5	77
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	8·2	71	8·6	54	6·8	66	6·2	66
Wolverhampton	8·0	74	6·7	77	6·5	72	5·6	75
Hounslow	7·9	75	8·0	65	7·4	57	6·3	63
Brent	7·7	76	8·6	54	6·4	74	5·4	78
Waltham Forest	7·4	77	5·5	83	3·6	89	3·8	90
Liverpool	7·2	78	7·9	66	7·6	55	7·1	54
Coventry	7·0	79	5·9	81	6·7	68	5·4	78
Gateshead	7·0	79	4·2	88	4·7	84	4·7	85
Somerset	7·0	79	5·3	84	4·2	88	3·9	88
Harrow	6·5	82	6·3	79	5·5	82	8·0	40
Durham	6·4	83	5·8	82	5·5	82	5·4	78
Sunderland	5·7	84	6·0	80	4·3	87	3·4	91
Sandwell	5·6	85	4·1	89	2·9	93	2·6	94
Rochdale	5·2	86	6·8	75	6·8	66	6·4	62
Wakefield	5·0	87	5·3	84	4·5	86	4·3	87
Bury	4·9	88	3·7	91	5·6	81	8·7	32
Inner London Boroughs	4·5	89	4·4	87	4·6	85	4·5	86
Haringey	4·2	90	3·9	90	3·6	89	3·9	88

	1988-89 to 1990-91		*1987-88 to 1989-90*		*1986-87 to 1988-89*		*1985-86 to 1987-88*	
	Per cent.	*Rank*	*Per cent.*	*Rank*	*Per cent.*	*Rank*	*Per cent.*	*Rank*
Barnsley	4·0	91	5·2	86	5·7	80	5·4	78
Barking and Dagenham	3·7	92	3·5	92	3·3	91	3·4	91
Knowsley	3·1	93	2·3	95	1·3	95	2·0	95
Newham	2·0	94	2·4	94	2·6	94	2·9	93
South Tyneside	1·3	95	2·8	93	3·2	92	4·9	84
Richmond upon Thames	0·0	96	0·0	96	0·0	96	0·0	96
Total	10·8		9·6		8·5		7·8	

Note: The figures used in this reply have been estimated from the School Examination Survey, formerly the School Leavers Survey. This survey is based on a 10 per cent. sample and therefore the estimated LEA figures have been aggregated over three years in order to reduce the effect of sampling errors.

Some local education authorities provide a substantial proportion of their A level teaching in tertiary or other establishments than secondary schools. The tables do not include statistics showing results arising from such provision.

Pre-school Education

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received concerning the standard spending assessment criteria for under-fives provision in Lancashire.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has received letters from several hon. Members who represent Lancashire constituencies, including the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms. Anderson).

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of three and four-year-olds are in nursery education in Britain.

Mr. Forth: Nursery education in Wales and Scotland is the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland. Fifty-one per cent. of three and four-year-olds attended maintained and independent schools in England in January 1991. The figure for maintained schools alone was 48 per cent., that for maintained nursery schools and nursery classes of primary schools was 25 per cent.

Student Numbers

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has had from the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals concerning the real-terms increase in funding required to cope with growth in student numbers as regards *(a)* buildings, *(b)* plant and equipment, *(c)* academic and *(d)* non-academic staff.

Mr. Forman: My right hon. Friend received the CVCP's statement on the 1992 public expenditure survey which was published last May, covering all of these areas. The CVCP's views will be taken into account alongside advice from the Higher Education Funding Council for England and others.

Surplus School Places

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what consultations he has had, or intends to initiate, with statutory, religious, professional, charitable, and voluntary organisations whose current function or roles are of significance in the operation of the schools system, as presently in operation, prior to the publication of a Bill designed to implement the proposals described in Cm. 2021.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has already received some 850 responses to his White Paper proposals. He, his ministerial colleagues and his officials at the Department for Education have also held meetings with representatives of the local authority associations, the churches and other interested bodies. All these responses and comments will be carefully considered before the publication of a Bill.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his statement concerning the savings he expects to accrue from the reduction, or elimination, of claimed surplus places in schools, on page 57 of Cm. 2021, if he will state the approximate amount of actual expenditure he hopes to save, together with the relevant arithmetical calculations.

Mr. Forth: The Department is currently consulting LEAs on the scope for removing surplus places on the basis of its estimate that in 1991 there were up to 1·5 million surplus places in England. The costs associated with surplus places vary considerably according to the particular circumstances, and not all of them can practicably be removed. It is therefore not possible to provide the information requested at this stage.

School Reports

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the local education authorities that issued a school report to parents of their child's progress at the end of the 1991-92 school year.

Mr. Forth: The duty to send all parents an annual written report on their child's progress rests with the head teachers of all maintained schools. In 1992, head teachers were required to send written annual reports in respect of all school pupils of, and above, compulsory school age.

School Sizes

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education in the calculation of teaching space per pupil place in secondary schools, what add-on factor of space he requires to permit teaching of small classes or groups, minimum movement of staff or pupils, and flexibility in construction of the timetable.

Mr. Forth: The requirements as to minimum teaching area in the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981 apply to the school as a whole based on the number and age of the pupils. The only specific requirement for the disposition of this area relates to study and social accommodation for pupils who have attained the age of 16. The details of the organisation of the teaching area are a matter for the school. No minimum area standard is specified for the movement of staff or pupils but the regulations do require that school buildings shall be adequate for the "convenient passage of persons".

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will state the current area of floor space now constituting a place within each primary and secondary school, respectively, together with the minimum areas he expects or requires to be allocated to teaching, circulation, assembly, kitchen and eating, staff, storage, and convenience or other non-teaching space, as an actual proportion of floor space for both categories of school.

Mr. Forth: The minimum teaching areas for maintained and grant-maintained schools are set out in schedule 4 of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981. They are related to the number and age of pupils in the school. There are no statutory minimum area requirements for circulation, assembly, kitchen and eating, staff, storage or other non-teaching space, which are a matter for local discretion, subject to the general requirements of the regulations.

Mature Students

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations she has received about tuition fees and grant aid for mature students who withdrew from courses in the past, and who now wish to recommence further education; and if he will make a statement relating to award regulations.

Mr. Forman: My right hon. Friend receives representations from time to time on this matter. Under the present regulations, a mandatory award is not normally available for a second higher education course if a student has previously attended a higher education course of more than two years' duration with the help of an award. But, exceptionally, a student whose previous attendance did not exceed one term and seven weeks of a second term, or was at a long term residential adult education college, is eligible for another mandatory award. The regulations also allow a student to transfer with a mandatory award from one course to another, in certain circumstances. A student ineligible for a mandatory award may apply to his local authority for a discretionary award.

Religious Education

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 3 July, *Official Report*, column *713*, what plans he has for funding the standing advisory committees for religious education, or their equivalents, if plans described in Cm. 2021, are implemented.

Mr. Forth: Under the proposals set out in the White paper, "Choice and Diversity" (Cm. 2021), local education authorities would remain responsible for establishing and funding standing advisory councils on religious education.

Higher Education

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will establish a pay review body for higher education academic staff.

Mr. Forman: As we have made clear on a number of occasions in the House and elsewhere, my right hon. Friend has no intention of establishing such a pay review body.

GCSE

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he requested Her Majesty's inspectorate of education to consider and report on the three aspects of the GCSE examinations in its recent report; and if he will indicate the date and nature of similar requests previously made by a Secretary of State and the reference of the relevant published report.

Mr. Forth: The recent report on GCSE examining standards in 1992 is the only published report by HMI on the conduct of GCSE examinations. It was not specifically commissioned by my right hon. Friend, but the previous Minister of State did ask HM inspectorate to monitor awarding procedures with especial care following concerns expressed by them in connection with the 1991 examinations.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what evidence he has as to the cost of providing each pupil with the Shakespearian texts he has added to the GCSE syllabuses; and how much extra he is allocating to schools to meet this expenditure.

Mr. Forth: The works of Shakespeare have traditionally been included in most GCSE English syllabuses.

My right hon. Friend, however, decided that 14-year-olds should be tested on their knowledge of a Shakespeare play—chosen from "Julius Caesar", "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "Romeo and Juliet"—in the first national curriculum tests of this age group in English in 1993. The plays selected were chosen in part because a supply of at least one of the chosen plays can be found in most schools.

Some schools may need to top up their current stock. In doing so, schools will be able to draw on the £15 million worth of schools' expenditure specifically on national curriculum books which the Government have supported through the 1992-1993 grants for education support and training programme.

Special Needs Pupils

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to introduce proposals to amend the Education Act 1981 in order specifically to state which authority has the responsibility for providing therapy back-up for special needs pupils.

Mr. Forth: The Department's circular 22/89 on "Assessments and Statements of Special Educational Needs: Procedures within the Education, Health and Social Services" contains guidance on the need for local education authorities to work closely with district health authorities and social services departments on the provision of non-educational services to pupils with special educational needs.

The addendum to circular 22/89, published in March 1992, offers further advice to authorities on responsibilities for the provision of speech therapy. I do not consider that any further clarification of the responsibility for providing speech and other therapy services is necessary.

A-Levels

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on his proposals to increase access to higher education for students unable to succeed at the A-level exams.

Mr. Forman: Universities and colleges are responsible for setting entry standards to ensure that students have the necessary intellectual competence to benefit from higher education. A-levels are traditional indicators of such competence, but they are by no means the only ones.

Institutions are becoming more prepared to consider qualifications other than A-levels and their Scottish equivalent. More than 20 per cent. of those entering full-time first degree courses in 1990 did so on the basis of such qualifications. We welcome such flexibility, and are promoting the development of vocational and other routes into higher education.

We are introducing general national vocational qualifications—GNVQs—which offer a broadly based preparation for work and an alternative ladder to higher education. GNVQs at level 3 will be as demanding as A-levels.

We have encouraged the development of access courses for mature students without traditional entry qualifications for higher education. There are now well over 1000 such courses.

Education Expenditure

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of the national income was spent on education in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* 1992.

Mr. Forman: The information requested is as follows:

Financial year	*UK general Government expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP*
1978-79	5·4
1984-85	5·0
1991-92[1]	5·0

[1] Estimated.

Secondary Schools

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, in respect of determining the current expenditure limit on the basic needs building costs of a new secondary school place, what ratio is assumed between the notional number of pupils in the school and the actual pupil capacity in learning space at any one time which is the minimum necessary to ensure the essential flexibility required in a timetable for a fully occupied school meeting the requirements of the national curriculum.

Mr. Forth: In determining the distribution of annual capital guidelines to LEAs, allowance for the provision of new schools places is made on the basis of cost multipliers. These reflect the average cost of providing a new school place. They are based on actual LEA building projects, which are themselves subject to the space provision requirements of the school premises regulations.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Iraq

Mr. Townsend: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what proposals he has to obtain relief for British business men whose firms have suffered from the freezing of Iraqi assets held in the United Kingdom;

(2) what action he intends to take to deal with the release of Iraqi funds held in the United Kingdom for *(a)* the settlement of United Kingdom creditors' claims in respect of legitimate trade with Iraq prior to the imposition of sanctions and *(b)* the financing of trade in goods not embargoed under United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: United Nations Security Council Resolution 778 provides for the temporary sequestration of certain unencumbered frozen Iraqi assets to be paid into a UN-administered account to fund UN operations in Iraq and to provide interim funding for the UN compensation commission and fund. The resolution expressly forbids the release of assets for the financing of trade in goods not embargoed, except to the sub-account of the UN escrow account or directly to the United Nations for humanitarian activities in Iraq.

British companies may claim from the compensation fund for direct losses as a result of Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait. Losses resulting from the operation of the UN embargo and related measures are not within the scope of the compensation commission. The same is true of debts and obligations of Iraq arising prior to 2 August 1990, which should be pursued through the normal mechanisms.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy that the essential aim of the British Government's action in the post-Gulf war situation should be the establishment of peace and democracy in Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We aim to ensure that Iraq implements its obligations under all the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions in full. These include the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction so that Iraq can never again build a capacity to threaten its neighbours with nuclear, chemical or biological weapons; and arrangements for compensation for those who suffered as a result of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

We want to see a democratic and pluralistic system in Iraq in which all sectors of the population would enjoy respect for political and human rights. It is difficult to see how this can be achieved while Saddam Hussein remains in power.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his estimate of the number of Iraqi Shias sheltering in the marshes; what information he has of air attacks on Iraqi Shias in the marshes and of the continued use by Iraqi forces of chemical weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is difficult to obtain accurate information about the number of people in and around the marshes of southern Iraq but we believe that there are about 200,000 people in the area. There have been no flights of Iraqi aircraft over the marshes since the imposition of the no-fly zone on 27 August. We have no conclusive evidence of the use of chemical weapons by Iraqi forces.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Sri Lanka to ensure the safety and protection of the Tamil community during the present military security actions now taking place in Sri Lanka.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have frequently made clear our concern to the Government of Sri Lanka that they should conduct the anti-terrorist campaign against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam with full respect for the security and human rights of civilians. I emphasised this during my recent visit there. We shall continue to watch the situation closely.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Government of Sri Lanka concerning human rights abuses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have taken every opportunity to raise human rights issues with the Sri Lankan authorities, including during my recent visit there. There has been a marked improvement in Sri Lanka's human rights performance over the last year. We shall continue to watch the situation closely.

Law of the Sea

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the informal consultations which the United Kingdom Government have been participating in regarding the United Nations convention on the law of the sea.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom Government participated in the last round of informal consultations convened by the Secretary General in August 1992, with a view to resolving the difficulties over the seabed mining provisions of the United Nations convention on the law of the sea (part XI).

There was some progress in analysing the problem areas and we shall be participating in the next round of consultations.

Research Projects

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 29 June, *Official Report*, column *410*, if he will list the seven research projects, detailing the institutions involved and the value of each project; and what change in the number of these projects in universities and polytechnics there has been since 1979.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The seven research projects referred to in my answer of 29 June were as follows:

(a) Cambridge university, department of pure mathematics and mathematical studies, research fellowship, £109,683 over three years.

(b) Oxford university, Merton college research fellowship (this fellowship is with the college as a whole rather than with college department), £109,000 over three years.

(c) York university, department of electronics, electrical screening measurements, £101,823 over three years.

(d) York university, department of electronics, induction field wave impedence effects, £53,055 over three years.

(e) Leicester university, department of physics, development and construction of data collection and processing unit for HF radio propagation measurements, £33,151 over one year.

(f) Leicester university, department of physics, analysis of HF radio propagation measurements with reference to high latitude effects, £35,392 over three years.

(g) Leicester university, department of physics, analysis of HF radio propagation measurements, £64,849 over one year.

All these projects are still current (or have been renewed) except for that with York university on induction wave impedence.

The foregoing list omitted two recently signed contracts with York university for:

(h) classification of fax image, worth £5,000.

(i) research support in the field of communications simulation and modelling, worth £14,547.

A further contract has since been signed with the Gloucester college of higher education for work on fax image counter orientation image worth £10,000.

The number of projects is subject to change, but to the best of GCHQ's knowledge in the time available there were four contracts current in 1979, with the universities of Loughborough, Leicester, Birmingham and Surrey. The total value of these was £69,000 in 1979.

European Union

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what attempts he has made to extend the provisions of title VI, article K.3(2) of the Maastricht treaty permitting initiation by member states to cover other aspects of Community policy making.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Article K3.2 is one of the provisions governing intergovernmental cooperation, where the Community institutions operate under different rules than under the treaty of Rome. The article could not therefore be extended to cover areas of Community policy.

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has to alter the status of the United Kingdom within the United Nations as a result of article J2(3) of the treaty on European union.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The text of the treaty on European union does not necessitate any alteration of the status of the United Kingdom within the United Nations. Article J.5(4) of the treaty safeguards the United Kingdom's ability to fulfil its responsibilities as a permanent member of the Security Council effectively.

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effect on the overseas responsibility of the United Kingdom, including the dependencies of Hong Kong and the Falkland islands, and in Cyprus and Belize, of the common foreign and security policy under article J1(1) of the treaty on European union.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Implementation of the common foreign and security policy under article J1(1) of the treaty on European union will not alter the United Kingdom's existing overseas responsibilities. Further, the "Declaration on the representation of the interests of the overseas countries and territories referred to in article 227(3) and (5) (a) and (b) of the Treaty establishing the European Community" (annexed to the Maastricht treaty) confirms our right and that of other member states to represent the interests of their dependencies in the exceptional case of a divergence between their interests and those of the union. Nor will the common foreign and security policy affect the United Kingdom's military commitments in Cyprus and Belize.

European Ombudsman

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the Government will take to facilitate any inquiries into maladministration by European Community institutions in the United Kingdom which might be made by the Ombudsman of the European Parliament.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Since the ombudsman is to enquire into maladministration by Community institutions or bodies it will be for those institutions and bodies themselves to facilitate his or her inquiries.

Cyprus

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he will take during the forthcoming round of talks on Cyprus to be held in New York under the auspices of the Secretary General of the United Nations to effect a resolution of the issue of the Greek Cypriots who have been missing since 1974; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The problem of missing persons is one of the most tragic aspects of the Cyprus dispute. We are making every effort to support the United Nations Secretary General in his work for a just overall settlement in Cyprus.

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the response of his Department to Council of Europe Document 6589 on the demographic structure of the Cypriot communities; and if this response will be made when this document is discussed at the Council of Europe meeting in Strasbourg in October.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office regards Council of Europe document 6589 as a useful contribution to the limited knowledge on this subject.

This response was not given when the report came before the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly as the Members of Parliament who attend it to speak in their own capacities and not as Government representatives.

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy as to the extent to which officers of the British High Commission in Cyprus should encourage British parliamentarians on visits to Cyprus to visit the occupied areas in the north; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: As a courtesy to visiting parliamentarians, our High Commissioner in Nicosia offers to arrange appointments with members of either Cypriot community or both.

Mr. Deva: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps towards permitting international commercial air services to northern Cyprus direct from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Garel-Jones: No. Direct flights to northern Cyprus are permitted by no country except Turkey.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many diplomats serve in the United Kingdom commission in Nicosia, Cyprus; how many of these have previous experience of service in Greece and Turkey; and what is his policy on ensuring a balance of experience in this high commission office.

Mr. Garel-Jones: There are 15 accredited diplomats in the British high commission, Nicosia. Of these two have previously served in Greece. Our policy on staffing the high commission is to ensure that the best available officers are sent to Nicosia and that both Turkish and Greek speakers are on the staff.

UK Nationals (Deaths Abroad)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent steps have been taken to record the number of United Kingdom nationals who die abroad.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our posts report, and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office records, the deaths of British nationals abroad in the following circumstances:

(a) where substantial assistance of a consular official has been requested, and provided;

and/or

(b) where consular death registration has been effected.

There is no requirement for the death of a British national overseas to be registered at a British consulate.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make further representations to the Spanish Government to secure the prosecution of those responsible for the death of Gary Maher in Tenerife in 1985.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Spanish authorities investigating this case concluded in August 1992 that there was insufficient evidence to bring a prosecution, and the case was closed. It can be re-opened at any time if new evidence is produced.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to facilitate a second opinion on the diagnosis of Spanish doctors to ensure that they do not misdiagnose the cause of death of United Kingdom nationals in Spain.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: One way of obtaining a second opinion on the cause of death of a British national in Spain, following an inquest in Spain, is to repatriate the body to the United Kingdom. When the body of a British national dying abroad from other than natural causes is repatriated to this country, coroners in England and in Wales must hold an inquest. In Scotland the Procurator Fiscal's office is not obliged to conduct a fatal accident inquiry.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what circumstances an autopsy is performed or an inquest held on United Kingdom subjects who have died abroad.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The decision to hold an autopsy or inquest overseas on a United Kingdom subject who has died abroad follows the law of the land in which the person died.

Where the body of a British national dying abroad from other than natural cause is repatriated to this country, coroners in England and Wales must hold an inquest. In Scotland the Procurator Fiscal's office is not obliged to conduct a fatal accident inquiry.

A coroner may call for an autopsy should he consider one necessary to complete the inquest.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Spanish Government over United Kingdom nationals who are left untreated in hospital wards pending checks on their insurance cover.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have not been notified of any such cases.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Spanish Government to ensure that a full court hearing is held in Spain on the death of Gary Maher in Tenerife in 1985; and what explanation he has received for the delay.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It would be wrong for us to try to influence Spanish judicial procedures. The Spanish authorities have already decided, after a full investigation, that the criminal case should be closed because of insufficient evidence to bring a prosecution. The civil case, which is a private matter, continues.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes he has made or intends to make in the procedures for informing relatives when British citizens die abroad on holiday.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Following a recent case in which the organisation which had undertaken to break the news of a British national's death overseas to the next of kin failed to do so, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has introduced procedures for checking in all cases that such undertakings are met.

BBC World Service

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to commence BBC World Service broadcasts to Uzbekistan in Uzbeki and to Albania in Albanian.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no plans at present for the BBC World Service to introduce an Uzbek service to Uzbekistan. Broadcasts in Albanian to Albania will commence shortly, as soon as the BBC World Service has recruited the necessary staff. The planned output will be one hour per day.

CSCE

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the resolutions passed at the first meeting of the CSCE Assembly, held in Budapest.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) on 9 July 1992 at column *278*.

Association Agreements

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he intends to proceed with ratification of the association agreements with *(a)* Poland, *(b)* Czechoslovakia and *(c)* Hungary.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Draft Orders in Council designating the EC association agreements with Poland and Hungary as Community treaties under section 1 of the European Communities Act 1972 will be laid before Parliament shortly. United Kingdom ratification will be concluded once the designation procedure has been completed. This requires affirmative resolutions from both Houses of Parliament. No further steps will be taken at this stage on the Czechoslovakia agreement pending decisions on the future of the federation.

Treaty of Rome

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has made to amend the treaty of Rome to allow non-European states to become EC members.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The treaty of Rome provides that any European state may apply for membership of the Community. There are no proposals to amend the treaty to allow non-European states to become EC members.

European Security Policy

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes he will propose to the structure of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in the light of the implementation of a common European security policy by article J1 of the treaty on European union.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The position of the United Kingdom as a signatory of the North Atlantic treaty will not be affected by a common foreign and security policy. The Maastricht treaty (article J.4.4) makes it clear that the common foreign and security policy

> "shall respect the obligations of certain member states under the North Atlantic treaty and be compatible with the common security and defence policy established within that framework."

Macedonia

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will open diplomatic relations with Macedonia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since Her Majesty's Government have not recognised the republic as an independent state, the question of opening diplomatic relations has not arisen.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial provisions, and how much, he has made within his Department in order to look at the potential for deregulation of each of the regulatory measures for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am not responsible for any regulatory measures.

Western Sahara

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what actions have been taken at the United Nations to ensure that the proposed referendum in the western Sahara takes place;

(2) what discussions he has had with the Government of Morocco concerning the referendum in the western Sahara; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: During my visit to Morocco earlier this year, I underlined the need for parties to co-operate fully with the UN Secretary General in his efforts to resolve this dispute. Differences over who should be eligible to vote in the proposed referendum have delayed the implementation of the UN settlement plan, but the Secretary General and his special representative have been working hard to try to overcome these differences. The Secretary General is expected to make a further report to the Security Council in the next few weeks. As a permanent member of the Security Council, we shall continue to give our full support to the Secretary General.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of France concerning the referendum in the western Sahara.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Officials have regularly discussed the Western Sahara with the French. It has been discussed at ministerial level in the framework of European political co-operation.

Bangladesh

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of Bangladesh concerning the allegations of human rights abuse in the Chittagong hill tracts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We continue to be concerned about reports of human rights abuses in the Chittagong hill tracts. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Department, raised the matter with the Bangladesh Home Minister on 29 September.

International Investments Ltd., Gibraltar

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will investigate the circumstances which led to the collapse of International Investments Ltd., Gibraltar, and seek compensation for British subjects whose investments were misappropriated.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given on 14 July 1992 by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in reply to a previous question on this subject by the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) International Investments Limited was registered in Gibraltar, not in the United Kingdom, and this is therefore a matter for the Gibraltar authorities, not Her Majesty's Government.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what conclusions he has reached as a result of studying the recent Argentinian/Chilean joint declaration concerning territorial disputes; what are the implications for the Falkland Islands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: There are no implications for the future of the islands: sovereignty is not for negotiation. We have repeatedly made that clear to the Argentine Government, and have reminded them and the Chilean Government of that since the joint declaration.

Russia (Seal Culling)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what written representations he has made to the Russian authorities concerning seal culling; if he will make it his policy to place a copy of any such representations in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We continue to draw the attention of the Russian authorities to public concern in the United Kingdom about the seal culling.

Consular Services

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the circumstances under which he advises British holidaymakers abroad to contact the consular services.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are numerous circumstances in which British holidaymakers abroad may seek help or advice from British Consulates. They include:

i. heightened danger from civil unrest;
ii. arrest and/or imprisonment;
iii. death of a British national or serious injury;
iv. lost or stolen passports, tickets or money;
v. need for help with repatriation;
vi. requests for general information, such as names of lawyers, doctors, dentists, translators;
vii. requests for travel advice.

China (Death Penalty)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further representations have been made to the Government of China about the use of the death penalty in that country for offences other than murder.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have made no specific representations on this point. The Chinese Government have been made aware repeatedly of the widespread concern in this country about human rights abuses of all kinds which occur in China.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when it is intended for names to be put on the list of those held to be responsible for crimes against humanity in the current fighting in the former Yugoslavian state; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: UN Security Council resolution 771 calls on all states to submit substantiated information on "grave breaches" of international humanitarian law in the former Yugoslavia to the UN Secretary-General. Her Majesty's Government will submit any such information they receive as requested.

South Africa

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of the British Council on the encouragement of cultural exchanges between Britain and South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The British Council's policy in South Africa is to promote Britain's role as a key partner in education, science, technology and culture by providing British expertise and assistance to those who will be in positions of authority and influence within a democratic, multiracial society. This policy enjoys the full support of the Government.

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the cultural exchange visits between Britain and South Africa funded by the British Council in each of the last three financial years; and what was the financial support provided in each case.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is as follows:

	Number of Visits to UK (including British Council fellows)	*Financial support* (£)	*Number of Visits from UK*	*Financial support* (£)
1989-90				
English Language	13	21,868	4	4,893
Science and technology	6	35,024	—	—
Education and social science	50	132,433	8	15,913
The arts	4	17,314	2	2,791
Total	73	206,639	14	23,597
1990-91				
English language	5	17,182	3	13,844
Science and technology	—	—	4	2,508
Education and social science	41	90,121	18	38,840
The arts	6	22,016	5	10,784
Total	52	129,319	30	66,016
1991-92				
English language	7	16,683	6	19,376
Science and technology	4	8,826	1	1,065
Education and social science	47	96,622	15	25,493
The arts	6	16,992	3	9,969
Total	64	139,123	25	55,903

British Council

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the total funds available to the British Council for supporting cultural exchanges in the current financial year; and if he will provide a breakdown of the application of these funds by country.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government are giving the British Council grants-in-aid of £116·99 million to support cultural exchanges (including development activities) in the current financial year.

British Council country allocations for cultural exchanges in 1992-93 are as follows:

	£000
Eastern and central Europe	
Bulgaria	1,463
Croatia	[1]496
Czechoslovakia	3,138
Hungary	2,902
Poland	3,655
Romania	1,277
Slovenia	[1]482
Yugoslavia	[1]1,093
Countries with no directorate	12
Former Soviet Union and Baltic countries	
Baltic countries	281
Russia	[1]2,870
Ukraine	[1]1,481
Western Europe	
Austria	750
Belgium and Luxembourg	1,370
Cyprus	168
EC: EC Relations Office	183
UKRHEEO	149
France	3,266
Germany	6,793
Greece	1,044
Ireland	296
Italy	4,240
Malta	147
Netherlands	823
Nordic countries	1,139
Portugal	1,343
Spain	2,639
Turkey	2,622
Countries with no directorate	136
Middle east and north Africa	
Algeria	792
Bahrain	305
East Jerusalem	997
Egypt	1,334
Ethiopia	565
Israel	1,336
Jordan	634

	£000
Kuwait	447
Morocco	395
Oman	316
Qatar	353
Saudi Arabia	854
Sudan	577
Syria	250
Tunisia	423
United Arab Emirates	353
Yemen	189
Countries with no directorate	544
Asia Pacific	
Brunei	100
China	2,105
Hong Kong	2,119
Indonesia	1,455
Japan	5,086
Malaysia	1,427
Philippines	340
Singapore	974
South Korea	1,359
Thailand	747
Countries with no directorate	151
South Asia	
Bangladesh	645
Burma	248
India	4,162
Nepal	157
Pakistan	1,272
Sri Lanka	516
Countries with no directorate	0
South Africa	
South Africa	847
Sub-Saharan Africa	
Botswana	181
Cameroon	427
Ghana	404
Kenya	620
Lesotho	216
Malawi	300
Mauritius	250
Mozambique	72
Namibia	147
Nigeria	1,486
Senegal	418
Sierra Leone	337
Swaziland	63
Tanzania	292
Uganda	180
Zambia	386
Zimbabwe	451
Countries with no directorate	57
Latin America and the Caribbean	
Argentina	856
Brazil	2,975
Caribbean	378
Chile	751
Colombia	577
Ecuador	214
Mexico	959
Peru	545
Venezuela	606
Countries with no directorate	163
North America, Australia and New Zealand	
Australia	1,214
Canada	710
New Zealand	496
United States of America	670
Grand total	116,988

[1] Provisional only. All other figures are based on the Council's financial estimates for 1992-93.

British Council

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the total funds expended by the British Council in each of the past five years in *(a)* southern Greek Cyprus and *(b)* northern Turkish Cyprus.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: British Council expenditure since 1987-88 is as follows:

	Northern Cyprus £	*Southern Cyprus* £
[1]1987-88	63,279	78,635
1988-89	193,184	212,059
1989-90	179,912	218,464
1990-91	272,653	294,468
1991-92	236,675	366,278

[1] Statistics for technical co-operation training programme not available before 1988-89.

Visa Applications

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what records are kept of personal interventions made by hon. Members in respect of visa applications for each year since 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No records are available before 1988. The hon. Member will be aware that the correspondence unit of the migration and visa department which was set up in May 1989 deals specifically with inquiries about entry clearance applications made at posts overseas. Details about the Unit were last circulated to hon. Members under cover of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs' letter of 24 April 1992. From 1988 to date the Department and subsequently the unit has handled 20,850 inquiries from hon. Members as follows:

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
January	299	346	357	313	337
February	353	344	359	345	342
March	374	269	368	344	381
April	266	351	358	284	213
May	348	342	390	406	415
June	380	363	426	409	557
July	424	364	532	492	564
August	309	338	390	414	443
September	274	321	342	420	474
October	332	373	397	44	—

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
November	282	421	354	374	—
December	234	279	288	335	—
TOTALS	3,875	4,111	4,561	4,577	3,726

Whaling

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning the effect on Norway's proposed membership of the EC of its policy of continuing commercial whaling; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel Jones: Many members of the public have expressed their opposition to Norway's recent decision to resume commercial whaling. The Government regret this decision, which we hope will be reconsidered. Community legislation prohibits trade in whale products and requires member states to protect whales; new members will be expected to accept this legislation.

El Salvador

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest information he has on the abuse of trade union members in El Salvador; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel Jones: We are deeply concerned by recent reports of deaths of, and threats to, trade unionists and others in El Salvador. We continue to urge restraint on all concerned, to allow full implementation of the peace agreement signed in Mexico City on 16 January.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Next Steps Agencies

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list all the next steps agencies and indicate the date on which they began operating, the number of staff each employs and the personnel costs each agency is incurring or is estimated to incur on an annual basis.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The information requested in respect of launch dates and staff numbers is as follows. Personnel costs for each agency are not held centrally: further details may be obtained from individual agency annual reports or direct from the appropriate chief executive.

Next Steps—Executive agencies established

Agency	*Launch date*	*Staff*[1]
Accounts Services Agency	1 October 1991	90
ADAS	1 April 1992	2,500
Building Research Establishment	2 April 1990	700
Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments)	2 April 1991	230
Central Office of Information[2]	5 April 1990	670
Central Science Laboratory	1 April 1992	370
Central Statistical Office	19 November 1991	1,090
Central Veterinary Laboratory	2 April 1990	590
Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment[3]	2 April 1991	600
Civil Service College	6 June 1989	230
Companies House[2]	3 October 1988	1,070
Compensation Agency[4]	1 April 1992	150
Defence Analytical Services Agency[3]	1 July 1992	150
Defence Operational Analysis Centre[3]	1 July 1992	180
Defence Postal and Courier Services[3]	1 July 1992	600
Defence Research Agency	2 April 1991	12,150
Directorate General of Defence Accounts[3]	1 April 1991	2,130
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency	2 April 1990	4,580
Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency[4]	1 April 1992	250
Driving Standards Agency	2 April 1990	2,080
Duke of York's Royal Military School	1 April 1992	100
DVOIT	1 April 1992	590
Employment Service	2 April 1990	38,400
Fire Service College[2]	1 April 1992	160
Forensic Science Service	1 April 1991	600
Historic Royal Palaces	1 October 1989	330
Historic Scotland	2 April 1991	630
HMSO[2]	14 December 1988	3,250
Hydrographic Office[3]	6 April 1990	860
Insolvency Service	21 March 1990	1,470
Intervention Board	2 April 1990	980
Laboratory of the Government Chemist	30 October 1989	340
Land Registry	2 July 1990	9,800
Medicines Control Agency	11 July 1991	300
Meteorological Office	2 April 1990	2,390
Military Survey[3]	2 April 1991	1,300
National Engineering Laboratory	5 October 1990	390
National Physical Laboratory	3 July 1990	830
National Weights and Measures Laboratory	18 April 1989	50
Natural Resources Institute	2 April 1990	440
Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation[3]	1 April 1992	1,510

Agency	*Launch date*	*Staff*[1]
NHS Estates	1 April 1991	120
Occupational Health Service	2 April 1991	100
Ordnance Survey	1 May 1990	2,380
Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland[4]	1 April 1992	210
Patent Office[2]	1 March 1990	1,080
Planning Inspectorate	1 April 1992	630
Public Record Office	1 April 1992	440
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre	6 July 1989	60
Queen Victoria School	1 April 1992	60
Radiocommunications Agency	2 April 1990	520
RAF Maintenance[3]	2 April 1991	13,300
Rate Collection Agency[4]	1 April 1992	270
Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency	2 April 1991	240
Registers of Scotland	6 April 1990	1,200
Royal Mint[2]	2 April 1990	1,020
Scottish Agricultural Science Agency	1 April 1992	140
Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency	12 April 1991	210
Service Children's Schools (North West Europe)[3]	24 April 1991	2,300
Social Security Agency[4]	1 April 1992	5,350
Social Security Benefits Agency	2 April 1991	63,100
Social Security Contributions Agency	2 April 1991	8,000
Social Security Information Technology Services Agency	2 April 1990	4,000
Social Security Resettlement Agency	24 May 1989	520
Teachers' Pensions Agency	1 April 1992	300
The Buying Agency[2]	31 October 1991	110
Training and Employment Agency[4]	2 April 1990	1,670
Transport Research Laboratory	2 April 1992	580
United Kingdom Passport Agency	2 April 1992	1,250
Valuation Office	30 September 1991	5,200
Vehicle Certification Agency	2 April 1990	80
Vehicle Inspectorate[2]	1 August 1988	1,820
Veterinary Medicines Directorate	2 April 1990	80
Warren Spring Laboratory	20 April 1989	310
Wilton Park Conference Centre	1 September 1991	30
75 in number		211,890
Customs and Excise[5] (30 Executive Units)	1 April 1991	26,800
Inland Revenue[5] (34 Executive Offices)	1 April 1992	62,100
TOTAL[6]		300,790
TOTAL CIVIL SERVANTS[7]		291,050

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[1] October 1991 figures for civil servants and armed forces personnel. Casuals are excluded. Part-time staff are counted as half units.

[2] Trading Fund.

[3] Defence Support Agency.

[4] Northern Ireland civil service.

[5] Departments operating fully on 'Next Steps' lines. Staffing figure for Inland Revenue excludes the Valuation Office which is a free standing agency.

[6] Includes 8,440 armed forces personnel in Ministry of Defence Agencies, and 1,300 locally engaged staff in service children's schools, north west Europe.

[7] Includes 7,900 civil servants in agencies of the Northern Ireland civil service.

Scientists and Technologists

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what efforts are being undertaken by his Department to attract more scientists and technologists into the senior ranks of the civil service.

Mr. Robert Jackson: Under the policy of fair and open competition for civil service posts the Civil Service Commissioners within my Department see that many appointments for scientists and technologists are widely publicised. These include appointments at senior level, including agency chief executives and heads of research establishments, posts in the scientific and engineering fast stream and, more widely, the full range of opportunities for scientists and technologists to work in the civil service. In addition, Departments, agencies and research establishments publicise their own vacancies.

Pesticides

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what research his Department has undertaken concerning the relationship between the use of pesticides and the incidence of atopic illness.

Mr. Waldegrave: None. Neither the Agricultural and Food Research Council nor the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid through my office, are supporting any research projects specifically on the relationship between the use of pesticides and the incidence of atopic illness.

The research councils are always ready to consider, in competition with other applications, soundly based research proposals.

Civil Research and Development

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it his policy to raise the Government's share of the funding of civil research and development and to set a target date for achieving such a goal.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. It would be wrong for the Government to set a target for their share in the funding of total civil research and development—R and D—not least because this share would vary as a result of decisions on R and D funding by the private sector and other bodies. The Government fund the R and D they need on the basis or merit and value for money, consistent with what can be afforded.

EC Biomedical and Health Programme

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what monitoring he has undertaken of the biomedical and health programme of the EC.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Office of Science and Technology maintains contact with developments through officers of the Medical Research Council, who represent the United Kingdom on the programme advisory committee.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what financial provisions, and how much, he has made within his Department in order to look at the potential for deregulation of each of the regulatory measures for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not have responsibility for any regulatory measures.

Justices of the Peace

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list for each year since 1987, the number of people submitted for consideration as justices of the peace in Rossendale broken down by *(a)* gender and *(b)* political affiliation; if he will indicate how many of these have not been approved, both as a total number and a percentage of all submissions; and if he will specify the criteria for the appointment of justices of the peace.

Mr. Waldegrave: The statistics requested are set out in the tables.

Table of submissions to Rossendale advisory committee for consideration as Justices and numbers appointed to the Lancashire Commission

	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Submissions						
Men	2	3	4	5	7	9
Women	4	2	2	2	13	7
Labour						
Men		1	1		1	2
Women					2	1
Conservative						
Men	2	1	3	2	3	2
Women	2	1	2	2	6	5
Liberal Democrat						
Men						
Women					1	
Other not declared						
Men		1		3	3	5
Women	2	1			4	1
Appointments						
Men	2	1	3	2	1	4
Women	1			1	5	1
Labour						
Men						
Women					1	1
Conservative						
Men	2	1	3	2	1	1
Women	1			1	3	
Liberal Democrat						
Men						
Women					1	
Other not declared						
Men						3
Women						

Deletions by the advisory committee and number remaining for future consideration

	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Deletions						
Men		1	1	2	6	2
Women	1	1	2	1	6	4
Labour						
Men			1		1	
Women					1	
Conservative						
Men					2	1
Women			2	1	2	3

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Liberal Democrat						
Men						
Women						
Other not declared						
Men		1		2	3	1
Women	1	1			3	1
Future Consideration						
Men		1		1		3
Women	2	1			2	2
Labour						
Men		1				2
Women	1					
Conservative						
Men					1	2
Women		1				
Liberal Democrat						
Men						
Women					1	
Other not declared						
Men				1		1
Women	1					

Number of names considered and deleted

	Total names considered	*Names deleted*	*Percentage of names deleted*
1987	6	1	16·66
1988	5	2	40·00
1989	6	3	50·00
1990	7	3	42·85
1991	20	12	60·00
1992	16	6	37·50

As regards criteria for the appointment of magistrates, these are set out in a handbook for the guidance of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's advisory committees on the appointment of justices of the peace in Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside. This broadly follows the pattern of the handbook from the Lord Chancellor's Department. The deliberations of my advisory committee in Rossendale are, of course, confidential.

A candidate's political persuasion is neither a qualification nor disqualification for appointment as a magistrate. Political persuasion as well as other factors such as age and experience are taken into account in order to try and achieve a bench which broadly reflects the area it serves.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Trevi Group

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he will publish a list of the Trevi group of Ministers and officials;

(2) if he will list the meetings of the Trevi group since 1990 and the Ministers and officials who attended in each case.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There is one Trevi ministerial meeting held during every EC Presidency, which is attended by the Minister from each EC member state with responsibility for interior and justice matters. In the United Kingdom this is the Home Secretary. Ministers are supported by officials normally from their respective Departments. In the United Kingdom these are from the Home Office.

Ministers who have attended Trevi ministerial meetings since 1991 are Mr. Kenneth Clarke—Lisbon, June 11-12 1992, Mr. John Patten—The Hague, 1-2 December 1991 and Mr. Kenneth Baker—Luxembourg, 13-14 June 1992.

Individual Trevi working group meetings are attended by a delegation led by officials from each interior and justice ministry of the EC. United Kingdom delegations comprise Home Office officials and, generally, a police representative.

I have written to the hon. Member with dates of Trevi working group and ministerial meetings since January 1991, which is when full records are available. These are repeated in the table.

Records of the dates of meetings of the TREVI group are not held centrally before 1991. The following meetings have taken place since then:

30 September 1992—1 October 1992	TREVI Working Group III
18 September 1992	Ad Hoc TREVI/Immigration Ministers
3-4 September 1992	TREVI Working Group I
20-21 July 1992	TREVI Working Group III
9-10 July 1992	TREVI 1992 Working Group
2-3 July 1992	TREVI Senior Officials TROIKA
11-12 June 1992	TREVI/Immigration Ministers
14-15 May 1992	TREVI Senior Officials
9-10 April 1992	TREVI 1992 Working Group
19-20 March 1992	TREVI Working Group III
27-28 February 1992	TREVI Working Group II
30-31 January 1992	TREVI 1992 Working Group
23-24 January 1992	TREVI Working Group I
2-3 December 1991	TREVI/Immigration Ministers
21-22 November 1991	TREVI Senior Officials
7-8 November 1991	TREVI 1992 Working Group
24-25 October 1991	TREVI Working Group I
7-8 October 1991	TREVI Working Group III
26-27 September 1991	TREVI 1992 Working Group
19-20 September 1991	TREVI Working Group II
9-10 September 1991	TREVI Working Group III
4 July 1991	TREVI 1992 Working Group
3 July 1991	TREVI Senior Officials
13-14 June 1991	TREVI/Immigration Ministers
30-31 May 1991	TREVI Senior Officials
18-19 April 1991	TREVI 1992 Working Group
28 March 1991	Ad Hoc TREVI/Immigration Ministers
14-15 March 1991	TREVI Working Group III
1 March 1991	TREVI Working Group II
14-15 February 1991	TREVI Working Group I
31 January-1 February 1991	TREVI 1992 Working Group
22 January 1991	Ad Hoc TREVI/Immigration Ministers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what decisions were taken by the Trevi group of Ministers in the past 36 months; and if he will deposit a copy of the decisions in the Library;

(2) what was on the agenda for the meetings of the Trevi group of Ministers, during the past 36 months; and if he will place copies of the agenda in the Library.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Successive Secretaries of State for the Home Department have reported to the House on the decisions of Trevi and Immigration Ministers by means of a written answer after each ministerial meeting. I refer the hon. Member to the replies given on those occasions: 7 July 1992, column *132;* 20 December 1991, column *351;* 20 June 1991, column *242;* 18 December 1990, column *110;* 4 July 1990, column *582;* 20 December 1989, column *276*.

Asylum

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions the United Kingdom Government have taken part in relating to EC-wide measures to introduce compulsory fingerprinting for all asylum seekers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: EC Immigration Ministers meeting in The Hague in December 1991 agreed that a feasibility study should be undertaken of a Communitywide system for matching the fingerprints of asylum applicants in order to detect multiple and successive applications being made in different member states. This work is continuing.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers were detained in Her Majesty's prisons during the past 24 months; and what was the most frequent period of custody to the nearest month.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is not available in the form requested. However, on 7 October 1992 a total of 138 asylum seekers had been detained in prisons, including Haslar, for more than seven days. Of these 32 had been detained for less than one month, 20 for between one and two months, 46 between two and six months and 40 for over six months.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what inquiries immigration officials will be required to make of immigration officials in another member state in order to assure the admissibility of an asylum seeker being returned to another member state under the 1990 Dublin convention, before such person is so returned.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Under the terms of articles 11 and 13 of the Dublin convention (Cm. 1623), where a member state considers that another member state is responsible for examining an application for asylum it may request that member state to take charge of or take back the applicant. That member state is obliged to respond to the request within specified timescales, and in so doing it will indicate whether or not the applicant is admissible to its territory.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what level of seniority an immigration officer must have to make a decision to return an asylum seeker to another member state of the European Community as permitted by the 1990 Dublin convention and whether such a decision will be reached and implemented without a reference to the asylum and special cases unit at the immigration and nationality department.

Mr. Charles Wardle: All decisions to refuse an application for asylum are taken by the asylum and special cases division and not by immigration officers. This will remain the position when such decisions are made under the terms of the Dublin convention (Cm. 1623).

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what safeguards will be taken to ensure that all relevant information, including the presence of family members, which affects the member state responsible for determining an asylum application under the 1990 Dublin convention, is obtained and considered before a decision is reached.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Article 15 of the Dublin convention (Cm. 1623) provides that each member state shall communicate to any member state which requests it such information on individual cases as is necessary for determining the member state responsible for examining an application for asylum. The member state that forwards the information must ensure that it is accurate and up to date. The applicant has the right to know what information is being exchanged concerning him or her and to have it corrected or erased if it is inaccurate. Where the removal of an asylum applicant is contemplated on third country grounds the applicant will also be invited as at present to explain why the United Kingdom should be considered the most appropriate country of refuge, and if there are any compassionate factors or family links which weigh against removal. All these matters will be considered before a final decision on removal is made.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what precautions are taken under the 1990 Dublin convention to ensure that all information about the identity of the asylum seeker and the nature of his application are kept confidential and are not revealed to unrelated third parties, including crew members of carriers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Article 15 of the Dublin convention (Cm 1623) contains safeguards on the transmission and storage of information about asylum applicants. It sets limits on what information may be exchanged between member states on individual asylum applicants for the purposes of implementing the convention and requires that information shall be exchanged only between specially designated authorities in each member state. The article requires all exchanges of information to be recorded and limits the period during which information can be retained. It requires any computerisation of such information to be compatible with the 1981 Strasbourg convention on data protection. Crew members of carriers or other third parties are not informed of the basis of a person's application for admission or further leave to remain in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest proposals of the group of EC Ministers concerned with immigration on the position of a person who is being removed or deported through another member state who applies for political asylum in transit.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No specific proposals have been made, but in general these circumstances are covered by the convention determining the state responsible for examining applications for asylum lodged in one of the member states of the European Communities—the Dublin convention, Cm 1623. Article 3.1 of the convention makes it clear that every application for asylum will be considered by one of the member states. Which member state is responsible will depend upon the precise circumstances of the case.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total cost in producing and processing the Asylum Bill in Session 1991-92.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The readily available information suggests that staff costs of £48,000 were incurred in the Home Office.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the numbers of staff who determine asylum claims; and how many of the proposed number are now in post.

Mr. Charles Wardle: On 1 October 1992 there were 495 staff in post in the asylum division. Of those, 350 staff, including clerical support, are involved in the determination of asylum claims. Present plans provide for the total number of staff in the asylum division to rise further, to about 550, next year.

Immigration

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what evidence an immigration officer decides that a passenger has arrived from another member state of the European Community.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In some cases, most notably at the channel ports, the immediate point of departure will be self-evident. Otherwise, where there is any doubt, the immigration officer takes into account the passenger's own statement and such documentary evidence as is available, including endorsements in travel documents, travel tickets and carriers' records.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 15 July, *Official Report*, column *775*, if he will make a statement on progress under the United Kingdom presidency on the work programme of EC Ministers concerned with immigration.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Progress is being made under the United Kingdom Presidency on a number of matters identified in the work programme adopted in December 1991 by EC Ministers concerned with immigration. We are carrying forward the work begun under the Portuguese Presidency on the harmonisation of family reunification policy; and have introduced proposals concerning the admission of non-EC nationals for purposes of employment. We are also working towards an agreement on the expulsion of illegal immigrants and on a resolution on manifestly unfounded asylum applications. There has been continuing progress on practical measures to prepare for the implementation of the Dublin asylum convention and the draft external frontiers convention.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, (1) further to his answer to the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) of 15 July, *Official Report*, column 77, what policy implications for United Kingdom immigration law stem from the progress made under the Portuguese presidency on family reunification; and what changes to primary or secondary legislation are required;

(2) what administrative measures may need to be taken to implement the progress made on family reunification under the Portuguese presidency of the EC Ministers concerned with immigration.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Discussion of family reunification policy did not reach a sufficiently advanced stage during the Portuguese Presidency to enable conclusions to be drawn about the possible implications for United Kingdom law and practice.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in respect of precisely which areas of family reunification discussions are currently taking place in the EC group of Ministers concerned with immigration.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The basic issues being addressed are which family members are to be admitted to join third-country nationals resident in a member state and under what conditions.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements have been agreed with the other EC Ministers concerned with immigration for the transit through member states of persons removed or deported.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No arrangements have yet been agreed with other EC Ministers. However, draft guidelines have been prepared, which it is intended should be considered by EC Immigration Ministers at their meeting at the end of November. These recommend that, where possible, removal of third-country nationals through other EC member states should be avoided; that, where such a removal is necessary, for example in the interests of efficiency, speed or economy, the removing state should make satisfactory arrangements for the individual's onward journey; and that there should be proper consultation with the transit state on such matters as documentation and the use of escorts.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to change the green form legal aid option for immigraiton advice and representations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My noble Friend the Minister of State announced on 10 February in another place, column 459-60, that the Government did not intend to proceed with the proposal to transfer advice on immigration and asylum from the green form legal aid scheme to the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service. Green form legal aid continues to be available in immigration and asylum cases.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what matters were discussed by the ad hoc group of Home Affairs Ministers responsible for immigration matters in the European Community at its meeting on 10 and 11 September; and if he will make a statement as to decisions or agreements reached at that meeting, the areas in which discussions are on going, and the form in which conclusions will be presented to Parliament.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The ad hoc working group on immigration is composed of senior officials. It reports to EC Immigration Ministers, who meet towards the end of each Presidency. At its meeting on 10-11 September, the group discussed a range of issues, including admission for the purpose of employment, implementing work in respect of the draft external frontiers convention and the practices to be followed by member states as regards the expulsion of third country nationals unlawfully present in their territories. Discussions will continue on these and other matters in preparation for consideration by Ministers.

My right hon. and learned Friend will report to the House in the usual way the conclusions of the meeting of Immigration Ministers due to take place in London at the end of November.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all EC directives, draft directives and other EC proposals which currently pertain to immigration, nationality and asylum.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The area covered by Community law is that of free movement and residence rights for EC nationals and their families. The operation of these rights is currently governed by Council directives 64/221/EEC; 68/360/EEC; 72/194/EEC; 73/148/EEC; 75/34/EEC; 75/35/EEC; 90/364/EEC; 90/365/EEC and 90/366/EEC; and by regulations EEC No. 1612/68, EEC No. 1251/70 and EEC No. 2194/91. A Commission document, COM(90)108, contains proposals to amend regulation EEC No. 1612/68 and directive 68/360/EEC. These proposals are currently under discussion.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out in tabular form the annual salary scales for those employed in the immigration service up to and including the permanent secretaries and Ministers, giving the numbers employed at each grade.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information is set out in the tables:

		Salary scales			
		London		*Elsewhere*	
Grade	*Number of Staff employed in grade on 30 September 1992*	*Range minimum*	*Range maximum*	*Range minimum*	*Range maximum*
Grade 3 (chief inspector)	1	51,272	59,280	49,920	57,928
Grade 5 (director)	2	37,589	49,790	36,019	47,921
Grade 6 (deputy director)	3	28,904	44,390	27,660	42,724
Grade 7 (assistant director)	16	25,330	36,019	24,239	34,469
Inspector	72	19,815	23,082	19,616	22,618
Senior executive officer	6	18,082	22,618	17,361	21,715
Chief immigration officer	316·5	16,333	18,833	16,004	18,454
Higher executive officer	18	14,456	18,454	13,880	17,718
Immigration officer	1,832	12,411	15,682	12,161	15,366
Executive officer	55	10,440	14,753	10,024	14,165
Assistant immigration officer	49	9,405	11,138	8,790	10,409
Administration officer	133	9,405	11,138	8,790	10,409
Administration assistant	108·5	7,175	9,405	6,706	8,790
Senior personal secretary	1	12,752	14,599	11,917	13,644
Personal secretary	12	9,405	11,521	8,790	10,768
Typist	35	7,175	9,405	6,706	8,790

Note: Progression on the salary scale depends on performance.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in relation to the ad hoc group of Home Affairs Ministers in the European Community responsible for immigration matters, what treaties, agreements, resolutions or protocols are currently being considered by the group; when the group will next meet; and if he will publish the names of sub-groups, the person chairing them and the frequency of meetings.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The ad hoc working group on immigration is composed of senior officials. It meets approximately eight times a year and reports to Ministers concerned with immigration matters. The group will meet next on 12-13 November. Work currently in hand in the group under the immigration and asylum work programme agreed at Maastricht in December 1991 includes the preparation of resolutions for adoption by Ministers on manifestly unfounded asylum applications, harmonisation of family reunification policy, and expulsion practice. Other areas under discussion include admission for employment and transit for the purposes of removal. The current chairman is Mr. A. R. Rawsthorne, an Assistant Under-Secretary of State in the Immigration and Nationality Department of the Home Office.

There are currently five sub-groups reporting to the ad hoc group, each chaired during the United Kingdom Presidency by a senior official of the Immigration and Nationality Department, as follows:

Sub group	*Chairman*
Admission/Expulsion	Mr. N. R. Varney/Mr. C. B. Manchip
Asylum	Mr. N. C. Sanderson
External Frontiers	Mr. N. R. Varney
False documents	Mr. C. B. Manchip
Visa	Mr. R. G. Yates

The frequency of meetings varies, but a total of 22 days had been allocated in total to meetings of the sub-groups during the United Kingdom Presidency.

Carriers Liability

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much the United Kingdom Government have fined airlines under the provisions of the Immigration (Carriers Liability) Act 1987 in the past 24 months.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The total of sums demanded of airlines under the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 for the two years up to 31 August 1992 was about £24 million.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the provisions of the carriers liability schemes which exist in the OECD countries.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The following is a list of the OECD countries which we understand have carriers' liability schemes, with the charges which may be imposed on carriers in each case.

Australia	$1,000 Aus (approximately £430)
Belgium	100,000 BgF (£2,070)
Canada	$100-$5,000 Can. (£50-£2,500)
France	10,000 FF (£1,260)
Germany	2,000-5,000 DM (£850-£2,135)
Italy	170,000-500,000 Lira (£80-£240)
Turkey	$3,000 US (£1,785)
United Kingdom	£2,000
United States of America	$300-$3,000 (£175-£1,785)

Schengen Group

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what liaison takes place between the United Kingdom and the Schengen group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There are no formal liaison arrangements between the United Kingdom and the Schengen states, although the Schengen presidency has on occasion briefed British officials on developments in implementing the Schengen convention. There are, however, frequent contacts between United Kingdom Ministers and officials and their counterparts in the Schengen states, both bilaterally and in the course of discussions among the Twelve.

Commissioner Bangermann

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his recent meeting with EC Commissioner Bangermann.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: At my meeting with Vice-President Bangemann on 1 September, it was agreed that we should avoid disputes over the interpretation of article 8A of the treaty of Rome and should concentrate instead on practical measures to make it as easy as possible for EC nationals including British citizens to enter and leave the United Kingdom. Discussions with the Commission are continuing.

Child Abuse

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to change the legislation regarding the cross-examination of child witnesss in cases of alleged child abuse, neglect and sexual abuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: None, at present. The Criminal Justice Act 1991 introduced new provisions relating to the taking of evidence from children. These provisions derive from the recommendations of Judge Pigot's advisory group and are designed to reduce the stress of criminal proceedings for child witnesses.

In particular, video recorded interviews with child witnesses will now be admissible in place of a child's evidence in chief and the availability of live television links for abused children giving evidence and being cross-examined—introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 1988 —will be extended. Under no circumstances will the accused be allowed to question a child in person.

We will be monitoring the effectiveness of these reforms and in the light of experience with them will, of course, consider whether any further changes are needed.

United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest position over the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service and its replacement; if the UKIAS staff and offices have been retained; if he will name the members of the replacement committee and where appropriate the organisations they represent; what arrangements have been made for the election of an executive of the new body; what funding it will receive from the Government; and what response has been made by the UKIAS staff to the replacement committee.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I announced in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) on 8 July, column 202-3, that Mr. Humfrey Malins had been invited to lead a planning group outside Government to draw up proposals for a new voluntary body to take over UKIAS's general immigration work and in due course to establish such a body. The members of the group are Baroness Flather, Mr. Alf Dubs, Dr. Z. U. Khan and Ms. Rachel Pickavance. All have been invited to participate as individuals, not as representatives of particular organisations. The planning group hopes by the end of the year to put forward recommendations on the constitution and structure of the new organisation. The group would welcome views from any interested party.

On 24 July UKIAS appointed a standing executive committee, separate from the previous executive committee, to administer the organisation while the planning group does its work. This is chaired by the Reverend David Haslam of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland and the members are Mr. Navnit Dholakia of the Commission for Racial Equality, Mrs. Helen Ellis of the Kent Committee for the Welfare of Migrants, Mr. Bob

Purkiss of the Trade Union Congress and Mrs. Sabiha Shahzad of the National Association of Race Equality Councils. In addition, Mr. Victor Kasinathan is the treasurer and Mr. Andrew Puddephat of Liberty is a co-opted member. The Government are providing funds on a monthly basis so that UKIAS's staff, working from the existing offices, can continue to provide advice and representation for appellants until the successor body is established.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to continue the services currently offered by UKIAS.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) on 8 July, *Official Report*, column 202-3.

Faroes Citizens

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what rules govern the settlement of citizens of the Faroes in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Faroe Islanders are not EC nationals and do not, therefore, enjoy the free movement rights set out in the treaty of Rome. Any applications for settlement in the United Kingdom fall to be decided in accordance with the immigration rules.

Metropolitan Police

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out in tabular form the annual salary scales for the ranks of commander to commissioner for the Metropolitan police and show for each rank all other allowances payable.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is set out in the tables.

Table 1 (Salaries)

Rank	*Salary on promotion* £	*Salary after one year* £	*Salary after three years* £	*Salary after five years* £
Commander	46,542	46,542	47,709	47,709
Deputy Assistant Commissioner	53,031	53,031	54,354	55,683
Assistant Commissioner	66,288	66,288	67,944	69,603
Deputy Commissioner	75,138	75,138	77,016	78,894
Commissioner	87,620	87,620	87,620	87,620

Table 2 (Allowances)

Officers (excluding the Commissioner) may qualify for the following allowances:

Allowance	*Rate*	
Housing Allowance	£6,529·30 pa	Commanders and Deputy Assistant Commissioners
	£7,544·96 pa	Assistant Commissioners and Deputy Commissioner
Rent Allowance	£7,890·00 pa	Commanders and Deputy Assistant Commissioners
	£9,153·00 pa	Assistant Commissioners and Deputy Commissioner
London Allowance	£1,011·00 pa	
London Weighting	£1,344·00 pa	
Supplementary rent Allowance	£726·12 pa	
Uniform Allowance	£287·00 pa	
Permanent Plain Clothes Allowance	£284·72 to	Commanders and Deputy Assistant Commissioners

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many radio control rooms there are in divisional and other units of the Metropolitan police; and what is the total number of police officers and civilians employed in them.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In addition to the central command complex at New Scotland Yard, there are 69 divisional control rooms and 11 others in specialist units, with a total staff of 726 police officers and 477 civilians.

Police Salaries

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out in tabular form the annual salary scales for the ranks of police constable to chief superintendent with effect from 1 September; and in the case of London, if he will show for each rank and scale point the London allowance, special London allowance and maximum rent allowance payable, respectively.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is set out in the table.

Annual salary with effect from 1 September 1992

	On appointment/ promotion £	*After 1 year* £	*After 2^1 years* £	*After 3 years* £	*After 4 years* £	*After 5 years* £	*After 6 years* £	*After 7 years* £	*After 8 years* £	*After 12 years* £	*After 15 years* £
Constable	12,555	13,425	15,807	16,179	16,713	17,289	17,838	18,390	18,933	20,043	20,952
Sergeant	20,043	20,952	21,690	22,407	22,992	—	—	—	—	—	—
Inspector	22,992 *24,228*	23,709 *24,903*	24,636 *25,785*	25,368 *26,577*	26,103 *27,357*	—	—	—	—	—	—
Chief Inspector	26,103 *27,357*	26,835 *28,026*	27,564 *28,749*	28,299 *29,514*	29,037 *30,279*	—	—	—	—	—	—
Superintendent	35,508 *36,414*	36,414 *37,128*	37,314 *37,839*	38,556 *38,556*	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

	On appointment/ promotion £	*After 1 year* £	*After 2*[1] *years* £	*After 3 years* £	*After 4 years* £	*After 5 years* £	*After 6 years* £	*After 7 years* £	*After 8 years* £	*After 12 years* £	*After 15 years* £
Chief Superintendent	39,480	40,044	40,941	41,919	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

[1] Entry point for those aged 22 or over, who will move to the next point after three years' service.

Note: London salaries in *italics.*

London Allowance £ 1,011 (for All Ranks)
London Weighting £ 1,344 (for All Ranks)

Maximum limits of transitional rent allowance

	Federated Ranks £	*Superintendents and Chief Superintendents* £
Metropolitan	5,863·65	6,802·00
City of London	5,864·00	6,802·00

Standard rate housing allowance

	Federated Ranks £	*Superintendents and Chief Superintendents* £
Metropolitan	4,836·51	5,610·83
City of London	4,807·00	5,577·00

New Refugee Unit

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for establishing a network of advice offices for applicants and appellants regarding political asylum status outside London for the new refugee unit.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is for the refugee legal centre, as the new refugee unit is now called, to decide where it locates its advice offices. I understand that it has no plans to establish advice offices outside London at present, since the great majority of the centre's clients live in the London area.

Police (BMW Motor Cycles)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the police forces that have fleets of BMW 1000cc K100-RT motor cycles; what is the strength of that fleet; how many have been taken out of service during the last 12 months as a precautionary safety measure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Earlier this year, the Association of Chief Police Officers issued advice to forces on measures which could be taken to improve the stability of these and other motorcycles.

Carl Bridgewater

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long he has had the report from Merseyside police into the Carl Bridgewater murder; and when he expects to reach a decision regarding the cases of the three men who received life sentences for this offence.

Mr. Jack: The report was received at the end of July and its findings are now being very carefully considered. Once this exercise is completed my right hon. and learned Friend will decide as soon as possible whether there are grounds for any action on his part.

Prevention of Terrorism

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce proposals to amend the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 to take account of the role of the press with a view to freedom of expression and the provision of legitimate information to the public.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No.

Nuisance

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the police forces that are currently using the Justices of the Peace Act 1361 instead of the Public Order Act 1986 to combat anyone causing a nuisance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The only extant power from the Justices of the Peace Act 1361 is for magistrates to make binding over orders. Information on the number of orders made under the 1361 Act and on the circumstances leading to the making of those orders is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Probation Officers

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what proposals he has to alter the funding arrangements and selection procedures for probation officers; and what consultations he has had with the National Association of Probation Officers, Central Council for the Training of Social Workers and the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals regarding such changes and their timing;

(2) what representations he has received concerning the training of probation officers.

Mr. Jack: The funding arrangements for students starting courses which would qualify them for entry to the probation service were revised in the summer. This followed a decision by the special commissioners of taxes that Home Office payments to probation students were not taxable, with the consequence that national insurance deductions, too, would not be appropriate. Following this decision we reviewed the grant arrangements and concluded that probation students should now receive their grants in the same way as the majority of social work students, but at a higher rate in view of the additional training involved. The selection procedures have not been altered. Discussions about the new arrangements have taken place with the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work and the National Association of Probation Officers. We have received a number of representations from the association and from individual students.

Lord-Lieutenants

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list *(a)* the names and *(b)* the occupation of each Lord-Lieutenant and Deputy Lord-Lieutenant currently in post in England and Wales; who is responsible for their nomination; and what (i) salary and (ii) honoraria, allowance or expenses each receives.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend's responsibilities are limited to the reimbursement of certain expenses to Lord-Lieutenants, and the appointment of Deputy Lieutenants, in England. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, upon whose behalf I am also replying, has similar responsibility in Wales.

Lord-Lieutenants are appointed by the Queen under section 130 of the Reserve Forces Act 1980, on the advice of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Deputy Lieutenants are appointed by the Lord-Lieutenant under section 133 of the Act, subject to Her Majesty's non-disapprobation, which is signified as appropriate by the Secretary of State for the Home Department or the Secretary of State for Wales. There are some 2,250 Deputy Lieutenants in England and Wales and a list of their names and occupations could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Lord-Lieutenants and Deputy Lieutenants are unsalaried. Lord-Lieutenants, but not Deputy Lieutenants, may claim from central funds reimbursement of the cost of travel, postage, telephone calls and other non-entertainment expenses incurred in the course of their official duties.

Reginald Dudley and Robert Maynard

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what actions he is taking regarding a referral back to the Court of Appeal of the convictions of Reginald Dudley and Robert Maynard following the fresh evidence submitted by their solicitor at the beginning of July.

Mr. Jack: I am considering the representations and material submitted to me in this case and will come to a decision as soon as I can.

Accidents (Police Vehicles)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out for each police force in England and Wales for each of the last 10 years, the number of persons killed or injured by police officers when driving motor vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information which is available centrally relates to accidents where death or serious injury has arisen in the course of either police pursuits or responses to emergency calls. The information is available only from 1987 and the figures do not show the cause of the accident or the injury.

Information in respect of the Metropolitan police is as follows:

Year	*Fatal injury (Civilian)*	*Fatal injury (Police)*	*Serious injury (Civilian and Police)*
1987	8	0	69
1988	8	0	103
1989	11	1	139
1990	6	1	124
1991	3	0	82

For the other police forces in England and Wales information for 1987 is not available by force, but it is as follows:

Fatal injury (Civilian)	*Fatal injury (Police)*	*Serious injury (Civilian)*	*Serious injury (Police)*
16	8	152	141

For those other forces, the information for 1988 to 1991 is set out in the table:

Police vehicle accidents—fatal injury (police)

Force name	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Avon and Somerset	0	0	0	0
Bedfordshire	0	0	0	0
Cambridgeshire	0	0	0	0
Cheshire	0	0	0	0
City of London	0	0	0	0
Cleveland	0	0	0	0
Cumbria	0	0	0	0
Derbyshire	0	0	0	0
Devon and Cornwall	0	0	0	1
Dorset	0	0	0	0
Durham	0	0	0	0
Dyfed Powys	0	0	0	0
Essex	0	0	0	0
Gloucestershire	0	0	0	0
Greater Manchester	0	0	0	0
Gwent	0	0	0	0
Hampshire	0	0	0	0
Hertfordshire	0	0	0	0
Humberside	0	0	0	0
Kent	0	0	0	0
Lancashire	0	0	0	0
Leicestershire	0	0	0	0
Lincolnshire	0	0	0	0
Merseyside	0	0	0	0
Norfolk	0	0	0	0
North Wales	0	0	0	0
North Yorkshire	0	0	0	0
Northamptonshire	0	0	0	0
Northumbria	0	0	0	0
Nottinghamshire	0	0	0	0
South Wales	0	0	0	0
South Yorkshire	0	0	0	0
Staffordshire	0	0	0	0
Suffolk	0	0	0	0
Surrey	0	0	0	0
Sussex	0	0	0	0
Thames Valley	0	0	0	0
Warwickshire	0	0	0	0
West Mercia	0	0	0	0
West Midlands	0	1	0	0
West Yorkshire	0	0	0	1
Wiltshire	0	0	0	0

Force name	1988	1989	1990	1991
National summary	0	1	0	2

Police vehicle accidents—serious injury (police)

Force name	1988	1989	1990	1991
Avon and Somerset	1	2	2	3
Bedfordshire	0	6	2	4
Cambridgeshire	2	0	2	0
Cheshire	2	0	2	1
City of London	0	0	0	0
Cleveland	0	1	0	0
Cumbria	5	0	2	0
Derbyshire	0	0	0	0
Devon and Cornwall	2	0	0	0
Dorset	0	1	1	1
Durham	1	1	0	2
Dyfed Powys	0	0	0	0
Essex	3	2	14	0
Gloucestershire	0	2	2	0
Greater Manchester	5	6	5	1
Gwent	0	0	0	0
Hampshire	2	2	0	2
Hertfordshire	2	1	1	3
Humberside	2	2	1	0
Kent	3	2	2	4
Lancashire	2	0	0	0
Leicestershire	0	0	0	1
Lincolnshire	2	2	1	2
Merseyside	10	12	2	3
Norfolk	0	3	0	0
North Wales	1	5	0	0
North Yorkshire	6	1	5	3
Northamptonshire	0	0	2	0
Northumbria	5	2	0	3
Nottinghamshire	2	4	0	2
South Wales	0	0	0	5
South Yorkshire	4	6	5	4
Staffordshire	3	2	0	0
Suffolk	0	0	0	0
Surrey	2	1	2	2
Sussex	0	0	2	2
Thames Valley	0	0	6	1
Warwickshire	0	0	0	1
West Mercia	0	3	3	0
West Midlands	3	20	19	N/A
West Yorkshire	0	0	1	1
Wiltshire	2	0	0	0
National summary	72	89	84	51

Police vehicle accidents—fatal injury (civilian)

Force name	1988	1989	1990	1991
Avon and Somerset	2	1	1	1
Bedfordshire	0	0	0	0
Cambridgeshire	0	1	1	4
Cheshire	0	0	1	0
City of London	0	0	0	0
Cleveland	0	2	0	0
Cumbria	0	0	1	0
Derbyshire	0	0	0	0
Devon and Cornwall	0	0	0	0
Dorset	0	2	1	0
Durham	0	0	0	1
Dyfed Powys	0	0	0	0
Essex	2	0	0	0
Gloucestershire	0	0	0	0
Greater Manchester	3	10	2	3
Gwent	0	0	0	0
Hampshire	0	0	0	0
Hertfordshire	0	0	0	0
Humberside	0	0	0	0
Kent	2	0	1	1
Lancashire	0	1	0	4
Leicestershire	0	0	0	0
Lincolnshire	0	1	0	0
Merseyside	1	1	1	4
Norfolk	0	0	0	0
North Wales	1	0	1	0
North Yorkshire	0	2	2	0
Northamptonshire	0	0	0	1
Northumbria	0	0	1	3
Nottinghamshire	1	0	0	0
South Wales	1	0	1	0
South Yorkshire	0	0	2	1
Staffordshire	0	0	0	0
Suffolk	0	0	0	0
Surrey	0	0	0	0
Sussex	0	0	0	0
Thames Valley	0	0	1	1
Warwickshire	0	0	0	1
West Mercia	0	0	0	1
West Midlands	1	3	0	1
West Yorkshire	0	1	0	0
Wiltshire	0	0	0	0
National summary	14	25	17	27

Police vehicle accidents—serious injury (civilian)

Force name	1988	1989	1990	1991
Avon and Somerset	5	2	6	5
Bedfordshire	1	7	0	2
Cambridgeshire	1	1	1	0
Cheshire	0	0	6	5
City of London	1	2	0	0
Cleveland	1	0	2	3
Cumbria	3	3	9	2
Derbyshire	0	0	0	0
Devon and Cornwall	1	5	5	0
Dorset	2	1	1	4
Durham	0	3	1	2
Dyfed Powys	0	0	0	0
Essex	3	4	5	1
Gloucestershire	1	1	0	1
Greater Manchester	20	8	14	15
Gwent	0	0	0	0
Hampshire	1	1	3	7
Hertfordshire	0	0	1	5
Humberside	0	0	1	1
Kent	3	3	3	2
Lancashire	3	2	0	7
Leicestershire	0	1	0	0
Lincolnshire	0	0	0	2
Merseyside	31	24	19	26
Norfolk	0	0	0	0
North Wales	3	4	2	1
North Yorkshire	9	8	5	4
Northamptonshire	5	1	3	2
Northumbria	0	2	3	4
Nottinghamshire	1	2	0	3
South Wales	0	0	0	0
South Yorkshire	4	6	6	9
Staffordshire	3	2	3	0
Suffolk	0	0	0	0
Surrey	0	3	0	2
Sussex	0	0	2	5
Thames Valley	0	2	7	6
Warwickshire	0	0	0	1
West Mercia	0	1	1	3
West Midlands	4	14	0	n/a
West Yorkshire	1	0	0	0
Wiltshire	0	0	0	0
National summary	107	113	109	130

Drugs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to make it illegal for anyone to be in possession of the drugs *(a)* Clenbuterol, *(b)* Norditropion and *(c)* Gonadotrophin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I have no present plans to do so, but I am willing to support any private Member who brings forward a Bill to make it an offence for an unauthorised person to supply anabolic steroids and related substances to minors. Precise substances to be included would need to be considered.

Attack Deterrents

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will reconsider proposals to amend the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 to allow the importation of deterrent products using pepper against attacks.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 provides the powers for Customs to enforce the prohibition of any goods on their importation.

Devices capable of discharging a noxious substance are classed as prohibited weapons under section 5 of the Firearms Act 1968. Such weapons may be imported only under the authority of an import licence issued by the Department of Trade and Industry to importers who are authorised by the Secretary of State for the Home Department to possess them. If such weapons are imported without a licence, Customs seize them under section 49(1)(b) of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979. We consider that spray devices, which are designed to discharge pepper into a person's eyes and face in order temporarily to incapacitate them, are prohibited weapons under section 5 of the Firearms Act 1968. They could be used effectively in crime and it would not be in the public interest to permit their importation or possession.

Mr. David Brown

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the detention by immigration officers of Mr. David Brown, of Shepherd's Bush, London, a British citizen leaving for a holiday in New York.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have written to the hon. Member.

Drug Couriers

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons are currently serving sentences of imprisonment as drug couriers *(a)* in total and *(b)* who are foreign nationals either without the right of abode in the United Kingdom, or who would be subject to deportation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information readily available does not distinguish the different types of drugs offence. On 30 June 1992, the latest date for which information is available, about 3,440 prisoners were held under sentence in prison service establishments in England and Wales for drugs offences, excluding any where drugs offences were not the principal offence. Of these about 1,020 were recorded as foreign nationals and the nationality of a further 140 was not recorded. Information on their liability for deportation on completion of sentence is not recorded centrally.

Immigration and Nationality Department

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to bring forward proposals to convert the immigration and nationality department into an agency.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have no proposals to change the administration of the Immigration and Nationality Department at the moment.

Safer Cities Programme

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the expenditure of his Department *(a)* on the safe cities programme in the past financial year and *(b)* on each of the cities included in that programme.

Mr. Jack: The total expenditure under the safer cities programme in the financial year 1991-92 was £7·2 million of which £2.0 million was for the running costs of the 20 projects including staff salaries, accommodation and other administrative expenditure. A total of £5·2 million was paid in grants to support local crime prevention activity, as follows:

	£000's
Birmingham	293
Bradford	305
Bristol	406
Coventry	383
Derby[1]	2
Hammersmith and Fulham[1]	0
Hartlepool	309
Hull	291
Islington	366
Leicester[1]	10
Lewisham	413
Middlesbrough[1]	0
Nottingham	307
Rochdale	315
Salford	315
Sunderland	264
Tower Hamlets	367
Wandsworth	274
Wirral	320
Wolverhampton	299

[1] New project established in 1991-92. There is a lead-in time of several months before new projects have an action plan and systems in place to commence grant making.

Treaties

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will publish a list of all treaties, European Community documents and accounts that the United Kingdom has agreed to in the past three years.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I have been asked to reply.

Such a list cannot be provided in *Hansard* without disproportionate cost. However, major treaties and agreements signed by the European Community and its member states are listed and explained in the six monthly White Papers on "Developments in the European Community", which are deposited in the Library of the House. The most recent was published on 12 October. The *Official Journal* of the European Communities, which is also placed in the Library of the House, publishes in the "L" series monthly and annual indices listing legislative measures adopted by the Council of Ministers of the European Communities.

Prisoners

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were held in police cells in each of the police forces in England and Wales on the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On Friday 16 October 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, the total number of prisoners held in police cells in each force area was as follows:

Force area	*Prisoners*
Avon and Somerset	31
Cheshire	33
Cumbria	2
Derbyshire	10
Gloucestershire	10
Greater Manchester	238
Humberside	21
Lancashire	50
Merseyside	87
North Wales	7
North Yorkshire	11
South Wales	24
South Yorkshire	9
Staffordshire	10
Surrey	3
Sussex	5
West Mercia	38
West Midlands	7
West Yorkshire	10
Wiltshire	10
TOTAL	616

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) which local authorities and emergency services have been involved in exercises to practise the Government's contingency plan to deal with the effects in the United Kingdom of an overseas nuclear accident;

(2) what improvements have been made to the original Government contingency plan to deal with the United Kingdom effects of an overseas nuclear accident based on exercises to practise the plan;

(3) how frequently and on what occasions exercises have been carried out to practise the Government's contingency plan to deal with the effects on the United Kingdom of a nuclear accident occurring overseas.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

My Department has lead responsibilities for responding to overseas nuclear accidents, under the United Kingdom's national response plan arrangements.

There have been two exercises: the first, held in October 1988, did not involve local authorities. The second exercise was held in November 1991, and three local authorities were involved: Avon county council, Lancashire county council and West Midlands metropolitan borough council. Emergency services were not involved in either exercise.

Lessons learned from these exercises, and from our response to the St. Petersburg incident last March, have resulted in several improvements to internal procedures, but the national response plan itself remains unchanged from the statement made in the House on 30 June 1987, *Hansard*, columns 65-67, by the then Prime Minister, and subsequently set out in a booklet published by HMSO, entitled "The National Response Plan and Radioactive Incident Monitoring Network (RIMNET), A Statement of Proposals", copies of which are held in the Library.

HEALTH

Psychiatric Care

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which local social services authorities do not have social workers approved under the Mental Health Act 1983 available on a 24-hour basis to deal with psychiatric emergencies which require consideration of compulsory admission to hospital.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not held centrally.

Social Workers

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the post-qualifying system of credit accumulation for social workers and probation officers now being piloted by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work.

Mr. Yeo: One of the aims of the Government's training strategy launched in January 1991 was to provide a coherent framework for post qualifying education and training addressing the need to improve service provision.

The Central Council for the Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW) post qualifying framework includes the following components:

- credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) system linked to academic awards;
- post qualifying and professional development leading to two CCETSW awards.

The requirements made by CCETSW to implement the CAT system were developed in consultation with Council for National Academic Awards and other awarding bodies, and can link to other CAT systems including that of the Open university. When fully established, in-house training, programmes of study at educational institutions, and accreditation of prior learning will all contribute "credits" towards the post-qualifying award and the advanced award.

Mental Health Services

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make it her policy to provide an impartial assessment of the adequacy of the relevant authorities' provision of social care to meet the needs of severely mentally ill people;

(2) if she will make a statement on the finding by the social services inspectorate that in some local authorities evidence of any sense of direction in terms of mental health services is lacking.

Mr. Yeo: The care programme approach, implemented as from 1 April 1991, should ensure that mentally ill people living in the community receive appropriate social care. We have asked regional health authorities to monitor its implementation consulting the regional offices of the Department's social services inspectorate as necessary.

Under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, local authorities are required to draw up and publish their community care plans for all client groups, including mentally ill people, after consultation with a range of statutory and independent sector bodies, and users and carers.

The White Paper "Caring for People" stresses the importance of health and local authority co-operation in planning services, and in the White Paper "The Health of the Nation", this is extended to joint purchasing of mental health services. The Ministerial Committee on Health Strategy will oversee development in respect of "Health of the Nation" and periodic reports on progress will be published.

We are not aware of a finding by the social services inspectorate that in some local authorities evidence of any sense of direction in terms of mental health services is lacking.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average cost per week of psychiatric treatment in *(a)* an acute, *(b)* a long-stay ward in a specialist psychiatric hospital, *(c)* similar provision in a local hospital or unit and *(d)* long-term treatment and care in a high dependency hospital hostel.

Mr. Yeo: The average cost per day in 1990-91 for patients in the mental illness specialty was £55. The average costs for groups within the specialty cannot be identified separately.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the "Health of the Nation" White Paper represents a change in Government policy that the transfer of services away from large psychiatric hospitals to a balanced range of locally based services remains dependent on the actual provision of such services by health and local authorities; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: District health authorities and local authorities, as purchasers of health care, are responsible for securing a comprehensive range of psychiatric services to meet the needs of their resident populations. Health authorities will secure these services by means of contracts with national health service trusts, directly managed units and the independent sector. Local authorities will effect contracts with voluntary and private organisations, as well as providing their own services.

The White Paper "Caring for People" stresses the importance of health and local authority co-operation in planning services, and in the "Health of the Nation" White Paper this is extended to joint purchasing of services.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy that the monitoring of local authority mental health services by the social services inspectorate should be focused on authorities whose residents, or former residents, are short or long-stay patients served by those specialist psychiatric hospitals with plans to close by 1997.

Mr. Yeo: No, since confining monitoring of services only to those mentally ill people who have been in-patients would exclude those services to people who have never been admitted to hospital for treatment.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the Government plans to replace the services currently provided for many patients in large psychiatric institutions for occupational and recreational therapy, long-term high dependency care, and secure wards for mentally ill offenders and others needing security, including access to fresh air and sheltered gardens or grounds.

Mr. Yeo: Ministers have repeatedly made clear that the closure of obsolete psychiatric institutions should be preceded by the development of adequate alternative facilities which address the health, social and security needs of the re-located people.

The responsibility for providing these services rests primarily with district health authorities and local authority social services departments.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the Government plans to achieve significant improvement in the health and social functioning of severely mentally ill people.

Mr. Yeo: We are preparing detailed guidance to managers in both the health service and in the personal social services on their part in harnessing together the existing initiatives and new developments generated by the White Paper "Health of the Nation", to achieve demonstrable improvement in mental health services by specific target dates.

Child Psychotherapists

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many child psychotherapists are employed *(a)* within the National Health Service, *(b)* within the west midlands region and *(c)* within north Staffordshire.

Dr. Mawhinney: The most recent figures available are for September 1991 when the following whole time equivalent child psychotherapists were employed:

	Number
Great Britain	198·6
West Midlands	6·1
North Staffordshire	1·0

Solvent Abuse

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs to report on its proposals for targets for the reduction of solvent abuse.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs is considering a broad range of issues relating to the problem of volatile substance abuse, and will report in due course.

Social Workers (Training)

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are taken by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work to ensure that approved social workers are trained to deal with the violent and potentially violent mentally ill person.

Mr. Yeo: The Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work's (CCETSW's) requirements for the training of approved social workers include prescribed training in the management of violent behaviour. CCETSW is currently reviewing its requirements to ensure that they are up-to-date and effective in preparing approved social workers for all aspects of their responsibilities and to emphasise the skills with which they must be equipped through training. The council will be formerly considering the recommendations of the review at its November meeting.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what financial provisions, and how much, she has made within her Department in order to look at the potential for deregulation of each of the regulatory measures for which she has responsibility.

Mr. Sackville: Deregulation considerations form an integral part of the Department's normal working practice in respect of both EC and domestic legislation. It is not possible to provide separate figures for the cost of work on the subject.

Neuroscience

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the names and distances from Westminster of the nearest six hospitals offering neuroscience services.

Mr. Sackville: The information is as follows:

	Miles
The Middlesex hospital	2·0
The National hospital	2·5
St. Bartholomews hospital	2·75
The Maudsley hospital	3·5
The Royal London hospital	4·0
The Royal Free hospital	4·5

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she expects decisions following the Tomlinson report to precede major spending on moving neurosciences from Shooters hill to Denmark hill.

Mr. Sackville: The South East Thames regional health authority is committed to centralising neuroscience services in the region and moving to a single site service. Its plans will be reviewed in the light of the recommendations of the Tomlinson enquiry.

Abortions

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what self-help groups are available for survivors of attempted abortions; and what assistance her department gives to such groups.

Mr. Sackville: The Department of Health does not have information on such self-help groups.

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what records are kept of the cost to the NHS of treating a damaged foetus, and subsequent child and adult, in either the physical or psychological sense, where the damage has arisen as a result of a failed abortion attempt.

Mr. Sackville: Such information is not collected centrally.

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines are issued by her Department to doctors on the counselling of pregnant women who attempt to have the foetus aborted, but where the foetus lives.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) where an abortion fails and the foetus survives to a live birth, what specific records are kept of the consequent damage to that child arising out of the unsuccessful abortion attempt;

(2) what records are kept of attempted abortions which fail and where the foetus survives.

Mr. Sackville: Such information would be recorded in the appropriate clinical records of the woman and child concerned.

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many attempted abortions in the United Kingdom failed and ended in a live birth for each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available.

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance is given to doctors in regard to dealing with abortions where the attempted abortion fails and a live birth follows and, in particular, on the advice given to mothers about whether they should disclose this to the surviving person.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the number of people who have attempted to gain legal redress, against the National Health Service or any other body or person, for damages suffered where an abortion failed and the pregnancy resulted in a live birth.

Mr. Sackville: I am not aware of any such cases.

Anaesthetists

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by regional health authority the current establishment requirement for anaesthetists; and how many are in post.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are currently no "establishment requirements" set for hospital doctors in the National Health Service. The table gives the provisional number of consultant anaesthetists, expressed in the form of "whole-time equivalent", in England, by region as at 30 September 1991 (the latest date for which figures are available).

Hospital medical consultants anaesthetists in England and by region —30 September 1991 (provisional figures)

	Whole Time Equivalent
England	2,030
Northern	130
Yorkshire	140
Trent	200
East Anglia	90
North West Thames	110

	Whole Time Equivalent
North East Thames	160
South East Thames	160
South West Thames	110
Wessex	120
Oxford	90
South Western	140
West Midlands	250
Mersey	120
North Western	180
SHAs	30

Figures are rounded to the nearest 10.

Seals

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what beneficial medical by-products of the Greenland, harp, hooded or crested seal are recognised by her Department; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Records are held on licensed medicinal products and medical devices rather than medical by-products. These show that there are currently no such products making use of, or containing, extracts of seal.

Drug Imports

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans her Department's Medicines Control Agency has for proposals for reviewing the introduction of a requirement for all drug imports into the United Kingdom to have documentation certifying their country of origin; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are no plans to review the introduction of such a requirement. The United Kingdom licensing system is kept under constant review and amendments are made when considered necessary.

Extra-contractual Referrals

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress her Department is making in respect of extra-contractual referrals being made more readily available for patients requesting them; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We have always made clear that general practitioners are free to refer their patients to whichever hospital or other unit best meets the needs of the patient. We remain committed to this principle.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of extra-contractual referrals were refused in each regional health authority in 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by regional health authority how many extra-contractual referrals were returned during the financial years *(a)* 1991-92 and *(b)* 1992-93 to date.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected centrally.

West Midlands Air Ambulance Service

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will take steps to safeguard the funding of the West Midlands air ambulance service.

Mr. Sackville: Air ambulance services are currently under evaluation and, until this has been completed, no investment is being made from central funds. In the meantime, it is for health authorities in West Midlands region, as purchasers, to decide whether to fund this service from their financial allocations.

Theatre Sessions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the average weekly number of theatre sessions for each regional health authority for the year ended March 1992 and for the current year to date.

Mr. Sackville: The available information is given in the table.

Operating theatre sessions: average number per week in 1991-92 (provisional)

RHA	*Scheduled sessions held*	*Weekly rate*
Northern	53,089	1,019
Yorkshire	57,949	1,112
Trent	64,970	1,247
East Anglian	32,242	619
North West Thames	48,558	932
North East Thames	68,513	1,315
South East Thames	63,258	1,214
South West Thames	50,364	967
Wessex	43,165	829
Oxford	34,098	654
South Western	54,799	1,052
West Midlands	79,674	1,529
Mersey	46,532	893
North Western	79,617	1,528
Special health authorities	15,631	300

Air Pollutants

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what preliminary reports she has received from the advisory committee she set up on the assessment of exposure to air pollutants on health; when she hopes to have the committee's final conclusions; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 10 June at columns *221-22*. The Advisory Group on the Medical Aspects of Air Pollution Episodes was set up to look at the short term health effects of exposure to specific air pollutants.

The Group's second report on "Sulphur Dioxide, Acid Aerosols and Particulates" is to be published shortly and a copy will be placed in the Library.

The group currently studying the oxides of nitrogen and its third report is expected to be published in 1993.

This year the Department also set up the committee on the medical effects of air pollutants which held its inaugural meeting at the end of May. Its terms of reference are:

> "At the request of the Department of Health,
>
> (a) to assess and advise Government on the effects upon health of air pollutants both in indoor and outdoor air, and to assess the adequacy of the available data and the need for research.
>
> (b) to co-ordinate with other bodies concerned with the assessment of the effects of exposure to air pollutants and the associated risks to health and to advise on new scientific discoveries relevant to the effects of air pollutants upon health."

The Department has asked the committee to advise on the link between exposure to low levels of air pollution and asthma, the effects of exposure to ambient levels of carbon monoxide in urban areas, and the effects of exposure to benzene.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of food poisoning have been notified to the OPCS for England and Wales for each year since 1980; if she will provide a total figure and a regional breakdown of the total; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Notifications of food poisoning which were: (a) formally notified; (b) ascertained by other means; and (c) total for England and Wales (not including port health authorities) and by regional health authority (RHA), 1980[2]

		1980[1]	
RHA	*a*	*b*	*c*
England and Wales	10,071	n/a	10,071
Wales	438	n/a	438
Northern	504	n/a	504
Yorkshire	1,065	n/a	1,065
Trent	820	n/a	820
East Anglian	279	n/a	279
North West Thames	743	n/a	743
North East Thames	804	n/a	804
South East Thames	622	n/a	622
South West Thames	662	n/a	662
Wessex	373	n/a	373
Oxford	636	n/a	636
South Western	618	n/a	618
West Midlands	1,190	n/a	1,190
Mersey	360	n/a	360
North Western	957	n/a	957

[1] The number of food poisoning cases 'ascertained by other means' other than formal notification, were first reported to OPCS by local authorities in 1982.

[2] Provisional.

Notifications of food poisoning which were: (a) formally notified; (b) ascertained by other means; and (c) total for England and Wales (not including port health authorities) and by regional health authority (RHA), 1981[2]

		1981[1]	
RHA	*a*	*b*	*c*
England and Wales	9,925	n/a	9,925
Wales	528	n/a	528
Northern	810	n/a	810
Yorkshire	866	n/a	866
Trent	715	n/a	715
East Anglian	217	n/a	217
North West Thames	815	n/a	815
North East Thames	642	n/a	642
South East Thames	596	n/a	596
South West Thames	641	n/a	641
Wessex	481	n/a	481
Oxford	583	n/a	583
South Western	536	n/a	536
West Midlands	982	n/a	982
Mersey	469	n/a	469
North Western	1,044	n/a	1,044

[1] The number of food poisoning cases 'ascertained by other means' other than formal notification, were first reported to OPCS by local authorities in 1982.

[2] Provisional.

Notifications of food poisoning which were: (a) formally notified; (b) ascertained by other means; and (c) total for England and Wales (not including port health authorities) and by regional health authority (RHA), 1982[1]

		1982[1]	
RHA	*a*	*b*	*c*
England and Wales	9,954	4,288	14,242
Wales	598	68	666
Northern	457	154	611
Yorkshire	1,247	471	1,718
Trent	609	308	917
East Anglian	262	104	366
North West Thames	923	281	1,204
North East Thames	912	435	1,347
South East Thames	659	96	755
South West Thames	660	606	1,266
Wessex	457	258	715
Oxford	574	207	781
South Western	428	261	689
West Midlands	875	454	1,329
Mersey	294	164	458
North Western	999	421	1,420

[1] Provisional.

Notifications of food poisoning which were: (a) formally notified; (b) ascertained by other means; and (c) total for England and Wales (not including port health authorities) and by regional health authority (RHA), 1983[1]

		1983[1]	
RHA	*a*	*b*	*c*
England and Wales	12,265	5,461	17,726
Wales	654	51	705
Northern	913	148	1,061
Yorkshire	1,592	463	2,055
Trent	698	375	1,073
East Anglian	374	241	615
North West Thames	1,060	637	1,697
North East Thames	907	427	1,334
South East Thames	894	176	1,070
South West Thames	745	665	1,410
Wessex	726	205	931
Oxford	705	191	896
South Western	634	528	1,162
West Midlands	986	688	1,674
Mersey	445	204	649
North Western	932	462	1,394

[2] Provisional.

Notifications of food poisoning which were: (a) formally notified; (b) ascertained by other means; and (c) total for England and Wales (not including port health authorities) and by regional health authority (RHA), 1984[1]

		1984	
RHA	*a*	*b*	*c*
England and Wales	13,247	7,455	20,702
Wales	830	147	977
Northern	859	437	1,296
Yorkshire	1,664	896	2,560
Trent	893	507	1,400
East Anglian	400	246	646
North West Thames	1,174	728	1,902
North East Thames	1,206	783	1,989
South East Thames	1,024	227	1,251
South West Thames	620	689	1,309
Wessex	692	187	879
Oxford	615	319	934
South Western	812	624	1,436
West Midlands	1,081	861	1,942
Mersey	418	171	589
North Western	959	633	1,592

[1] Provisional.

Notifications of food poisoning which were: (a) formally notified; (b) ascertained by other means; and (c) total for England and Wales (not including port health authorities) and by regional health authority (RHA), 1985[1]

		1985[1]	
RHA	*a*	*b*	*c*
England and Wales	13,124	6,091	19,215
Wales	1,167	164	1,331
Northern	747	241	988
Yorkshire	891	409	1,300
Trent	889	401	1,290
East Anglian	375	115	490
North West Thames	1,169	717	1,886
North East Thames	1,174	480	1,654
South East Thames	1,079	260	1,339
South West Thames	920	550	1,470
Wessex	743	339	1,082
Oxford	661	208	869
South Western	700	467	1,167
West Midlands	1,129	793	1,922
Mersey	391	260	651
North Western	1,089	687	1,776

[1] Provisional.

Notifications of food poisoning which were: (a) formally notified; (b) ascertained by other means; and (c) total for England and Wales (not including port health authorities) and by regional health authority (RHA), 1986[1]

		1986[1]	
RHA	*a*	*b*	*c*
England and Wales	16,498	7,439	23,937
Wales	1,234	179	1,413
Northern	873	597	1,470
Yorkshire	1,157	704	1,861
Trent	1,177	278	1,455
East Anglian	542	152	694
North West Thames	1,143	712	1,855
North East Thames	1,591	599	2,190
South East Thames	1,253	376	1,629
South West Thames	1,111	605	1,716
Wessex	893	413	1,306
Oxford	952	203	1,155
South Western	1,092	452	1,544
West Midlands	1,368	1,074	2,442
Mersey	533	203	736
North Western	1,579	892	2,471

[1] Provisional.

Notifications of food poisoning which were: (a) formally notified; (b) ascertained by other means; and (c) total for England and Wales (not including port health authorities) and by regional health authority (RHA), 1987[1]

		1987	
RHA	*a*	*b*	*c*
England and Wales	20,348	8,929	29,277
Wales	1,300	374	1,674
Northern	1,301	657	1,958
Yorkshire	1,507	1,071	2,578
Trent	1,920	329	2,249
East Anglian	623	255	878
North West Thames	1,534	825	2,359
North East Thames	2,073	583	2,656
South East Thames	1,706	382	2,088
South West Thames	1,376	631	2,007
Wessex	848	690	1,538
Oxford	1,139	257	1,396
South Western	1,171	631	1,802
West Midlands	1,426	1,242	2,668
Mersey	691	168	859
North Western	1,733	834	2,567

[1] Provisional.

Notifications of food poisoning which were: (a) formally notified; (b) ascertained by other means; and (c) total for England and Wales (not including port health authorities) and by regional health authority (RHA), 1988[1]

		1988	
RHA	*a*	*b*	*c*
England and Wales	27,819	11,885	39,704
Wales	1,621	329	1,950
Northern	1,688	670	2,358
Yorkshire	2,604	1,723	4,327
Trent	2,763	805	3,568
East Anglian	923	215	1,138
North West Thames	1,856	736	[illegible]
North East Thames	2,439	582	[illegible]
South East Thames	2,315	405	[illegible]
South West Thames	1,848	869	2,717
Wessex	1,085	800	1,885
Oxford	1,472	390	1,862
South Western	1,785	748	2,533
West Midlands	1,798	2,188	3,986
Mersey	1,557	239	1,796
North Western	2,065	1,186	3,251

[1] Provisional.

Notifications of food poisoning which were: (a) formally notified; (b) ascertained by other means; and (c) total for England and Wales (not including port health authorities) and by regional health authority (RHA), 1989[1]

		1989	
RHA	*a*	*b*	*c*
England and Wales	38,042	14,450	52,492
Wales	2,477	446	2,923
Northern	2,687	1,214	3,901
Yorkshire	3,582	1,468	5,050
Trent	4,075	805	4,880
East Anglian	1,081	205	1,286
North West Thames	2,205	852	3,057
North East Thames	3,037	734	3,771
South East Thames	2,974	585	3,559
South West Thames	2,314	724	3,038
Wessex	1,614	1,101	2,715
Oxford	1,957	545	2,502
South Western	2,166	1,197	3,363
West Midlands	2,962	2,433	5,395
Mersey	2,431	311	2,742
North Western	2,480	1,830	4,310

[1] Provisional.

Notifications of food poisoning which were: (a) formally notified; (b) ascertained by other means; and (c) total for England and Wales (not including port health authorities) and by regional health authority (RHA), 1990[1]

		1990[1]	
RHA	*a*	*b*	*c*
England and Wales	36,945	15,200	52,145
Wales	2,528	495	3,023
Northern	2,881	1,047	3,928
Yorkshire	3,920	1,721	5,641
Trent	3,621	1,247	4,868
East Anglian	1,164	254	1,418
North West Thames	2,507	731	3,238
North East Thames	2,756	775	3,531
South East Thames	2,502	780	3,282
South West Thames	2,160	913	3,073
Wessex	1,568	1,147	2,715
Oxford	2,191	488	2,679
South Western	2,510	1,272	3,782
West Midlands	2,831	2,548	5,379
Mersey	1,670	143	1,813
North Western	2,136	1,639	3,775

[1] Provisional.

Notifications of food poisoning which were: (a) formally notified; (b) ascertained by other means; and (c) total for England and Wales (not including port health authorities) and by regional health authority (RHA), 1991[1]

	1991[1]		
RHA	*a*	*b*	*c*
England and Wales	35,289	17,251	52,540
Wales	2,715	670	3,385
Northern	2,427	1,301	3,728
Yorkshire	3,759	1,903	5,662
Trent	3,196	1,468	4,664
East Anglian	956	552	1,508
North West Thames	2,516	761	3,277
North East Thames	2,550	752	3,302
South East Thames	2,637	638	3,275
South West Thames	2,130	1,262	3,392
Wessex	1,522	1,367	2,889
Oxford	1,823	510	2,333
South Western	2,102	1,377	3,479
West Midlands	3,224	2,285	5,509
Mersey	1,418	187	1,605
North Western	2,314	2,218	4,532

[1] Provisional.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the numbers of patients waiting for in-patient treatment on 31 March, for each individual health authority *(a)* in total and *(b)* by main speciality for periods (i) under 12 months, (ii) 12 to 24 months and (iii) over 24 months.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is given in the publication "Hospital Waiting List, In-Patients and Day Cases" (ISBN 1 85839 003 6), a copy of which is available in the Library.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the numbers of patients waiting for out-patient treatment on 31 March, for each individual health authority *(a)* in total and *(b)* by main speciality for periods (i) under 12 months, (ii) 12 to 24 months and (iii) over 24 months.

Mr. Sackville: Figures for out-patient waiting times are not collected centrally. All health authorities are required under the patients charter to publish information on the local standards they have set for waiting times for first out-patient appointments and on performance against these targets.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of patient waiting lists by regional health authority area for *(a)* July, *(b)* August and *(c)* September of the current year.

Mr. Sackville: On 11 August we announced that, in future, provisional waiting time figures would be published on a quarterly basis. Figures for the three months to 30 September 1992 are not yet available centrally.

Medical Records

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements exist for the transfer of medical records for the national health service to registered medical practitioners in other European Community countries when British citizens move to other countries in the European Community for work or retirement.

Mr. Sackville: General practitioner medical records are the property of the national health service and are retained in the country for NHS purposes including the possible future care and treatment of the patient. Patients who plan to live abroad may approach their GP to obtain a precis of their medical history or a copy of their medical records to give to any practitioner in the new country of residence.

Leukaemia

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she is yet in a position to publish the findings of the study undertaken by the north London blood transfusion service on behalf of her Department, into the risks associated with blood transfusions involving human T-cell leukaemia; what plans she has to ask other blood transfusion services to carry out similar studies on behalf of her Department; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The north London blood transfusion centre (NLBTC) undertook a study on behalf of the United Kingdom blood transfusion services, to determine the prevalence of antibodies to human T-cell leukaemia/lymphoma virus (HTLV) in the blood of a sample donor population. Preliminary results of that study were published in abstract form at the British Blood Transfusion Society annual meeting, Nottingham 1991 and again in abstract form at the Montpelier symposium on HTLV held in March 1992. I have arranged for copies of those abstracts to be placed in the Library.

The NLBTC is now undertaking a more detailed analysis of the findings with a view to submitting them shortly for publication in a scientific journal.

The independent expert advisory committee which advises Ministers on topics relevant to the safety of the blood supply, will keep under review developments concerning HTLV and its detection. It will also review whether further studies or other measures are necessary to maintain the safety of the blood supply. I will write to the hon. Member with further details.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to hold centrally records by regional health authorities of the number of cases of cancer that have been reported that were associated with the virus human T-cell leukaemia, including the number of those cases that proved fatal; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I have no plans to introduce such a policy.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the criteria which need to be satisfied when calling for an ambulance to respond in an emergency.

Mr. Sackville: Anyone may call an NHS ambulance following an accident, sudden illness or collapse.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information her Department has concerning the ratio between activated and stand-by time of emergency ambulance areas generally necessary to achieve ORCON standards under different patterns of population and traffic density.

Mr. Sackville: The deployment of ambulance personnel and vehicles to meet national emergency performance standards is a matter for local ambulance service providers and their purchasers.

Orimulsion

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been conducted by her Department on the effects of the toxic ash particles upon the human lung produced during the burning of orimulsion.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. Biomedical research is a matter for the Medical Research Council which is funded by the Office of Science and Technology.

The burning of orimulsion produces relatively high levels of sulphur dioxide, vanadium and nickel compared with other fuels. However, owing to tight controls being implemented as a result of European Community directives, trace quantities of toxic chemicals which are emitted from incinerators and other combustion processes, should not be at levels which would be expected to cause adverse health effects.

Inflammatory Bowel Disorder

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her practice to hold central records from regional health authorities of the average current delay between patients reporting *(a)* symptoms starting and *(b)* diagnosis of patients with inflammatory bowel disorder; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: It would be neither appropriate nor cost effective to collect this information centrally.

Skin Cancer

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information her Department holds on the United Kingdom morbidity and mortality rates for skin cancer in each year since 1979; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table. There has been a rise in the number of cases of skin cancer (non-melanotic cancer and the rarer malignant melanoma) in recent years. On the latest available information there are about 28,000 cases of skin cancer a year and about 1,500 deaths. The main risk factor which is believed to account for the increase in incidence is the increased extent to which people expose themselves to ultraviolet radiation (UV), primarily sunlight.

Mortality and incidence rates (per 100,000 population) for malignant melanoma of skin (ICD 172), and other malignant neoplasm of skin (ICD 173), for Great Britain 1979-1991.

	Mortality Rate		*Incidence Rate*	
	172	*173*	*172*	*173*
1979	1·63	0·78	3·81	40·32
1980	1·65	0·74	4·04	41·75
1981	1·74	0·77	4·20	43·65
1982	1·90	0·76	4·36	42·91
1983	1·72	0·82	4·71	44·80
1984	2·00	0·88	4·70	45·78
1985	1·98	0·93	5·60	48·08
1986	2·08	0·82	5·88	54·34
1987	2·05	0·88	[2]—	—
1988	2·14	0·85	—	—
1989	2·17	0·88	—	—
1990	2·31	0·86	—	—
[1]1991	2·30	0·92	—	—

[1] 1991 population figures are not available and consequently 1990 population figures have been used to calculate the 1991 mortality rate.

[2] Registration data for the calculation of incidence rates 1987-1991 are not available.

Source OPCS DH2 Mortality Statistics, MB1 Cancer Registrations.
Scottish Cancer Registration Scheme,
Information and Statistics Division,
Common Services Agency.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate Her Majesty's Government has made of projected increases in skin cancer resulting from a 1 per cent. decline in the total column ozone; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UV) is an important factor influencing the number of cases of skin cancer which develop, and levels of UV at ground level are influenced by changes of levels of ozone in the stratosphere. However, stratopheric ozone levels are just one of the factors influencing the amount of UV reaching the ground. Seasonal variations in solar UV levels and short term variations due to cloud cover and local weather conditions are far in excess of any variations anticipated as a result of ozone depletion. The position is further complicated by variability in people's behaviour in relation to exposure to sunlight. Estimates of increases in skin cancer based solely on an estimate of ozone depletion would be misleading.

Thyroid Cancer

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by regional health authority, and by year since 1985, including the current year to date, the number of cases of thyroid cancer that have been reported and the number of cases that involved *(a)* children and *(b)* adults.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Number of cases of malignant neoplasm of the thyroid gland[1] for England and Wales, Regional health authority, 1985-87

	1985	*1986*	*1987*
England and Wales	679	734	755
Wales	58	39	60
Northern	38	49	42
Yorkshire	53	47	49
Trent	55	84	65
East Anglian	28	41	27
North West Thames	46	57	41
North East Thames	28	39	44
South East Thames	60	41	47
South West Thames	39	38	40
Wessex	55	39	50
Oxford	—	40	44
South Western	58	62	51
West Midlands	84	74	100
Mersey	26	28	35
North Western	51	56	60

[1] International Classification Disease code 193.

Number of cases of malignant neoplasm of the thyroid gland for England and Wales, Regional health authority, 1985-87 by age breakdown

	1985		1986		1987	
	Under 15	*15+ over*	*Under 15*	*15+ over*	*Under 15*	*15+ over*
England and Wales	4	675	6	728	6	749
Wales	3	55	—	39	—	60
Northern	—	38	—	49	1	41
Yorkshire	—	53	—	47	—	49
Trent	—	55	—	84	—	65
East Anglian	—	28	—	41	—	27
North West Thames	—	46	1	56		41
North East Thames	—	28	—	39	1[1]	44
South East Thames	—	60	1	40		47
South West Thames	—	39	1	37		40
Wessex	—	55	—	39	1	49
Oxford	—	—	1	39	2	42
South Western	—	58	1	61	—	51
West Midlands	—	84	—	74	1	99
Mersey	—	26	1	27	—	35
North Western	1	50	—	56	—	60

[1] One case of malignant neoplasm of the thyroid gland for 1987 only identifiable as Thames.

Foster Care

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to introduce a minimum weekly allowance to foster carers on a sliding scale based on the age of the child cared for.

Mr. Yeo: No.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS trust boards have held *(a)* one to six or *(b)* more than six public consultative meetings.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not collected centrally. Every national health service trust is required to hold one public meeting every year, other than in the year it became operational.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by NHS trust, the number of staff who are currently in NHS pensions schemes and those who have elected to change to a private pension scheme run on behalf of the trust.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of the current level of remuneration for *(a)* chairs and *(b)* non-executive directors of NHS trust boards.

Dr. Mawhinney: Chairmen are remunerated in one of three bands dependent on the revenue turnover of the trust (or its equivalent) in a given financial year (1988-89). The bandings are shown in the table.

Unit turnover 1988-89	*Current rates* £
Band 1	
Turnover in excess of £50 million	19,285
Band 2	
Turnover between £20-£50 million	17,145
Band 3	
Turnover less than £20 million	15,125

Non-executive directors are paid at a flat rate of £5,000 per annum.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS trust boards admit community health council representatives into their meetings.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally. Community health councils have the right to attend any national health service trust meeting which is open to the public. It is up to the individual trust to decide whether to invite the community health council to attend meetings which are otherwise closed to the public.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria will determine her decision as between expressions of interest in trust status from south Manchester; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: These expressions of interest will be considered against five criteria, taking into account patient choice and competition, the extent to which clinical services and management are already integrated, size and range of services, effect on purchasing and local views.

Water Fluoridation

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what cost benefit analyses have been carried out by her Department on the reduction of dental caries in children that would result from fluoridation of the drinking water supply in those areas where no artificial fluoridation is being carried out and where naturally occurring levels are below 1 part per million; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is for individual health authorities to consider whether water fluoridation in their area is cost effective, taking into account local factors. No cost benefit analyses have been carried out by the Department.

Potatoes

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information her Department holds on the health risks to consumers through the consumption of potatoes that have been treated with Tecnazene.

Mr. Sackville: Tecnazene, as with all pesticides, is approved for use following advice from the statutory advisory committee on pesticides. It has concluded that there is currently no evidence of risk to the health of consumers arising from the use of tecnazene on potatoes but is continuing its review of all the available data.

The Department holds copies of the scientific papers on this matter that have been put before the committee. Once the committee has completed its review an evaluation document which will contain an assessment of all these data will be published.

Atopic Illnesses

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of asthma and other atopic illnesses were reported in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991 and *(c)* 1992 to date; and how many of these were children under 10 years of age.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally.

Dentistry

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she intends to take to increase awareness of patients' rights to claim reductions in, or exemptions from, charges for dental treatment.

Dr. Mawhinney: Under the new dental contract introduced in October 1990, dentists are, for the first time, required to display in a prominent position at their practice premises a notice, indicating national health service charges which are payable under general dental services and giving details of entitlement to exemption from and remission of such NHS charges. In addition there are already leaflets available to the public on dental charges and NHS charges more generally. A complementary series of leaflets in ethnic languages is planned for the near future.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the current number of dentists *(a)* in the NHS, *(b)* in private practice and *(c)* practising both privately and in the NHS; what are the comparable figures for the previous five years; and if she will make a statement on the trends.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of dentists providing general dental services in England under the national health service as at 30 September each year was as follows:

Year	*Number*
1987	14,765
1988	15,070
1989	15,351
1990	15,480
1991	15,451

These figures are consistent with the increase of nearly 30 per cent. since 1978 in the numbers of dentists providing dental treatment under the NHS.

The figures do not include dentists who provide treatment under the hospital and community dental services.

The information requested on the numbers of dentists who practise privately, in whole or in part, is not held centrally.

Smoking

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the actions taken by Her Majesty's Government to assist the work of Action on Smoking and Health in publicising the dangers of cigarette smoking.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department has a long history of supporting the valuable work carried out by Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) and awarded it a three year grant of £241,500 per year which began in 1991. In addition, the "Health of the Nation" gives a commitment to continued support to the leading role played by ASH in disseminating information, encouraging action by others and providing advice and support.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she has to increase awareness of the long-term effects of smoking during pregnancy on children.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department is providing funding of £1 million over two years towards a Health Education Authority project being run specifically for this purpose. In addition, the "Health of the Nation" gives a commitment to achieve a target of a 30 per cent. reduction in the number of women who smoke at the start of their pregnancy by the year 2000.

Disability Legislation

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the provisions of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 which *(a)* have been implemented and *(b)* have not yet been implemented.

Mr. Yeo: The information requested is as follows:

a. *Implemented on 1 April 1987*
Section 4 (duty on local authorities to assess need)
Section 8(1) (duty to have regard to abilities of carers)
Section 9 (provision of information)
Section 10 (duty to consult organisations of disabled people when making appointments)

Implemented on 1 February 1988
Sections 5 and 6 (identification and assessment of disabled school leavers)

Implemented on 18 December 1989
Section 11 (report to Parliament on community care for mentally ill and mentally handicapped people)

b. *Non-implemented sections*
Sections 1 and 2 (appointment and rights of authorised representatives of disabled people)
Section 3 (provision of written statements of assessment)
Section 7 (identification and assessment of the needs of people leaving hospital after treatment for six months or more for a mental disorder)

Sections 8(2) and 8(3) (these are linked to section 3)

The requirements of the non-implemented sections are now, to a very large extent, reflected in our new and wide-ranging reforms of community care, which demonstrate our commitment to high quality care which is responsive to the needs and wishes of service users and carers. The need to implement these sections will be reviewed in the light of several years' experience of the community care arrangements.

Asbestosis

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she will take to implement an ethical code of practice for the diagnosis and treatment of terminal victims suffering from asbestosis.

Mr. Sackville: The Department of Health has no plans to implement such a code. Ethical issues relating to the diagnosis and treatment of the terminally ill are primarily a matter for the health care professions.

Clinical Regrading

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each health district in England and Wales the number of applications for clinical regrading still outstanding.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not collected centrally.

Sir Alan Greengross

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what correspondence she has received from Sir Alan Greengross concerning his resignation as chair of Islington and Bloomsbury health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Sir Alan Greengross wrote to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 23 June 1992. His decision to stand down as chairman of the Bloomsbury and Islington district health authority with effect from 31 July 1992 has been accepted.

Tobacco-related Diseases

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the total number of tobacco-related deaths in 1991-92.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is estimated that in the United Kingdom about 110,000 deaths each year are smoking related.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the cost to the NHS of smoking-related diseases in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Dr. Mawhinney: Treatment costs to the national health service are estimated to be £437 million annually. This figure is for hospital costs only and does not include the costs of the care given by GPs or at health clinics or other care in the community.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to publish the Smee report; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: A study on the effects of tobacco advertising will be published shortly.

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the draft EC directive on tobacco product advertising (EC document 6748/91) will be discussed at the Council of Health Ministers on 13 November.

Dr. Mawhinney: The agenda for Health Council on 13 November is not yet fixed. It is likely that the tobacco advertising directive will be discussed without a vote being taken.

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the answer of 15 May, *Official Report*, column 167, to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), when and in what form she now expects to make available the report of her chief economic adviser on the impact of banning tobacco advertising; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to make public the findings of the Smee report; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department of Health's report on the effects of tobacco advertising on tobacco consumption will be published shortly.

Wigan Area Health Authority

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current remuneration of the chairman of the Wigan area health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: The figure is £17,145.

Arts for Health

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what proposals she has for ensuring that the arts make the fullest possible contribution to the quality of the health care environment; and if she will make a statement indicating, in particular, what role she sees for Arts for Health, established in 1988 at Manchester polytechnic, as the first centre offering a national service;

(2) what study her Department has made of the pioneering work and achievements of Arts for Health; what consideration is being given to funding an expansion of its work in hospital and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Ministers have long recognised the valuable contribution the arts can make within the national health service. My department has published three guidance documents on the subject, "Art in the NHS", "The Arts in a Health District" and "Art and Health Care". As part of the NHS management executive's quality initiative, the arts were introduced into the outpatient department demonstration project and have made a valuable contribution. At the "Hospital and Care Premises Management Conference" held in Birmingham between 29 September and 1 October 1992, the arts featured prominently in sessions on "The Caring Environment" and "The International Aspects of Healthcare Design".

While Ministers are supportive of the many initiatives throughout the country, it is for local decision, NHS trust or directly managed unit, as to whether they use the services offered by "Arts for Health" or any other organisation in this field. No moneys are specifically voted for the arts in my Department.

Cancelled Operations

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing for each regional health authority area the proportion of operations cancelled in 1991-92 showing the figures in numbers and as a percentage of the total number of operations.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available centrally.

Midland Centre for Neurosurgery and Neurology

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received on the lack of provision of magnetic resonance imaging at the midland centre for neurosurgery and neurology; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We have received a number of representations on this subject. In March we announced the successful bids for additional money for whole body scanners and other medical equipment. This included a proposal for a magnetic resonance imager to support a combined neuroscience facility in Birmingham. Decisions on the provision of these services and location of this equipment are matters for West Midlands regional health authority.

Charitable Trusts

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals in *(a)* England and *(b)* London have access to charitable trusts; and what role her Department plays in monitoring the use of those trust moneys.

Dr. Mawhinney: Very nearly all hospitals in England will benefit from trust funds held by their health authority, national health service trust or special trustees. As charitable funds, these are subject to the supervision of the Charity Commission. The Secretary of State for Health prescribes the format of annual accounts and the financial central environment, and receives any reports produced by statutory auditors relating to these accounts.

Trust Hospitals

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many trust hospitals have *(a)* public relations budgets and *(b)* use outside consultants for public relations purposes; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not available centrally. It is a matter for national health service trusts to decide what use they make of public relations expertise to present themselves and the services they offer as part of the national health service to the authorities who purchase those services and the public who use them.

American Companies

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the activities of National Medical Enterprises and the Psychiatric Institute of America in relation to health services in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sackville: National Medical Enterprises and its United States counterpart are parent companies of an independent United Kingdom health care provider but do not, themselves provide health care in the United Kingdom.

NHS Information

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the categories of information relating to the national health service of which her Department has discontinued publication since 9 April; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: There are no categories of information for which publication has been discontinued since 9 April.

The need for the national health service to provide information to the Department of Health is under review. If information which is currently provided is clearly identified as being unnecessary for the management of the health service, that burden will be lifted from the national health service. A consequence of this would be that the information would no longer be available for central publication.

Lung Cancer

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what new initiatives she plans to reduce the incidence of lung cancer in women.

Dr. Mawhinney: Reducing the incidence of lung cancer in women will mainly depend on reducing the prevalence of smoking. "The Health of the Nation" includes a target to reduce smoking among women from 28 per cent. in 1990 to 20 per cent. by the year 2000. The White Paper sets out a comprehensive strategy to achieve the target, including action on price, health education, ensuring effective controls on advertising and a greater national health service role in reducing smoking.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Iraqi Shias

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is he will provide financial and logistical support for members of the all-party group for Iraqi Shias to monitor the delivery of aid in southern Iraq and related matters.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is no provision within the aid programme or elsewhere within the FCO's financial resources for funding monitoring visits by members of all party groups. ODA is providing finance fcr assistance to southern Iraq through non-governmental organisations, including those with which my hon. Friend is associated.

While suitable arrangements for monitoring this aid are important, members of the all party group for Iraqi Shias will be aware of the Iraqi Government's consistent refusal to renew the United Nation's humanitarian operations in Iraq, and of their rejection of the proposal to place United Nations human rights monitors in the south to report on the situation. In these circumstances the United Kingdom Government would not wish to encourage United Kingdom citizens to enter the region.

Southern Africa

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government are taking for the provision of extra resources to help the recovery of agriculture in the drought-affected areas of southern Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since the beginning of 1992 we have committed over £60 million including our share of EC food aid, to help the victims of the drought in southern Africa. We are supporting activities in the region to assist recovery of agriculture. These include agricultural research, including local irrigation, livestock, veterinary and pest control schemes in Zimbabwe, seeds and tools programmes in Mozambique and Malawi, and a seed multiplication project in Namibia. We are also funding a project in Zambia which, through checking and treatment of imported maize consignments, should help reduce the risk of infestation to future local crops by pests such as the larger grain borer. We shall continue to help, in concert with our partners in the donor community.

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support Her Majesty's Government are giving to the United Nations/Southern Africa Development Co-ordination conference appeal for US$854 million; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Her Majesty's Government have so far committed more than £51 million of bilateral aid in response to the drought in southern Africa. This is in addition to an estimated £11·3 million of food aid given by Britain through the EC special food aid programme. The Government will continue to monitor the situation closely in consultation with our EC partners and other donors.

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans Her Majesty's Government have to enlarge the social funds to aid the poorest in the drought-affected areas of southern Africa to cope with economic change, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have already committed over £51 million of bilateral aid to help drought victims in southern Africa in the form of balance of payments aid, food and support for non-governmental organisation programmes. More widely we are working closely with the IMF and World bank and both institutions are being flexible in modifying economic reform programme targets to help protect the populations of countries from the worst effects of the drought. Substantial extra multilateral resources have been made available to help cope with present difficulties.

Overseas Aid

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the value of the British overseas aid programme in deutschmarks on 15 September; and what is its current value in deutschmarks.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The planned aid programme to developing countries for 1992-93 is £1,831 million. At the exchange rate of Dm 2·78/£ on 15 September this was equivalent to Dm 5,090 million, and at an exchange rate of Dm 2·50/£, Dm 4,578 million. Fluctuation in the Deutschmark/sterling exchange rate does not itself materially affect the real value of the aid programme.

Rain Forests

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has to increase awareness of how individuals and communities can assist in the preservation of rain forests.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The individuals and communities best able to help preserve the rain forests are those living in and around the forests themselves. It is an important aim of many ODA-funded projects to encourage and enable these communities, along with their Governments, to participate in and benefit from the conservation and sustainable management of their forests.

Somalia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives Britain has initiated at the United Nations or the EC to find a long-term solution to Somalia's problems.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have agreed within the EC and proposed to the United Nations, that the UN should develop a strategy for the rehabilitation, both physical and political, of Somalia. We would give this our strong support and have urged partners and other donors to follow the UN lead.

Poland

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give full details of all assistance given to Poland under the know-how fund, including cost.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The know-how fund for Poland is working well. Over 170 projects have been supported. The actual and anticipated expenditure to the end of this financial year should be over £34 million.

A list of the activities approved since the beginning of the know-how fund has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

South Africa

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has yet received a full report from the South African Government in respect of the two South African defence force agents arrested in the United Kingdom in April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We received an interim report from the South African authorities in June. Investigations are continuing. One of the two South African officers has been dismissed from service. Other disciplinary action may be taken when enquiries in South Africa are complete. The South African Government have undertaken to provide full details of any links between South Africans and loyalist extremists in Northern Ireland.

Russia

Mr. Barry Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the total commitment to date to Russia in pounds sterling, against the know-how fund programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The know-how fund has so far committed a total of £15 million for projects to Russia. The figure comprises £6 million spent in financial year 1991-92 and £9 million to date in 1992-93.

Developing Countries (Debt Relief)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if debt relief and rescheduling agreed for developing countries under the Trinidad terms is accounted for as positive aid receipts by the Overseas Development Administration; and by what criteria the Overseas Development Administration judges that debt relief equates to official development assistance.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Debt relief under Trinidad terms is counted as a positive flow of official development assistance in accordance with directives agreed by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Trinidad terms directly benefit developing countries by significantly reducing their foreign exchange obligations. Eight countries have already benefited and we expect more to do so over the coming months.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Male Cattle

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many additional staff will be employed to register male cattle as required by the common agricultural policy; and what is the estimated annual cost of this registration.

Mr. Curry: The European Commission has not yet proposed rules for the implementation of the beef special premium scheme after 1 January 1993, and it is therefore not yet clear whether a system of registration and passports will be required for eligible animals. It is not yet possible to estimate the staff numbers or cost of such a system.

Plant Health and Pesticides HQ

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he intends to announce his decision on which site in York will be used for the new MAFF plant health and pesticides headquarters.

Mr. Curry: There is nothing to add to the reply given on this matter on 8 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *13*.

Tobacco

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in which areas of the EC tobacco is the only crop that can be cultivated.

Mr. Curry: In parts of southern Europe, and especially in Greece, infertile soils, dry climatic conditions, remoteness and poor transport links mean that no alternative crops can match tobacco's capacity to provide growers with a return.

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total level of support, in sterling equivalent, for growing tobacco in the EC under the common agricultural policy in the latest year for which figures are available; and what measures are in hand to reduce this sum.

Mr. Curry: In 1991, the EC spent around £930 million (1,330 mecu) on the CAP tobacco regime. The substantial reforms agreed by the Council in the recent CAP reform package should progressively reduce annual EC expenditure on tobacco. The Commission estimates that, by 1997, this reduction should amount to over a quarter of current expenditure. A further review is to take place, effective from the 1998 harvest.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current sum paid per British family to support the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Curry: Estimates of the current cost of the CAP to United Kingdom households are extremely difficult and depend critically on the assumptions used. For instance, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has estimated that the transfers from consumers and taxpayers resulting from agricultural policies in the European Community—separate figures for the United Kingdom are not available—were equivalent to some £18 per week for a family of four in 1991. However, as the OECD makes clear, this estimate does not take into account the impact on world prices, and on other variables, if farm support were to be removed. It is likely, therefore, to overstate to a significant degree the true cost to United Kingdom consumers and taxpayers.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will attach environmental conditions to the area payments that compensate farmers for the cuts in arable support under the CAP reforms.

Mr. Curry: We believe that direct payments to farmers under the CAP should be subject to appropriate environmental conditions. All farmers claiming area payments on over 15 hectares in England will have to set land aside. The land set aside will be subject to management conditions intended to help protect the environment.

The Community legislation establishing the new arable regime does not provide a legal basis under which such conditions could be applied to other arable land.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what environmental conditions he intends to apply to land set aside under the CAP reforms; and if those conditions apply to all arable land in the rotation.

Mr. Curry: Rules for the management of set-aside land are set out in the explanatory booklet on the arable area payments scheme, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House. These include measures specifically intended to help protect the environment.

The Community legislation establishing the new arable regime does not provide a legal basis under which these conditions could be applied to other arable land.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what increase in expenditure implementation of the multi-annual zonal schemes in the agri-environment package of the CAP's accompanying measures will require over and above existing expenditure plans on support for agriculture in special areas, capital grants and alternative land uses as published in the Government's expenditure plans 1992-93 to 1994-95.

Mr. Curry: No decisions on implementation of the agri-environment regulation have yet been taken. We have until July 1993 to draw up our implementation plans and will consult widely in doing so.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the cost of the CAP to the United Kingdom in 1992-93.

Mr. Curry: Details of public expenditure in the United Kingdom under the Common Agricultural Policy in 1992-93 will be contained in "Agriculture in the UK—1992", which is currently being compiled and is expected to be published in March 1993. Copies will be made available to the House.

The forecast expenditure in the United Kingdom in 1991-92 (the last year for which figures are readily available) is contained in section 9 of "Agriculture in the UK—1991". Actual outturn information for 1991-92 is presently being gathered and will be published in "Agriculture in the UK—1992". In addition, however, the United Kingdom supports CAP spending elsewhere in the Community through our net contribution to the EC budget. This is not allocated to particular elements of the budget, such as agriculture.

Flags of Convenience

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many Dutch fishing vessels sailing under flags of convenience have *(a)* area 7 beam trawl pressure stock licences and *(b)* area 4 beam trawl licences.

Mr. Curry: As at 9 October, 14 Dutch-owned or largely Dutch-owned United Kingdom-registered fishing vessels hold area VII beam trawl pressure stock licences. Ten of these also hold area IV beam trawl licences and a further five have area IV beam trawl licences only.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many flag of convenience fishery vessels operating from United Kingdom ports have not complied fully with the conditions attached to their licences; and what action has been taken against them.

Mr. Curry: Sixteen non-British-owned or largely non-British-owned United Kingdom-registered fishing vessels contravened the conditions of their fishing licence in 1991 and in 1992 to the end of August. In one case there has been a successful prosecution and in two other cases an official warning has been given. One case has been dropped and 12 cases are still pending, while prosecution is considered.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many fishing vessels registered under flags of convenience are licensed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is providing the hon. Member with a list of the 81 fishing vessels which qualified for registration either pursuant to the interim relief granted by the House of Lords or as a direct result of the Factortame judgment. As at 9 October 1992 all of these held United Kingdom fishing licences.

Starlings, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what were the results of the inquiry carried out by his Department into the large number of starlings that have died on a Doncaster housing estate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The incident was reported by local residents on 1 July. It was investigated the same day by an official of the Department together with an environmental health officer from Doncaster metropolitan borough. More than 300 young starlings were found dead. Following enquiries and discussions with other experts, including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, it was concluded that the immature birds probably died as a result of hypothermia caused by the strong cold winds and heavy rain on the previous night and during the morning.

Organic Farmers

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent assessment he has made of the extent of unmet consumer demand for organic farm produce; for what reasons organic farmers were included in the latest EC set-aside scheme; and if he will take steps to remove organic farmers from EC set-aside arrangements.

Mr. Curry: Demand is difficult to estimate in such a small market but it is clear that there is potential for growth in the organic sector as shown by the high level of imports. We are keen that United Kingdom farmers and growers should meet that demand.

Under the EC rules, the new arable area payments scheme must be open to all growers who meet the relevant scheme conditions, including the set-aside requirements. It is not possible to remove organic growers from these arrangements.

Eggs

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now pay the balance of sums due to the Sisters of the Monastery of Our Lady of the Passion; if he will increase the compensation paid to all egg producers after compulsory slaughter of their flocks under the Zoonoses Order 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: All moneys due to the Sisters of the Monastery of Our Lady of the Passion have now been paid. The final payment, as directed by the arbitrator, was made on 20 July 1992.

Compensation is paid in accordance with the Animal Health Act 1981 for all flocks which are required to be compulsorily slaughtered. Compensation is paid on the value of the birds immediately before slaughter. The Act requires compensation to be paid on poultry other than diseased poultry, and compensation is paid on the total number of birds in the flock less the estimated number of diseased birds. The value of each bird is calculated in accordance with a regularly reviewed scale of values which take into account the age of the birds at the time of slaughter. It is open to any flock owner who disputes the valuation of his flock to take the matter to independent arbitration.

Whaling

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many hon. Members wrote to him regarding whaling during the last six months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Over the last six months, this Department has received and replied to some 5,000 letters. Of these, over 1,000 were from hon. Members on behalf of themselves or their constituents. Very many letters have welcomed the stand we are taking in the International Whaling Commission to help conserve and protect the world's stocks of whales and small cetaceans.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will set out the steps he intends to take during his European presidency to press to end all commercial whaling, and protect whales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Trade in whale products by member states is already prohibited by the Community through regulations implementing the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Additionally, Council directive 92/43/EEC, adopted in May 1992, requires member states to take action to protect all species of whales by mid 1994. All forms of whaling within United Kingdom fishery limits are already banned and as far as we are aware, no whaling currently takes place within the fishery limits of other member states. Moreover, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and Spain, like the United Kingdom, are members of the International Whaling Commission and, as such, are bound by its moratorium on commercial whaling.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what financial provisions, and how much, he has made within his Department in order to look at the potential for deregulation of each of the regulatory measures for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Curry: Deregulation considerations form an integral part of this Department's normal working practice in respect of both EC and domestic legislation.

It is not possible, therefore, to assess separately what financial resources are utilised specifically for deregulatory purposes.

Agricultural Training Board

Mr. Conway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food following his Department's inspection of the Agricultural Training Board training services in 1988, what action has been taken to empower the director of ATB to adjust staff grades up to higher executive officer level within overall financial allocations.

Mr. Curry: The rules under which the director (now chief executive) of the Agricultural Training Board (ATB) currently operates are set out in the ATB financial memorandum which was signed on 10 May 1989. This gives the director the authority to create posts up to higher executive officer level without the prior consent of the Department. However the terms, allowances and conditions of service applicable must be approved by the Department.

Oak Dieback Disease

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his current assessment of the incidence and effect of oak dieback disease.

Mr. Curry: Oak dieback has been identified at about 40 sites in southern England, mainly in the east midlands. The growth of affected trees first started to decline in the mid 1980s, although the dieback did not become apparent until several years later. Similar problems on oak trees in several other countries in Europe have been recorded during the last decade.

There is no evidence that the dieback is caused by a contagious disease. Several different factors appear to be involved, of which water stress during the severe droughts in the 1980s seems to be the most important. The Forestry Commission is monitoring the situation carefully and so far it seems that oak dieback is unlikely to affect a large number of trees. Although fresh reports of dieback are still being received, the indications are that it has stabilised at most sites. Few new trees have been affected over the last two years, while trees affected in previous years have generally not deteriorated any further.

Further information is given in the Forestry Commission's Research information note 214, copies of which are in the Library.

Butterflies

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are his conclusions from investigation by Government scientists for the Agricultural Development Advisory Service into the death of tropical butterflies at Fraddam in 1992, and the related matters of imported chrysalids and wind-borne farm pesticides.

Mr. Soames: The findings of a field investigation which was carried out on 9 June were inconclusive. No relationship was established between the deaths of the butterflies at Fraddam and the use of pesticides.

Mink

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson) of 29 June, *Official Report*, column *401*, if he will make a statement on the outcome of his consultations on the Mink (Keeping) Order 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: I am considering the responses received to the consultation exercise, and I will make a decision in due course.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

County Courts

33. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what study he has made of the extent of the backlog of cases in the county courts in Greater London and the south east; and what action he proposes to take to improve the situation.

Mr. John M. Taylor: My Department monitors closely the throughput of cases in the county courts by a system of performance indicators. The situation varies from court to court but average performance figures against targets are published in the Lord Chancellor's court service annual report.

Staffing levels have been increased in the London county courts by almost 5 per cent. in the past 12 months and 11 additional district judges have been appointed.

Legal Aid

34. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what recent representations he has received about the cost of legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor and I receive a good deal of correspondence about a number of aspects of the legal aid scheme, of which cost is one.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of people who were successful in obtaining legal aid certificates for civil cases during the year ended March 1992 had to pay an amount towards the cost involved; and what was the average cost per person.

Mr. John M. Taylor: For the year ended March 1992 16·1 per cent. of people granted legal aid certificates in civil cases were assessed as having to pay a contribution towards the cost. The average contribution received from each assisted person was just under £340.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will give the number of people who were *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused legal aid in civil cases for the year ended March 1992.

Mr. John M. Taylor: For the year ended March 1992, 339,306 people were granted, and 100,030 were refused, legal aid certificates in civil cases.

Bankruptcy

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many *(a)* company bankruptcy debtor petitions and *(b)* personal bankruptcy debtor petitions were made in each of the last 12 quarters on the Wales and Chester court circuit.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The table shows the number of company winding up petitions and the number of bankruptcy petitions issued by both creditors and debtors in county courts on the Wales and Chester circuit for each of the past 12 quarters—the figures for 1992 are provisional. The company winding up figures include petitions issued in the High Court sitting at Cardiff. The number of petitions issued will not necessarily result in the same number of companies being wound up or individuals being made bankrupt.

Company winding up, creditors and debtors petitions issued during the past 12 quarters in the Wales and Chester circuit

	Company winding up petitions	Creditors petitions	Debtors petitions
1989 Q3	24	141	31
Q4	24	150	33
1990 Q1	36	176	56
Q2	32	162	48
Q3	41	211	64
Q4	42	198	96
1991 Q1	46	287	167
Q2	52	272	112
Q3	59	282	163
Q4	108	403	204
1992 Q1	112	427	266
Q2	105	390	244

Doncaster Magistrates Court

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the establishment figure of justices of the peace for Doncaster magistrates court; and how many are currently in place.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The establishment figure of justices of the peace for Doncaster magistrates court is 200, and the number of justices on the active list is 190.

PRIME MINISTER

Pitchford Hall

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what representations he has had on Her Majesty's Government's response to requests to take into public ownership Pitchford Hall and its contents in Shropshire;

(2) what discussions Her Majesty's Government have had with *(a)* Lord Rothschild of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, *(b)* Hugh Stirling of the National Trust and *(c)* Jocelyn Stevens of English Heritage on the future of the contents of Pitchford Hall in Shropshire.

The Prime Minister: I have written to the hon. Member and have placed a copy of the letter in the Library.

Racial Harmony

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will use the United Kingdom presidency to promote a European Community directive on racial harmony;

(2) what steps he has taken under his presidency of the European Community to promote racial harmony in the Community.

The Prime Minister: The Government are opposed absolutely to discrimination on grounds of race. This position is reflected in all our discussions with our European partners on these matters.

The detailed legislative arrangements in other member states are, however, a matter for them, taking account of their particular circumstances.

During the United Kingdom presidency the Government will be taking any appropriate opportunity to encourage our European Community colleagues to consider best practice in combating racial discrimination. One such opportunity will be the equal opportunities conference to be hosted by the Department of Employment in Birmingham from 7 to 8 December.

Classless Society

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister what proposals he has brought forward in his presidency of the EC to realise a classless society.

The Prime Minister: The Government's policies are aimed, and will continue to be aimed, at widening opportunities for all members of society. The education, health and other public service reforms, including the citizens charter, will take this process forward during our presidency of the EC and beyond. A European conference on public services and the citizen will be held in London in December as part of the United Kingdom presidency.

Olympic Games

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement detailing the Government's financial commitment to Manchester's Olympic 2000 bid and the timing of its implementation.

The Prime Minister: On 26 February I announced a £55 million support package for Manchester's Olympic 2000 bid. Of this, £53 million is towards the provision of facilities in advance of the nomination and £2 million is to support the bid itself. The International Olympic

Committee will decide the host city in September 1993. If Manchester's bid is successful, the Government will contribute to the provision of necessary facilities for the games.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Employment Statistics

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Protestants and Roman Catholics are employed by the Eastern area health and social services board; and what were the equivalent figures five years ago.

Mr. Hanley: The Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989 required employers to monitor the religious breakdown of their work force by establishing the community background of each employee. The first date on which the breakdown of the perceived religious affiliation of the Eastern area health and social services board's work force is available is 1 January 1990 and the latest is 1 January 1992.

The figures are as follows:

	Protestant	*Roman Catholic*	*Not known*
1 January 1990	16,989	10,733	2,495
1 January 1992	16,299	10,878	3,237

Criminal Damage and Injury

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the legislative base for the payment of loss assessors and solicitors in Northern Ireland in respect of payments from public funds in *(a)* criminal damage claims and *(b)* criminal injury claims.

Mr. Mates: The reasonable costs and expenses incurred by applicants in making out and verifying their claims for criminal damage and criminal injuries compensation are payable under article 12(1) of the Criminal Damage (Compensation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 and article 13(1) of the Criminal Injuries (Compensation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1988.

Further Education Colleges

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which colleges of further education have *(a)* higher education courses, *(b)* national diploma courses and *(c)* B tech courses.

Mr. Hanley: All 24 further education colleges offer national diploma and courses validated by the Business Technology Education Council. The following colleges also offer higher education courses:

Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education
North-West Institute of Further and Higher Education
Fermanagh College of Further Education
Limavady College of Further Education
Omagh College of Further Education
Ballymena College
Newtownabbey College of Further Education
Magherafelt College of Further Education
Northern Ireland Hotel & Catering College, Portrush
Lisburn College of Further Education
Down College of Further Education
Newcastle College of Further Education
Castlereagh College of Further Education
North Down and Ards College of Further Education
Lurgan College of Further Education
Portadown College of Further Education
Armagh College of Further Education
Newry/Kilkeel College of Further Education

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time students there are attending each college of further education in Northern Ireland in the current academic year; and what are the figures for each of the past three years.

Mr. Hanley: Figures are not available for the 1990-91 or 1992-93 academic years. The table sets out the information that is available as follows:

	1988-89 (a) Full-time	*1988-89 (b) Part-time*
Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education	2,911	10,210
North-West Institute of Further and Higher Education	1,368	3,847
Fermanagh College of Further Education	589	1,459
Limavady College of Further Education	490	675
Omagh College of Further Education	563	1,233
Antrim College of Further Education	229	976
Ballymena College	975	2,659
Newtownabbey College of Further Education	606	2,252
New Technical College, Ballymoney	181	939
Coleraine Technical College	574	1,031
Magherafelt College of Further Education	327	557
Larne College of Further Education	243	1,335
Northern Ireland Hotel and Catering College, Portrush	206	48
Lisburn College of Further Education	497	1,445
Down College of Further Education	602	1,687
Newcastle College of Further Education	225	174
Castlereagh College of Further Education	332	1,758
North Down and Ards College of Further Education	705	1,742
Lurgan College of Further Education	555	673
Portadown College of Further Education	839	1,747
Armagh College of Further Education	791	644
Banbridge College of Further Education	240	826
East Tyrone College of Further Education	680	1,716
Newry/Kilkeel College of Further Education	891	1,456

	1989-90 (a) Full-time	*1989-90 (b) Part-time*
Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education	3,472	11,029
North-West Institute of Further and Higher Education	1,405	4,194
Fermanagh College of Further Education	610	1,723
Limavady College of Further Education	576	819
Omagh College of Further Education	611	1,122
Antrim College of Further Education	214	964
Ballymena College	960	2,685
Newtownabbey College of Further Education	645	2,457
New Technical College, Ballymoney	169	1,007
Coleraine Technical College	631	1,169
Magherafelt College of Further Education	257	561
Larne College of Further Education	257	1,252
Northern Ireland Hotel and Catering College, Portrush	181	25
Lisburn College of Further Education	664	1,481
Down College of Further Education	721	546
Newcastle College of Further Education	232	132
Castlereagh College of Further Education	341	1,920
North Down and Ards College of Further Education	610	1,874
Lurgan College of Further Education	516	587
Portadown College of Further Education	1,026	1,588
Armagh College of Further Education	904	691
Banbridge College of Further Education	297	875
East Tyrone College of Further Education	750	1,513
Newry/Kilkeel College of Further Education	1,013	1,408

	1991-92 (a) Full-time	*1991-92 (b) Part-time*
Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education	3,959	17,509
North-West Institute of Further and Higher Education	2,063	3,846
Fermanagh College of Further Education	811	1,971
Limavady College of Further Education	556	880
Omagh College of Further Education	923	1,208
Antrim College of Further Education	379	1,522
Ballymena College	1,131	2,592
Newtownabbey College of Further Education	786	2,780
New Technical College, Ballymoney	308	1,075
Coleraine Technical College	671	1,193
Magherafelt College of Further Education	514	797
Larne College of Further Education	303	898
Northern Ireland Hotel and Catering College, Portrush	223	69

	1991-92 (a) Full-time	*1991-92 (b) Part-time*
Lisburn College of Further Education	757	2,473
Down College of Further Education	880	2,081
Newcastle College of Further Education	368	742
Castlereagh College of Further Education	693	2,429
North Down and Ards College of Further Education	1,218	4,654
Lurgan College of Further Education	528	1,033
Portadown College of Further Education	876	2,120
Armagh College of Further Education	1,002	1,048
Banbridge College of Further Education	337	1,159
East Tyrone College of Further Education	867	1,558
Newry/Kilkeel College of Further Education	1,284	2,947

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what sums he has provided in the current financial year, and what are his projections for each of the next three financial years, for extensions or rebuilding work at each of the colleges of further education in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: For major works in 1992-93, £350,000 was allocated for Fermanagh college and £2,157,000 for North Down and Ards college. The projected expenditure on North Down and Ards college for the next three years is as follows:

Year	*Amount £*
1993-94	4,058,000
1994-95	2,425,000
1995-96	1,045,000

Decisions have yet to be taken on new projects starting beyond 1992-93.

In addition the education and library boards are planning to spend some £394,000 of their minor works budgets in 1992-93 on adaptations and maintenance in colleges.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of full-time equivalent students at each college of further education in Northern Ireland; and what was the number of students for which the college was intended to cater.

Mr. Hanley: The initial capacity of many colleges is not known. In any case, adaptations of premises over the years to meet changing curricular needs have modified original intentions. However, the information that is available is as follows:

1990-91

College	*Number of full-time equivalent students*
Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education	8,604
North-West Institute of Further and Higher Education	3,105
Fermanagh College of Further Education	1,063
Limavady College of Further Education	831
Omagh College of Further Education	979
Antrim College of Further Education	611
Ballymena College	1,625
Newtownabbey College of Further Education	1,673
New Technical College, Ballymoney	517
Coleraine Technical College	959
Magherafelt College of Further Education	670
Larne College of Further Education	552
Northern Ireland Hotel and Catering College	203
Lisburn College of Further Education	1,378
Down College of Further Education	1,114
Newcastle College of Further Education	658
Castlereagh College of Further Education	1,298
North Down and Ards College of Further Education	2,001
Lurgan College of Further Education	798
Portadown College of Further Education	1,505
Armagh College of Further Education	1,171
Banbridge College of Further Education	571
East Tyrone College of Further Education	1,087
Newry-Kilkeel College of Further Education	1,605

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the funding for full-time equivalent students at colleges of further education in each education and library board area in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: The latest year in respect of which audited accounts are available is 1990-91. The funding per full-time equivalent student in that year was:

Education and Library Board—Funding per full-time equivalent student

	£
Belfast	2,427·25
Western	2,177·57
North-Eastern	2,525·80
South Eastern	2,363·56
Southern	2,282·56

Figures include the cost of students on the youth training programme based in the colleges.

Special Care Costs

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what sums were spent per child in each of the last three years on special care in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools.

Mr. Hanley: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Electricity Arrears

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the total sums of arrears due to Northern Ireland Electricity; how much of this is for domestic property; and how much the corresponding figures were for one and three years ago.

Mr. Atkins: The arrears due to Northern Ireland Electricity at 30 June 1992 totalled £5·022 million. The corresponding figures for 1989 and 1991 were £6·064 million and £5·33 million, respectively. The proportion relating to domestic property generally remains constant at approximately 98 per cent. of the total arrears.

EC Students

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how manyy students from *(a)* the Irish Republic, *(b)* Great Britain, *(c)* other EC countries and *(d)* elsewhere were at each college of further education in Northern Ireland in the current academic year and in each of the last three years; and what is his estimate of the cost to United Kingdom funds of the studenss from other EC nations in each of those four years.

Mr. Hanley: Although it is not possible to calculate costs, the table sets out the information regarding student numbers over the past three years as follows. Figures are not available for the 1992-93 academic year.

	1988-89			
	Republic of Ireland	*Great Britain*	*Other EC*	*Elsewhere*
Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education	30	10	6	51
North-West Institute of Further and Higher Education	323	0	0	6
Fermanagh College of Further Education	78	0	0	4
Limavady College of Further Education	2	2	0	18
Omagh College of Further Education	1	0	0	0
Antrim College of Further Education	0	4	3	2
Ballymena College	0	1	2	12
Newtownabbey College of Further Education	1	0	0	6
New Technical College, Ballymoney	0	1	2	2
Coleraine Technical College	1	10	0	33
Magherafelt College of Further Education	2	0	0	1
Larne College of Further Education	0	0	0	2
Northern Ireland Hotel and Catering College, Portrush	4	0	0	0
Lisburn College of Further Education	0	7	1	8
Down College of Further Education	3	18	0	7
Newcastle College of Further Education	6	0	0	25
Castlereagh College of Further Education	1	2	1	20
North Down and Ards College of Further Education	5	0	0	7
Lurgan College of Further Education	0	0	1	5
Portadown College of Further Education	3	0	0	8
Armagh College of Further Education	3	0	0	4
Banbridge College of Further Education	1	0	0	1
East Tyrone College of Further Education	1	0	0	2
Newry/Kilkeel College of Further Education	79	0	2	3

Note: Figures include full-time and part-time students,

	1989-90			
	Republic of Ireland	*Great Britain*	*Other EC*	*Elsewhere*
Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education	45	8	18	79
North-West Institute of Further and Higher Education	391	2	2	4
Fermanagh College of Further Education	85	0	1	5
Limavady College of Further Education	1	9	0	16
Omagh College of Further Education	8	0	0	2
Antrim College of Further Education	1	5	0	3
Ballymena College	0	1	0	12
Newtownabbey College of Further Education	0	0	2	11
New Technical College, Ballymoney	0	0	0	2
Coleraine Technical College	20	5	0	19
Magherafelt College of Further Education	1	0	0	1
Larne College of Further Education	0	0	0	2
Northern Ireland Hotel and Catering College, Portrush	7	1	0	0
Lisburn College of Further Education	3	5	1	9
Down College of Further Education	0	1	0	18
Newcastle College of Further Education	1	1	0	36
Castlereagh College of Further Education	6	0	0	18
North Down and Ards College of Further Education	1	1	6	17
Lurgan College of Further Education	2	0	0	2
Portadown College of Further Education	1	1	1	1
Armagh College of Further Education	4	0	0	1
Banbridge College of Further Education	1	0	0	5
East Tyrone College of Further Education	5	1	0	12
Newry/Kilkeel College of Further Education	97	0	2	12

Note: Figures include full-time and part-time students.

	1991-92			
	Republic of Ireland	*Great Britain*	*Other EC*	*Elsewhere*
Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education	37	2	0	2
North-West Institute of Further and Higher Education	734	4	1	4
Fermanagh College of Further Education	175	0	0	0
Limavady College of Further Education	0	0	0	5

	1991-92			
	Republic of Ireland	*Great Britain*	*Other EC*	*Elsewhere*
Omagh College of Further Education	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Antrim College of Further Education	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Ballymena College	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Newtownabbey College of Further Education	**1**	**0**	**1**	**20**
New Technical College, Ballymoney	**5**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Coleraine Technical College	**4**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Magherafelt College of Further Education	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Larne College of Further Education	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Northern Ireland Hotel and Catering College, Portrush	**6**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Lisburn College of Further Education	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Down College of Further Education	**1**	**0**	**5**	**3**
Newcastle College of Further Education	**0**	**0**	**0**	**32**
Castlereagh College of Further Education	**2**	**1**	**0**	**0**
North Down and Ards College of Further Education	**56**	**0**	**0**	**1**
Lurgan College of Further Education	**17**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Portadown College of Further Education	**3**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Armagh College of Further Education	**23**	**0**	**0**	**1**
Banbridge College of Further Education	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
East Tyrone College of Further Education	**3**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Newry/Kilkeel College of Further Education	**231**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Note: **Figures include full-time and part-time students.**

General Election

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the *(a)* average, *(b)* shortest and *(c)* longest period of time taken to carry out the count for constituencies in Northern Ireland at the general election in 1992.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

(a) average time : 5 hours 40 minutes
(b) shortest time : 4 hours
(c) longest time : 7 hours 45 minutes

Remedial Teaching

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what sums have been spent per child in each of the last three years in *(a)* secondary schools and *(b)* primary schools for remedial teaching.

Mr. Hanley: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could only be compiled at disproportionate cost.

Access Funds

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the amount of access funds allocated to each education and library board of each college of further education in Northern Ireland for *(a)* 1990-91 and *(b)* 1991-92; and what are the amounts paid out to date.

Mr. Hanley: Access funds were introduced at the start of the academic year 1990-91, with the sums allocated to each education and library board and the amounts disbursed by each board to students in colleges of further education being as follows:

Amount allocated to board

	1990-91 £000	*1991-92 £000*
Belfast Education and Library Board	29	85
Southern Education and Library Board	29	59
North-Eastern Education and Library Board	29	35
Western Education and Library Board	28	59
South-Eastern Education and Library Board	29	55

Amount disbursed to colleges of further education by board

	1990-91 £	*1991-92 £*
Belfast Education and Library Board		
College of Business Studies[1]	10,287	85,000
College of Technology[1]	5,226	
Rupert Stanley[1]	940	
Total	16,453	
Southern Education and Library Board		
Armagh	5,521	10,936
Banbridge	822	2,737
East Tyrone	6,435	11,555
Lurgan	1,860	4,106
Newry	10,038	19,589
Portadown	561	5,968
Total	25,237	54,891
North-Eastern Education and Library Board		
Antrim	—	2,150
Ballymena	1,816	8,285
Ballymoney	—	2,962
Coleraine	1,340	3,289
Larne	600	2,376
Magherafelt	700	941
Newtownabbey	2,227	12,907
Northern Ireland Hotel and Catering College, Portrush	1,430	1,512
Total	8,113	34,422
Western Education and Library Board		
North West Institute of Further and Higher Education, Londonderry	12,632	22,592
Omagh	4,816	14,073
Limavady	1,656	4,151
Fermanagh	1,569	19,252
Total	20,673	60,068
South-Eastern Education and Library Board		
North Down and Ards	3,260	10,604
Castlereagh	6,002	12,544
Downpatrick	5,581	7,995
Lisburn	1,858	8,553
Newcastle	6,615	7,354
Total	23,316	47,050

[1] From 1991-92, Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to increase the amount of access funds available to students in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The Department of Education for Northern Ireland, in making annual allocations for access funds available to students in Northern Ireland, follows the principle of parity with Great Britain. The amounts available for this purpose have been increased by 1·56 per cent. in 1992-93.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the amount of access funds allocated to teacher education colleges and universities in Northern Ireland for *(a)* 1990-91 and *(b)* 1991-92; and if he will give the amounts paid out to date.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

£ thousands

	1990-91[1]		*1991-92*[1]	
	allocated	*disbursed*	*allocated*	*disbursed*
Stranmillis college of education	15	4	22·7	12·2
St. Mary's college of education	14	14	22·0	22·0
Queen's university Belfast	169	169	169·6	169·6
University of Ulster	150	150	150·8	150·8

[1] Figures for universities relate to their financial year, August to July, whilst figures for colleges of education relate to the Government financial year, April to March.

Under-fives

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the report on the inter-departmental review of policy and services for under-fives will be completed and ready for publication.

Mr. Hanley: The outcome of the under-fives review is expected to be announced later this year.

Quarrying

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his Department's policy towards the creation of coastal super-quarries.

Mr. Atkins: It is unlikely that the Northern Ireland coastline has the geological and marine conditions necessary for a coastal super-quarry.

However, should such a proposal come forward, an environmental impact assessment would be required as an integral part of the relevant planning application, which would be determined on its merits, if necessary after a public inquiry.

Milk Marketing Board

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the present proposals for reforms by the Northern Ireland milk marketing board were discussed with the European Commission; and if those proposals have the approval of the European Commission.

Mr. Hanley: The proposals for reforms from the Northern Ireland milk marketing board were sent, along with the proposals from the other United Kingdom milk marketing boards, to the European Commission in June. There have been no discussions with the Commission on the details of the Northern Ireland board's proposals. However in a letter to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Vice-President of the Commission, the right hon. Sir Leon Brittan, has said that the competition aspects of proposals presented by the Northern Ireland board do not have a real Community dimension and that the arrangements should be dealt with by the competent United Kingdom authorities.

Patients (Transfers)

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many patients have been transferred from Northern Ireland health board waiting lists to private health care surgeries in the Republic of Ireland; and what has been the total cost of this exercise since its commencement.

Mr. Hanley: The Northern health and social services board has contracted with Blackrock clinic, Dublin to provide plastic surgery for 32 patients on its waiting list. So far seven patients have been treated at a cost of £7,000. In addition one patient from the Southern health and social services board has received cardiac surgery at Blackrock clinic at a cost of £7,000.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Legislation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Lord President of the Council what proportion of the time spent by the House in Report stages of Government Bills during the Session 1990-91 was taken up by debates on new clauses and amendments which did not conclude with a Division.

Mr. Newton: The total amount of time spent in Session 1990-91 on the Report stages of Government Bills was 95 hours and 47 minutes. The time taken up by debates on new clauses and amendments which did not conclude with a Division was 48 hours and 37 minutes, or 51 per cent. of the total time taken on Report stages of Government Bills.

EMPLOYMENT

Wages Councils

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on her policy on the continuation of wages councils.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government have made it clear on many occasions that the wages councils have no permanent place in the labour market.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workers are covered by each of the two largest wages councils.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is estimated that, in March 1992, 736,000 workers were covered by the retail trades (non-food) wages council and 538,000 by the licensed non-residential establishment wages council.

Unemployment

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current level of unemployment.

Mr. McLoughlin: In September 1992, the latest date for which claimant unemployment figures are available, the level of seasonally adjusted unemployment in the United Kingdom was 2,843,300.

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were unemployed in each standard economic region, including Greater London, in June 1979, and in the latest monthly figures available, adjusted for seasonality and for discontinuities.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many men aged 16 to 64 years were registered as unemployed on 1 May 1992, 1 May 1991 and 1 May 1990 in *(a)* Blaenau Gwent, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* England; how many of them had been unemployed for more than six months and for more than 12 months; how many registered unemployed claimants in (i) Blaenau Gwent, (ii) Wales and (iii) England fail to qualify for unemployment benefit; and if she will present the unemployment figures as a percentage of all economically active males and provide comparable figures for unemployment rates and benefit entitlement for females.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available information is contained in the tables.

Table 1 *Male claimant unemployment (not seasonally adjusted)*

	April 1990		April 1991		April 1992	
	Number	Rate[1]	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Blaenau Gwent constituency[2]						
Total	2,270	—	2,589	—	2,698	—
Unemployed for more than six months	1,194	—	1,282	—	1,629	—
Unemployed for more than 12 months	830	—	775	—	1,095	—
Wales						
Total	63,859	8·4	86,694	11·4	99,071	13·1
Unemployed for more than six months	31,170	4·1	39,104	5·2	55,276	7·3
Unemployed for more than 12 months	19,746	2·6	21,247	2·8	33,633	4·4
England						
Total	909,664	6·7	1,342,355	9·9	1,739,063	12·8
Unemployed for more than six months	458,048	3·3	583,211	4·3	935,204	6·9
Unemployed for more than 12 months	302,390	2·2	330,398	2·4	552,585	4·1

[1] Percentage of male work force (the sum of unemployed claimants, employees in employment, self-employed, Her Majesty's forces and participants on work-related Government training programmes).

[2] Official unemployment rates are not available for parliamentary constituencies.

Note: Claimant unemployment figures by duration are produced quarterly for the months of January, April, July and October, and are on the unadjusted basis.

Source: Employment Department quarterly analysis of unemployed claimants.

Table 2 *Female claimant unemployment (not seasonally adjusted)*

	April 1990		April 1991		April 1992	
	Number	Rate[1]	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Blaenau Gwent Constituency[2]						
Total	598	—	552	—	525	—
Unemployed for more than six months	262	—	206	—	240	—
Unemployed for more than 12 months	170	—	129	—	146	—
Wales						
Total	20,698	3·8	23,810	4·4	26,590	4·9
Unemployed for more than six months	8,567	1·6	8,810	1·6	11,754	2·2
Unemployed for more than 12 months	4,860	0·9	4,379	0·8	5,803	1·1
England						
Total	328,568	3·2	429,595	4·2	529,478	5·2
Unemployed for more than six months	145,209	1·4	160,519	1·6	239,461	2·4
Unemployed for more than 12 months	84,340	0·8	81,173	0·8	118,719	1·2

[1] Percentage of female work force (the sum of unemployed claimants, employees in employment, self-employed, HM forces and participants on work-related Government training programmes)

[2] Official unemployment rates are not available for parliamentary constituencies

Claimant unemployment figures by duration are produced quarterly for the months of January, April, July and October, and are on the unadjusted basis.

Source: Employment Department
Quarterly analysis of unemployed claimants

Table 3
Unemployed claimants not in receipt of unemployment benefit (not seasonally adjusted)

	May 1990	*May 1991*	*May 1992*
Wales	62,000	79,000	91,000
Percentage of unemployed claimants	78 per cent	74 per cent	76 per cent
England	920,000	1,256,000	1,617,000
Percentage of unemployed claimants	79 per cent	73 per cent	74 per cent

(i) Figures for the number of claimant unemployed not in receipt of unemployment benefit are produced quarterly for the months of February, May, August and November, and are on the unadjusted basis. These figures are not available by gender or for parliamentary constituency areas.

(ii) Because of slight definitional and methodological differences the figures in the above table do not equate exactly with the figures in tables 1 and 2 relating to the total number of unemployed claimants.

(iii) The above figures include cases where entitlement to unemployment benefit has been exhausted and cases which, on the day of the count, had not been rated for benefit.

Source: Department of Social Security
Quarterly analysis of unemployed claimants.

Social Policy

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which provisions on social and employment legislation defined by the agreement on social policy concluded between 11 member states of the European Community at Maastricht are also covered by articles 118a and 100a of the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Article 118a of the treaty of Rome provides for the adoption of directives establishing minimum requirements as regards workers' health and safety. Article 100a provides for the adoption of measures to assist the establishment or functioning of the internal market, but provisions

"relating to the rights and interests of employed persons"

are among those excluded from its scope.

The United Kingdom is not a party to the separate agreement on social policy concluded between the other member states. The coverage and interpretation of that agreement's provisions are matters for the member states that signed it and, in the final analysis, for the European Court of Justice once the Maastricht treaty has entered into force.

Youth Training

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make it her policy to increase the weekly allowance offered to non-employed 16 and 17-year-olds on youth training placements.

Mr. McLoughlin: There are no plans at present to increase minimum YT allowances. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment believes that the current minimum allowances are sufficient to meet the normal requirements of trainees living in the parental home. Trainees who live independently may apply for income support if they consider their income is insufficient to meet their needs. Employers benefit considerably from Government expenditure on YT and are strongly encouraged to supplement trainee incomes wherever possible.

Accidents

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give for each year since 1984 details of the number of times incidents have occurred at sites covered by the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 which required the activation of off-site emergency plans made under those regulations.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety Executive does not hold information on the number of times incidents have occurred at sites covered by the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 which required the activation of off-site emergency plans made under those regulations.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the number of *(a)* deaths and *(b)* serious injuries on construction sites for each of the past five years and the names of those who were labour only sub-contractors; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available information for Great Britain is provided in the following tables—extracted from Occasional Supplement No. 3 of the September 1992 *Employment Gazette*. Data for the latest year commencing 1 April 1991 are not yet available. Information identifying specific individuals is not released.

	1986-87	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
(a) Fatal injuries in construction					
Employees	99	103	101	100	96
Self-employed	26	40	36	54	28
Members of the public	14	15	14	11	9
All persons	139	158	151	165	133
(b) Major injuries[1] in construction					
Employees	2,736	2,767	2,907	3,180	2,907
Self-employed	443	561	753	927	931
Members of the public	162	153	132	113	123
All persons	3,341	3,481	3,792	4,220	3,961

[1] As defined under regulation 3(1) of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR), 1985.

The Government and the Health and Safety Commission have recognised for some years that there needs to be a new approach to improve the management of health and safety in construction. Today, the commission is launching a major consultative document on proposed new construction (design and management) regulations and an approved code of practice. These will implement the design and management aspects of the European Community's temporary or mobile construction sites directive, adopted in June this year. The timing of the document is appropriate in view of the European Year of Safety's focus on construction as a high risk area. The regulations should help make construction sites much safer places to work in the future.

Social Action Programme

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list each initiative under the EC social action programme, indicating in each case *(a)* action and directives proposed or agreed by the Council of Ministers, *(b)* in which EC countries it has been adopted and implemented and *(c)* in which EC countries it has not been adopted and implemented.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is provided in the table.

Not all of the proposals in the EC social action programme are binding instruments required to be implemented by member states. Where binding instruments have been adopted, there is in every case some time still to elapse before they are required to be implemented in the domestic legislation of member states.

Title	*Date published Date agreed/adopted*	*Implementation date*
Directive on the organisation of working time	Published 25 July 1990	—
Directive on the introduction of a form to serve as proof of an employment contract or relationship	Published 5 December 1990 Adopted 14 October 1991	30 June 1993
Revision of the directive of 14 February 1975 on the approximation of the laws of member states pertaining to collective redundancies	Published 15 November 1991 Adopted 24 June 1992	24 June 1994
Commission opinion on an equitable wage	Published 11 December 1991	n/a
Memorandum on the social integration of migrants from non-member countries	Published 4 September 1990	n/a
Two directives on contracts and employment relationships other than full-time open-ended contracts	Published 13 June 1990	—
Revision of part II of regulation on the clearance of vacancies and applications for employment and the related procedural decisions (SEDOC)	Published 5 September 1991 Adopted 17 July 1992	regulation 1 January 1993 programme ongoing
Commission communication on the living and working conditions of Community citizens residing in frontier regions and of frontier workers in particular	Published 4 December 1990	n/a
Commission communication on supplementary social security schemes (complementary retirement schemes)	Published 18 July 1991	n/a
Revision of regulation of 29 June 1970 on the right of workers to remain on the territory of a member state after having been employed in that state	Not yet published	—
Proposal for a regulation extending regulation 1408/71 on the application of social security schemes to employed persons, to self-employed persons and to members of their families moving within the Community and regulation 574/72 (laying down the procedure for implementing Regulation 1408/71 to all insured persons)	Published 19 December 1991	1 January 1993
Directive concerning the posting of workers in the framework of the provision of services	Published 19 June 1991	—
Proposal for a Community instrument concerning the introduction of a labour clause into public contracts	Withdrawn by Commission	n/a
Directive on the procedures for the information, consultation and participation of workers in European-scale undertakings	Published 5 December 1990	—
Council recommendation on equity sharing and financial participation by workers (PEPPER)	Published 3 September 1991 Adopted 16 July 1992	n/a
Communication on the role of the social partners in collective bargaining	Not yet published	n/a
Third community action programme on equal opportunities for men and women	Published 6 November 1990	Ongoing
Directive on the protection of pregnant women at work	Published 12 September 1990 Adopted 19 October 1992	19 October 1994
Council recommendation concerning child care	Published 8 July 1991 Adopted 31 March 1992	n/a

Title	*Date published* *Date agreed/adopted*	*Implementation date*
Recommendation concerning a code of good conduct on the protection of pregnancy and maternity	Withdrawn—covered by other measures	n/a
Communication on the rationalisation and coordination of Community action programme in the field of initial and continuing vocational training	Published 12 September 1990	n/a
Council decision amending earlier decision concerning an action programme for the vocational training of young people (merger of young workers exchange programme and PETRA)	Published 9 November 1990 Adopted 22 July 1992	n/a
Council decision to extend the third young workers exchange programme (merged with PETRA: see above)	Published 9 November 1990 Adopted 22 July 1992	n/a
Council decision on the second phase of the youth for Europe programme	Published 22 November 1990 Adopted 29 July 1991	n/a
Commission memorandum on vocational training in the EC in the 1990s (modified form of the revision of the 1963 measure initially proposed)	Published 13 January 1992	n/a
Community instrument on access to vocational training	Not yet published	—
Directive on protection of young people at work	Published 15 January 1992	—
Council decision on an initiative on the elderly (including action programme)	Published 30 April 1990	ongoing
Directive on the introduction of measures aimed at promoting an improvement in the travel conditions of workers with motor disabilities	Published 6 February 1991	—
Council decision establishing a third Community action programme for disabled people for 1992-95 (HELIOS II)	Published 2 October 1991	n/a
Council recommendation on sufficient resources in social protection	Published 7 May 1991 Adopted 24 June 1992	—
Council recommendation on convergence of policies in the social protection field	Published 26 June 1991 Adopted 16 July 1992	n/a
Recommendation to member states on the adoption of a European schedule of industrial diseases (a) for reporting (b) for compensation	Published 22 May 1990 Adopted 26 June 1990	n/a
Directive on health and safety of temporary workers	Published 13 June 1990 Adopted 25 June 1991	31 December 1992
Directive amending directive 83/447 on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to asbestos at work	Published 30 June 1990 Adopted 25 June 1991	1 January 1993
Directive on the minimum health and safety requirements to encourage improved medical assistance on board vessels	Published 25 July 1990 Adopted 31 March 1992	31 December 1993
Directive on the minimum health and safety requirements for work at temporary or mobile construction sites	Published 31 July 1990 Adopted 24 June 1992	31 December 1993
Directive on minimum requirements for health and safety signs at the workplace	Published 31 January 1991 Adopted 24 June 1992	24 June 1994
Directive on minimum requirements to be applied in improving the health and safety of workers in the drilling industries	Published 30 January 1991 Common position 30 April 1992	—
Directive on minimum requirements to be applied for improving the health and safety of workers in the extractive industries for the exploration and exploitation of minerals in mines and quarries	Published 21 February 1992 Common position 24 June 1992	—
Council regulation establishing a European Institute of Occupational Safety, Hygiene and Health	Published 30 September 1991	n/a
Directive on the minimum health and safety requirements for fishing vessels	Published 6 December 1991	—
Directive on minimum safety and health requirements regarding the exposure of workers to the risks caused by physical agents	Not yet published	n/a

Title	*Date published* *Date agreed/adopted*	*Implementation date*
Directive on the minimum safety and health requirements of activities in the transport sector	Not yet published	—
Directive defining a system of specific information for workers exposed to certain dangerous industrial agents to be replaced by:	Withdrawn by the Commission	
Directive concerning information on health and safety to be provided to workers at work	Not yet published	—

Disabled People

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what proportion of firms have complied with the quota for disabled people as laid down in the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944, supplying figures for each year since 1979 and by size of firm;

(2) what proportion of firms have been issued with block exemptions under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944, supplying figures for every year since 1979 and giving figures by size of firm.

Mr. McLoughlin: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Table 1

Percentage of firms in Great Britain with 20 or more employees and who have employed a 3 per cent. quota of registered disabled people

	per cent.
1979	35·3
1980	35·1
1981	33·6
1982	31·8
1983	31·4
1984	30·3
1985	28·1
1986	26·8
1987	25·3
1988	23·9
1989	22·8
1990	21·8
1991	20·4
1992	[1]—

[1] Not yet available.

Table 2

Percentage of employers in Great Britain with 20 or more employees, issued with bulk permits

	per cent.
1979	45·1
1980	46·5
1981	47·6
1982	46·3
1983	48·4
1984	49·9
1985	[1]—
1986	55·5
1987	56·1
1988	56·7
1989	57·1
1990	58·2
1991	55·1
1992	[2]—

[1] Unavailable.

[2] Not yet available.

Employment Agencies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals she has to strengthen her regulatory powers to register, monitor and supervise employment agencies; and what proposals she has to increase the supervisory powers she has over model agencies and to increase the minimum age at which young people can work as models without chaperones.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has no proposals to strengthen her powers over model agencies or employment agencies. There are no regulations which specifically govern the minimum age at which young people can work as models without chaperones. The Children (Performances) Regulations 1968 are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and are enforced by local education authorities.

Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Barry Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the progress of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications programme and its implementation.

Mr. McLoughlin: The National Council for Vocational Qualifications is making good progress in meeting the target set by my right hon. and learned Friend, the previous Secretary of State for Employment, that by the end of 1992 national vocational qualifications covering 80 per cent. of the work force up to NVQ level 4 are available, and in all the most important occupational areas.

There are currently some 430 national vocational qualifications accredited by the council covering about 73 per cent. of the work force in over 40 major industries. The council is well on course to achieve the 80 per cent. target.

The council is taking a leading role in helping to ensure that awareness and take up of national vocational qualifications is raised. The council's national communications strategy, which was launched by the Prime Minister in January 1992, is involving employer and other organisations in promoting NVQs.

Employment (Over-50s)

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what new proposals her Department has to promote employment among unemployed people over 50 years of age.

Mr. McLoughlin: We believe that it is in employers' own interests to make effective use of the skills and experience that older people possess. Our new advisory group on older workers will meet later this autumn. It will identify and encourage examples of good employment practice with regard to older workers, and seek to persuade employers to treat all applicants on their merits.

Euroform Initiative

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 3 July to the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman), *Official Report*, column *714*, which person or bodies are responsible for choosing successful applicants for the Euroform initiative; how many applicants were unsuccessful; by what means the fund was advertised; and if he will place in the Library a document showing the amount of grant made to each of the 175 projects mentioned in the answer naming the recipient organisation and the purposes to which the grant will be put.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A Euroform programme committee has been set up, comprising of representatives from local authorities, higher education institutions, voluntary bodies, training and enterprise councils, the European Commission and Employment Department. This committee made the selection of projects to be funded under Euroform. Out of 277 bids, 102 were unsuccessful.

Information about the Euroform initiative was made available through the existing European social fund committee structures, through Community action programme networks—FORCE and EUROTECHNET—and to all organisations which registered an interest.

Of the 175 projects originally given approval in principle, 62 have yet to be formally approved due to delays in applicants providing the necessary financial information and/or confirmation of transitional partnerships. Once these projects are cleared, a complete list will be placed in the Library detailing the projects to be assisted.

Redundancies

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what calculations or assumptions are made of the consequential effects of redundancies, and reduced purchasing power, on employment in the supply of other goods or services; what studies have been made of such effects in areas of local employment offices where major redundancies in shipbuilding, coal mining, engineering or other employment concentrations have taken place; and what conclusions have been drawn from such studies.

Mr. McLoughlin: The effect of redundancies varies with the circumstances involved. The Department does not therefore use any standard assumptions in assessing any knock-on effects of redundancies on the localities in question or on the economy overall.

Since 1990, the Department has commissioned two studies looking at the broader effects of large-scale redundancies on local economies. The first entitled "Sellafield Redundancies: Labour Market Effects" examined the rundown of construction activity at British Nuclear Fuel's Sellafield site. The research, which was undertaken by the Planning, Industrial and Economic Development Advisers (PIEDA) consultancy, indicated that for every 100 jobs disappearing at the Sellafield construction site, about 20 additional jobs would disappear in the rest of the west Cumbrian economy. The second study, entitled "Research into Redundancies at VSEL, Barrow", was also undertaken by PIEDA. This study looked at the effects of the expected fall in employment at the VSEL shipyards in Barrow on the local travel-to-work area. The consultants estimated that for every 100 jobs lost at the shipyards, an additional 11 jobs would disappear in the local economy. The studies did not examine the broader effects, either positive or negative, outside these localities on the United Kingdom economy overall.

Industrial Disputes

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many days were lost through industrial action by staff in higher education in *(a)* 1978 and *(b)* 1992; and how many separate incidents were involved.

Mr. McLoughlin: A breakdown of industrial action by staff specifically in higher education is not available for 1978. However, a total of 1,000 days were lost in six stoppages of work by staff in all educational services in 1978. This compares with a loss of 27 thousand days in 22 stoppages in 1991, the latest calendar year for which data are available.

As a result of changes in the industrial classification system, data on higher education have been available since 1982. On this basis, a provisional total of 4,000 days have been lost in three stoppages of work by staff in higher education in the eight months to August 1992, the latest period for which statistics are available.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Land

24. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, how many acres of dormant, vacant and derelict land are currently in the Church Commissioners' ownership; and how many offices and houses are currently vacant.

Mr. Alison: At 30 June, excluding woods, roads and verges, et cetera, 600 acres of our land were unlet as were 15 offices—or parts of offices—and 85 houses or flats.

25. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what plans the commissioners have to change the conditions under which they let church land.

Mr. Alison: The commissioners have no such plans in respect of their own land. Letting of other church land is a matter for the diocese or parish concerned.

WALES

NHS Trusts

14. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to make an announcement following the consultation on trust status applications from health units in Clwyd.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend is still considering the representations made during public consultation and hopes to announce his decisions shortly.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what policy considerations he will utilise in relation to whole health authority national health service trust applications.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The decision whether to seek national health service trust status is a matter for individual health units and the ambulance service. Each application for national health service trust status must demonstrate benefits to patients and quality improvement, management capability and capacity, involvement of key professional staff, especially consultants in management and financial soundness.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairmen and women of the Welsh health authorities, community health councils and family health service authorities regarding policy on community health services trust status applications.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Each application for national health service trust status is subject to public consultation, which statutorily includes the relevant community health councils. In addition, health authorities and family health service authorities are among a range of consultees who are invited to comment on proposals contained in an application.

Beaches

15. **Mr. Sweeney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to ensure that all Welsh beaches attain the highest standards of cleanliness.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A major investment programme is in hand by Dwr Cymru to enable all waters in Wales identified under the EC Bathing Waters Directive to meet the directive's mandatory bacteriological standards.

In addition, the Government have introduced provisions in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 which place local authorities and others under a duty to keep beaches clear of litter and refuse.

Unemployment

16. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new proposals he intends to introduce to curb the increase in Welsh unemployment.

Mr. David Hunt: The Welsh Office and agencies which already operate a range of measures to increase employment opportunities will continue to look for further opportunities which will increase employment prospects.

Housing

17. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the figure for the total amount in local authority housing capital receipt accounts across Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The latest information available relates to 31 March 1991, when local councils held £32·7 million of housing capital receipts and this sum may be re-used by the councils.

At the same date, after allowing for redemption, Welsh local councils had outstanding loan debt of £976·3 million on their housing revenue accounts.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what consultations he has had with the chairman of Tai Cymru concerning the impact of the proposals contained in his consultation paper on the future development of Welsh housing associations on *(a)* smaller housing associations, *(b)* housing associations specialising in infill and refurbishment and *(c)* small builders;

(2) what standards of *(a)* building development and *(b)* management capabilities he proposes to set as a minimum quality threshold for Welsh housing associations; what consultations he has had with (i) Tai Cymru, (ii) the Welsh Federation of Housing Associations and (iii) the Welsh Association of District Councils concerning the relationship between the development of new-build housing association development and the management of the housing association-owned estate; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what consultations he has had with the chairman of Tai Cymru concerning the reduction of the number of housing associations in Wales approved and grant aided for *(a)* building new affordable housing and *(b)* managing estates.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: These are matters which it is for the board of Housing for Wales to consider in the light of the consultation process currently under way.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning supplementary credit approvals for local authority housing estate partnership programmes in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Under the estate partnership programme an initial supplementary credit approval of £3 million has recently been offered to Cardiff city council and one of £1·5 million to Merthyr Tydfil borough council to help them fund remedial works on the Ely West and Gurnos estates respectively. Discussions with Arfon borough council continue as regards their proposals for Tai Station estate, Bangor.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy on the modernisation of aging council housing stock in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This is a matter for local authorities to address when deciding their priorities within the framework provided by "Housing in Wales: An Agenda for Action".

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of Welsh households in 1991 *(a)* lacked or shared a bath or shower, *(b)* had no inside WC, *(c)* had no central heating or *(d)* lived in a density of more than one per room.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) has to date published only a selection of 1991 census results in the county monitor series (CEN 91 CM). The Wales percentages given as follows for 1991 are provisional as they are derived directly from the rounded statistics in those monitors. National level results will be released by OPCS in November 1992 and more detailed results published in county reports later this year and in 1993. Percentages for 1981 are also given in the following table.

Percentage of households in Wales

		Per cent.	
		[1]*1991*	*1981*
a. and b.	which lacked exclusive use of a bath or shower and/or an inside WC	1·7	6·7
c.	which lacked central heating	18·5	([2])
d.	with more than 1 person per room	1·6	2·8

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[1] Provisional.

[2] This question was not asked in 1981.

Health Services, South Glamorgan

18. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the future of hospital services in Cardiff.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Our officials are in close touch with the authority about its strategic plan and my right hon. Friend expects to be in a position to consider it in the spring of next year.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what consultations he has had with the chairman of the South Glamorgan health authority concerning the recommendation to the health authority at its meeting of 16 July that *(a)* all accident and emergency services and *(b)* all paediatric hospital services should be moved to the University hospital of Wales, the Heath, Cardiff; what assessment he has made of the need to review his acceptance of the authority's 10-year strategic plan; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what consultations he has had with the chairman of the South Glamorgan health authority concerning the withdrawal of the third district general hospital from the authority's 10-year strategy;

(3) what consultations he has had with the vice-chair of the South Glamorgan health authority concerning the date of review of the South Glamorgan health authority 10-year strategic plan.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The health authority was asked in 1989 to review its strategic plan. The outcome is likely to be submitted to my right hon. Friend before Christmas. Until then, the proposals in the plan are a matter for the authority; and my right hon. Friend has not consulted the chairman or vice-chairman of the authority on any aspect of this issue, though naturally officials are in close touch.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to appoint a new chair of the South Glamorgan health authority; if he will advertise the post; and what proposals he has to ensure the appointing procedure achieves compliance with equal opportunities legislation and principles.

Mr. David Hunt: On 23 July I announced the appointment of Mr. Ian Grist as chairman of South Glamorgan district health authority for a four-year term commencing on 1 August 1992. Public appointments are not normally filled as a consequence of advertising. All public appointments are made irrespective of sex on the basis of aptitude and merit.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of the date for decision on the application for waiting list initiative capital approval by South Glamorgan health authority for a third orthopaedic operating theatre at the Prince of Wales orthopaedic hospital, Rhydlafar at Cardiff.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I announced on 6 October an allocation of £94,350 to support the development by South Glamorgan health authority of a third operating theatre at the Prince of Wales hospital.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultation he has had with the chairman of the South Glamorgan health authority concerning the suspension on full pay of the unit general manager of the Cardiff royal group of hospitals.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend has had no consultations with the chairman of the South Glamorgan health authority on this matter. This is an internal management issue for the authority.

District Council Boundaries

19. **Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when next he plans to meet the leaders of local authorities in mid Glamorgan to discuss the realignment of district council boundaries in that county.

Mr. David Hunt: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has already met delegations from each of the Mid Glamorgan district councils during the present phase of consultation.

Family Expenditure

20. **Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average expenditure of a family consisting of two parents and two children in *(a)* Blaenau Gwent and *(b)* Wales; and what is the current level of income support for such a family.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Estimated average expenditure for all types of Welsh households for the two year period 1989 to 1990 was £212 per week. The average weekly income support of recipients in Wales who have dependants was estimated to be £66 in May 1991. More detailed breakdowns of these estimates, either by area or type of household, are not available.

Traffic Accidents

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children under school-leaving age had been injured in road traffic accidents in Wales *(a)* prior to the launch of his Department's target to reduce road casualties by one third by the year 2000 and *(b)* for the latest year for which figures are available.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is as follows:

Child Road Casualties[1]

	Number
1981-85 average[2]	2,326
1986[3]	2,181
1991[4]	2,344

[1] Children under 16 years of age.
[2] Baseline for reduction target.
[3] Year preceding target launch.
[4] Provisional.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total number of road traffic accidents in Wales in the latest year for which figures are available; and how many such accidents resulted in head injuries, according to each standard age cohort.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In 1991, the total number of road traffic accidents in Wales was 10,824. Information relating to head injuries resulting from road accidents is not collected centrally.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what has been the total expenditure over the last three available years by the Welsh Development Agency on projects involving the redevelopment of town centres;

(2) what was the total sum spent by the Welsh Development Agency in the latest available year on the acquisition of properties;

(3) what has been the total expenditure so far paid by way of the Welsh Development Agency to outside consultants in respect of the agency's involvement in the southern area project in Llanelli;

(4) what was the total expenditure of the Welsh Development Agency in the latest available year on outside consultancy services;

(5) what has been the total expenditure so far by the Welsh Development Agency on the southern area project at Llanelli;

(6) who are the representatives of the Welsh Development Agency on the joint committee set up by the agency and Llanelli borough council to oversee the management of the redevelopment of Llanelli town centre;

(7) What is the estimated likely total expenditure at current prices of the southern area project at Llanelli carried out by the Welsh Development Agency;

(8) what has been the total amount spent so far by the Welsh Development Agency on the acquisition of properties in connection with *(a)* the south Llanelli project and *(b)* the redevelopment of Llanelli town centre;

(9) whether he will list the names of all the outside consultants who have so far been engaged jointly by the Welsh Development Agency and Llanelli borough council in connection with the redevelopment of the Llanelli town centre;

(10) whether he will list the names of the three outside consultancies which received most remuneration by way of fees from the Welsh Development Agency in the latest available year;

(11) what is the limited contribution of the Welsh Development Agency to the joint venture between the agency and Llanelli borough council for the redevelopment of the Llanelli town centre.

Mr. David Hunt: Operational issues are a matter for the Welsh Development Agency. I have therefore arranged for the chief executive of the agency to write to the right hon. Gentleman and for a copy of his response to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will list the outside directorships of each member of the board of the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not kept centrally. However, it is a condition of board membership that no outside interests are maintained which would be likely to conflict with such membership.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total sum spent by the Welsh Development Agency in the latest available year on the clearance of derelict land.

Mr. David Hunt: In 1990-91 the WDA spent £24 million on the reclamation of derelict land. Accounts for the year 1991-92 will be published shortly.

Youth Training

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many young people currently awaiting places on youth training schemes in Wales are currently in receipt of bridging allowance; and what is the total value of the allowance.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The number of young people in receipt of bridging allowances at August 1992 in Wales was 515.

The value of the allowance is £15 per week per person.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many trainees are currently on youth training schemes in Wales; and how many were deemed to need assistance with *(a)* numeracy and *(b)* literacy.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The most recent information available (estimates at 13 September 1992) indicates that there were approximately 14,300 trainees on youth training schemes in Wales.

Training and enterprise councils have an obligation to provide for young people with a numeracy or literacy need, but are not required to collect statistics indicating the numbers involved. The figures requested are, therefore, not available.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the percentage level for unemployment amongst youth training leavers in Wales in each year since 1989-90.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information relating to the percentage level of unemployment amongst youth training leavers in Wales is provided in the table.

Unemployment amongst youth training leavers (Wales)

	per cent.
April 1989 to March 1990	15·9
April 1990 to March 1991	22·5
April 1991 to December 1991[1]	26·2

[1] Latest period for which information is currently available.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the overall budget allocated for youth training in Wales during 1991-92 and 1992-93; if he will publish the estimated budget level for 1993-94; and how much has been allocated per youth training place on average in each instance.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The youth training budget for 1991-92 was £52·152 million and for 1992-93 is £48·441 million; information relating to budgets for 1993-94 is not yet available.

The average price per filled place was £53·80 per week for 1991-92 and is £49·40 per week for 1992-93.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of trainees on youth training placements achieved qualifications as part of their placement in each training and enterprise council area in Wales during each of the last three years; and what percentage of placements were brought to an end within three months in each training and enterprise council area.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information relating to the achievement of qualifications on youth traning and numbers of youth training leavers within three months is provided in the tables.

Table 1

Qualifications obtained during 1990-91

	Full qualification Per cent.	*Part qualification Per cent.*
Gwent	26	17
Swansea	35	21
Cardiff	29	19
Wrexham	40	23

The figures relate to the four areas of Wales which existed prior to the setting up of training and enterprise councils (TECs). Reliable figures on qualifications obtained are not available for TECs for 1990-91, since TECs in Wales were mostly operational for only a small part of the year.

Table 2

Qualifications obtained April-November 1991

	Full qualification Per cent.	*Part qualification Per cent.*
Gwent	26	15
West Wales	36	22
Mid Glamorgan	27	19
South Glamorgan	26	15
North West Wales	46	24

These are the latest available figures for TECs, since follow up of YT leavers is undertaken six months after leaving.

Figures for north east Wales and Powys are not available owing to the low number of respondents to the follow up survey in those areas.

Table 3

Leavers staying less than three months with a training provider

	Per cent.
1990-91	
Gwent	34
Swansea	28
Cardiff	32
Wrexham	26
April 1991 to November 1991	
Gwent	30
West Wales	30
Mid Glamorgan	29
South Glamorgan	34
Powys	23
North East Wales	7
North West Wales	15

The figures show the percentages of all leavers who spent less than three months with a training provider. They include those who transferred from one provider to another during the period.

Information is not available on the number of placements brought to an end within three months.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department will publish an estimated figure for the number of 16 and 17-year-olds in Wales who are without a job or a place on a training scheme and who are not in full-time education.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have recently introduced new measures which will enable this information to be collected on a monthly basis. The first monthly count has only just been completed and we intend to publish this information as soon as we are satisfied that it is both comprehensive and accurate.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many 16 and 17-year-olds have been *(a)* killed and *(b)* seriously injured in work-related training placement accidents on youth training and youth training schemes in Wales in each year since 1983.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The number of individuals who have been killed or injured on youth training schemes in Wales in each year since 1983 is given in the following table. Separate figures, by age, are not available.

Wales

YT(S) Accident statistics

Year	*Fatal*	*Major*	*Minor*
[1]1983	0	2	40
1984	0	20	162
1985	0	17	161
1986	2	26	173
1987	1	27	224
1988	1	46	265
1989	0	43	214
1990	0	36	189
1991	1	37	140
[2]1992	0	8	61

[1] The data for 1983 covers only the period 1 April to 31 December 1983.

[2] The data for 1992 covers only the period 1 January to 30 June 1992.

Notes

(a) Employment Department figures for trainees have been compiled on a similar basis to those prepared by the Health and Safety Executive for employed persons. However, the Employment Department's figures include a number of accidents to trainees in educational establishments, and road traffic accidents, which would not have been reportable to the Health and Safety Executive had the individuals been employed.

(b) Major injuries are classified according to the severity criteria laid down in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985. These regulations, which came into force on 1 April 1986, re-classified

fractured wrists and ankles as major injuries. These were not classed as major injuries in the previous regulations, the Notifications of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980 (NADOR).

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which training and enterprise councils in Wales are currently not fulfilling the Government's guarantee of a training place on youth training schemes for all 16 and 17-year-olds in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have recently introduced new measures which will enable information to be collected regularly to help identify localised difficulties, and which will encourage closer liaison between training and enterprise councils and careers services. The first monthly count under the new arrangement has only just been completed and it is therefore too early for the full picture to emerge. However, we have made it abundantly clear that we regard meeting the YT guarantee by TECs as of paramount importance and have said that no TEC will be prevented by lack of resource from meeting the guarantee.

Health Education

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what work is currently undertaken by his Department into the teaching of the dangers of alcohol abuse within the school curriculum in Wales;

(2) what research work is currently undertaken by his Department to evaluate the teaching of sex education in schools in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Teaching about the dangers of alcohol abuse and sex education are part of the cross curricular theme of health education within the national curriculum. It is subject to inspection by Her Majesty's inspectors of schools who have undertaken several surveys of provision in counties in Wales. Our new arrangements for inspections by registered inspectors will ensure more published reports on all aspects of the life of a school.

The Welsh Office provides funding for the appointment of local education authority health education co-ordinators who are closely involved in teaching in schools and make regular reports on provision and practice.

Weight Statistics

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of young people between the ages of 16 and 19 years are *(a)* normal weight, *(b)* 8 per cent. overweight, *(c)* 1 per cent. obese and *(d)* under normal weight in each health authority in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not available centrally. However, a survey carried out in 1990 by the Health Promotion Authority for Wales found that in the 18 to 24 year age group, 24 per cent. of men and 27 per cent. of women in Wales were overweight.

For the purpose of the study a person was considered to be overweight if that person's weight (measured in kilograms) divided by the square of their height (measured in metres^2) is greater than 24 in the case of men or 23 in the case of women.

Deregulation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what financial provisions, and how much, he has made within his Department in order to look at the potential for deregulation of each of the regulatory measures for which he has responsibility.

Mr. David Hunt: I have made all my staff aware of the need to consider the potential for deregulation of existing regulatory measures and of the need to assess compliance costs of any new regulations in Wales. I have provided £54,000 for my departmental deregulation unit to co-ordinate this work in my Department and with Departments in England since the Government introduced their deregulation initiative in 1985.

Job Creation Schemes

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to conclude his attempts to produce a comparable methodology for the evaluation of job creation schemes undertaken by the Welsh Development Agency, the Development Board for Rural Wales and the Welsh Office Industry Department; what consultancy assistance he is using for this exercise; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The development of evaluation techniques is a continuing process which the Department and other bodies will take forward in the light of the recent report by the Public Accounts Committee (HCP 76), calling on external consultancy advice as necessary.

Smoking

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the percentage of *(a)* males and *(b)* females between the ages of 16 and 19 years in Wales who are regular smokers.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The latest available estimates are given in the table:

	Daily smokers per cent.	*Smoking at least weekly per cent.*
Male	16	21
Female	19	29

Tourism

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures showing the total earnings from tourism in Wales in each year since 1981; and if he will break the figures down according to *(a)* earnings from United Kingdom staying visitors, *(b)* overseas visitors and *(c)* day visitors.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Estimates of expenditure by overnight visitors to Wales are given in the table. Estimates of expenditure by day visitors are available only for the financial year ending on 31 March 1989 when an estimated £22 million was spent in Wales.

(*Source:* The leisure day visits survey 1988-89, conducted by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on behalf of the Department of Employment and the British Tourist Authority.)

Expenditure by overnight visitors to Wales[1]

Year	*United Kingdom visitors*[2] *£ million*	*Overseas visitors* *£ million*
1981	n/a	50
1982	n/a	55
1983	n/a	85
1984	n/a	90
1985	n/a	95
1986	n/a	100
1987	n/a	120
1988	n/a	100
1989	985	120
1990	900	130
1991	900	130

Sources: United Kingdom Travel Survey, International Passenger Survey.

[1] These estimates, derived from sample surveys and thus subject to potential random sampling errors, have been rounded to the nearest £5 million.

[2] Since 1989 information has been obtained from the United Kingdom Tourism Survey (UKTS), sponsored jointly by the statutory tourist boards from England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. It is not possible to make a direct comparison between the results of this latter survey and those of earlier surveys.

Alcohol Consumption

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the percentage of young people between the age of 16 to 19 years who drink alcohol at least once a week in each health authority area in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The latest available best estimates from the Health Promotion Authority for Wales are as follows:

Estimated percentage drinking alcohol at least weekly by District Health Authority, Wales 16 to 19 year olds, 1990

	Male	*Female*
Clwyd	58·0	51·5
Dyfed	57·6	53·7
Gwent	61·0	47·7
Gwynedd	66·3	49·7
Mid Glamorgan	66·1	49·2
Powys	58·5	47·7
South Glamorgan	59·8	47·7
West Glamorgan	61·9	57·1
Wales	61·1	50·6

Pregnant Girls

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many girls under 16 years became pregnant in each health authority area in Wales in each year since 1981.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Data on conceptions are not available at district health authority level. However, the number of conceptions to girls aged under 16 usually resident in Wales, which led to a maternity or were terminated by abortion under the Abortion Act 1967, are presented in the table. Conceptions which led to an illegal or spontaneous abortion are excluded.

	Conceptions (aged under 16)
1981	455
1982	547
1983	558
1984	553
1985	577
1986	510
1987	545
1988	536
1989	460
1990	523

Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys

Road Safety

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met representatives of local councils in Wales to discuss levels of provision for road safety measures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Local government finance issues are discussed at the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance, a meeting of which I chaired on 6 July.

Ecstasy

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to undertake detailed research on the use of MDMA (ecstasy) in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Data are currently collected on the incidence of drug misusers presenting for treatment in Wales. A specialist sub-committee of the Welsh Committee for Drug Misuse is already looking at methodologies for undertaking prevalence studies.

Children's Hospital

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairmen of Welsh health authorities concerning the provision of a specialist children's hospital for Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None. I am aware, however, that South Glamorgan health authority has commissioned the King's Fund to assess the feasibility and viability of a proposal to establish a comprehensive child health service providing specialist services to children across Wales.

Bruce Report

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the Bruce report on careers guidance and education.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The review of careers guidance was an internal review carried out by the Employment Department. It is not customary to publish and release internal reviews. The review was taken into account in the consultation exercise which led to proposals for developing careers advice and guidance published in the White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st Century" (Cm. 156, Volume 1, Chapter 7).

Disability

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the latest available figures for the number of disabled people in Wales between the ages of 16 years and 64 years indicating the total number currently in work/training and the total number registered as unemployed.

Sir Wyn Roberts: At 31 March 1991 there were 147,918 people on the register of handicapped people in Wales. No information is held centrally on the numbers of disabled people between the ages of 16 and 64, nor the numbers in work/training or registered unemployed.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been allocated by his Department to each local authority in Wales, in the latest year for which figures are available, to provide portable ramps to assist physical access into buildings; if he will list the buildings which have been granted funds in each local authority area; and if he will indicate which of these buildings were utilised as polling stations during the last general election.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Expenditure on portable access ramps is a matter for individual local authorities in the light of the overall resources available to them and their service priorities.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what statistics he has concerning increased waiting lists for the fitting of adaptions and aids for the physically disabled under the disabled facilities grant scheme since 1 April; and what were the numbers on Welsh local authority waiting lists on *(a)* 1 January 1991, *(b)* 1 July 1991, *(c)* 1January 1992 and *(d)* 1 July 1992, respectively.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on such waiting lists is not held centrally.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people with disabilities are registered with the Employment Service and therefore qualify for a green card in Blaenau Gwent; what percentage of these people is registered unemployed; and what are the comparable figures for Wales as a whole.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of people registered as disabled under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 and who are therefore eligible to receive a certificate of registration (green card) in the Blaenau Gwent constituency is 504. The comparable figure for Wales is 21,998. These are the latest figures, based on a count conducted in April 1992.

Information is not available about the percentage of registered disabled people in Blaenau Gwent and Wales who are registered unemployed.

Young Offenders

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects the Welsh Office working party on secure accommodation for young offenders to present its report.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The working party under the chairmanship of the chief executive of West Glamorgan county council, is charged with taking forward the detailed design and planning of the new secure unit and I look forward to the provision of secure accommodation being pursued as quickly as possible.

European Centre

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make representations to the European Community for additional structural fund monies so as to allow more Welsh companies and organisations to subscribe to the European centre project.

Mr. David Hunt: It would not be appropriate for me to seek specific additional structural fund resources from the European Commission to support such initiatives. It would be for the relevant programme committee to determine whether or not applications submitted by sponsors for assistance with their contributions to the Wales European centre were eligible for structural fund support and, if so, whether these should be afforded sufficient priority to secure a part of the available resources.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many visitors have called at the Wales European centre in Brussels to date; and what are the estimated targets for visitor numbers in 1992-93.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of visitors calling at the Wales European centre from April 1992 to September 1992 was 260. This compares favourably with initial estimates for the number of visitors during 1992-93 of 400.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the companies and organisations which have subscribed to the Wales European centre project to date.

Mr. David Hunt: The following organisations have subscribed, or have agreed to subscribe, to the Wales European centre: the Welsh Development Agency, the Assembly of Welsh Counties, 34 of the district councils, six of the training and enterprise councils, the development Board for Rural Wales and the University of Wales College, Cardiff.

Children in Care

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children and young people were admitted to local authority care in each Welsh local authority area in both 1990 and 1991; and if he will express this both as total numbers and as a proportion per thousand children.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The numbers of children and young people admitted to local authority care for the years ended 31 March 1990 and 1991 are shown in the table.

All admissions were of children aged under 18 years.

Number of children and young persons admitted to local authority care during the 12 months ended 31 March

	1990		*1991*	
	Number	*Rate*[1]	*Number*	*Rate*[1]
Clwyd	218	2·3	216	2·3
Dyfed	191	2·4	203	2·6
Gwent	396	3·8	359	3·5
Gwynedd	120	2·2	135	2·5
Mid Glamorgan	435	3·4	315	2·5
Powys	40	1·6	53	2·1
South Glamorgan	313	3·2	308	3·2
West Glamorgan	239	2·9	237	2·9
Wales	1,952	2·9	1,826	2·8

[1] Rate per thousand population aged 0-17 years.

Slate

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made by his Department to date on the promoting of the sale of Welsh slate within other member countries of the EC.

Mr. David Hunt: The Welsh Office does not promote specific products. However, Government agencies like the Welsh Development Agency and the Development Board for Rural Wales offer help to individual companies with marketing and sourcing of their products and services both within the United Kingdom and overseas.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy not to change the formula for allocating central government finance to local authorities in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The formulae for distributing resources within the local government revenue settlement have been agreed annually between the Welsh Office and the Welsh local authority associations through the forum of the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance. The formulae for 1993-94 need to take account of changes in local government functions from 1 April 1993 and the introduction of the council tax on the same date. The distribution formulae will be set out in the Welsh Local Government finance report 1993-94 to be laid before the House in the new year.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what policy considerations underlay his decision to change the financial allocation to local authorities for expenditure on the disabled facilities grants scheme from the basic credit approval sector to the supplementary credit approval with effect from 1 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Resources for disabled facilities grant are already provided within local authorities' basic credit approvals. This allows for the necessary flexibility of operational response in providing the support best suited to the needs of disabled people.

Eastern Europe

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps have been undertaken to date by his Department to assist economic development and training in *(a)* Estonia, *(b)* Lithuania, *(c)* Slovenia, *(d)* Ukraine, *(e)* the Russian Federation and *(f)* Slovakia.

Mr. David Hunt: A delegation from the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic visited Wales in 1990. Although my Department has not taken any special initiatives, I am aware that considerable efforts have been made by others, including the Welsh Development Agency, in assisting economic development and training in some of the former eastern bloc countries.

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the attendance record of the board members of the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation for each of the past two years at all full board meetings.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is shown in the table.

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation—board attendance record

	October 1990	*October 1990* S*	*November 1990*	*December 1990*	*February 1991*	*March 1991*
G. D. Inkin	P	P	P	P	P	P
Lord Brooks of Tremorfa	P	P	P	P	A	P
Mrs. M. Barnes	P	P	A	P	P	P
J. A. Beveridge	P	P	P	P	P	P
P. Chapple	A	A	Deceased			
Mrs. H. Chapman	A	P	A	A	P	A
A. G. Cox	A	P	P	A	P	P
B. H. R. Hudson-Davies	P	P	P	P	P	P
T. Hunter Jarvie						P
W. P. Kitson	P	A	P	P	P	P
J. R. Phillips	P	P	P	P	P	P
J. P. Sainsbury						
H. R. Silverman	P	P	P	P	P	P
L. S. Smith						
B. K. Thomas						
R. E. Watkiss	P	A	P	P	P	A

A = Absent. S* = Special board meeting. P = Present.

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation—board attendance record

	April 1991	*May 1991*	*June 1991*	*July 1991*	*September 1991*	*October 1991*
G. D. Inkin	P	P	P	P	P	P
Lord Brooks of Tremorfa	A	P	P	P	P	A
Mrs. M. Barnes	A	P	A	A	P	A
J. A. Beveridge	A	A	P	P	P	P
P. Chapple	Deceased					
Mrs. H. Chapman	P	P	P	P	P	A
A. G. Cox	P	P	P	A	P	P
B. H. R. Hudson-Davies	P	A	P	P	P	P
T. Hunter Jarvie	P	A	A	Not re-elected to Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council		
W. P. Kitson	P	P	P	P	P	A
J. R. Phillips	P	P	P	P	P	A
J. P. Sainsbury						P

	April 1991	*May 1991*	*June 1991*	*July 1991*	*September 1991*	*October 1991*
H. R. Silverman	A	P	P	P	P	P
L. S. Smith					P	P
B. K. Thomas			P	P	P	P
R. E. Watkiss	P	Deceased				

A = Absent. S* = Special board meeting. P = Present.

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation—board attendance record

	November 1991	*November S**	*December 1991*	*February 1992*	*March 1992*	*April 1992*
G. D. Inkin	P	P	P	P	P	P
Lord Brooks of Tremorfa	P	P	A	P	P	A
Mrs. M. Barnes	P	P	Retired from CBDC Board			
J. A. Beveridge	A	A	P	P	P	P
P. Chapple	Deceased					
Mrs. H. Chapman	P	A	P	P	P	P
A. G. Cox	P	P	A	P	P	P
B. H. R. Hudson-Davies	A	P	P	P	P	P
T. Hunter Jarvie	Not re-elected to Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council					
W. P. Kitson	P	P	P	P	P	P
J. R. Phillips	P	A	P	P	P	P
J. P. Sainsbury	P	P	P	P	A	A
H. R. Silverman	A	P	P	P	P	A
L. S. Smith	P	P	P	P	A	A
B. K. Thomas	P	P	P	P	A	P
R. E. Watkiss	Deceased					

A = Absent. S* = Special board meeting. P = Present.

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation—board attendance record

	May 1992	*June 1992*	*July 1992*	*September 1992*	*October 1992*	*Per cent.*[2]
G. D. Inkin	P	P	P	P	P	100
Lord Brooks of Tremorfa	P	P	P	A	P	74
Mrs. M. Barnes	Retired from CBDC Board					64
J. A. Beveridge	P	P	P	P	P	83
P. Chapple	Deceased					0
Mrs. H. Chapman	P	P	A	P	A	65
A. G. Cox	P	P	A	A	A	70
B. H. R. Hudson-Davies	P	P	P	P	P	91
T. Hunter Jarvie	Not re-elected to Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council					50
W. P. Kitson	P	P	P	A	P	87
J. R. Phillips	P	P	P	P	P	91
J. P. Sainsbury	P	A	P	A	P	67
H. R. Silverman	P	P	A	P	P	83
L. S. Smith	A	P	A	P	A	62
B. K. Thomas	P	P	P	P	A	87
R. E. Watkiss	Deceased					71

[1] A = Absent. S* = Special board meeting. P = Present.

[2] Per cent. covers tables 1 to 4.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements he has made for the auditing of the accounts of the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation; what reserve powers the National Audit Office has, for involvement in the auditing process of the corporation's accounts; what proposals he has to change the arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have nothing to add to the letter that I wrote to the hon. Gentleman on 28 September.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements he has made or proposes to make for public consultation on the Wallace Evans and Partners study of the potential of de-watering wells for the combating of waterlogging of land areas within the protected property line published by the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation in connection with the proposed Cardiff bay barrage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: As I indicated to the hon. Gentleman on 24 June at col. *217*, I have sought the views of Mr. Roy Stoner, Cardiff Bay Development Corporation, Cardiff city council and the National Rivers Authority on the results of the report. Copies were also sent for information to petitioners against the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill and other bodies with a known interest.

Special Schools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children in special schools were without a statement of needs in *(a)* January 1986 and *(b)* January 1991, in each county in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information relating to January 1986 is not available. Data for the next available year and 1991 are shown in the table:

	Non-statemented pupils	
	1987	*[1]1991*
Clwyd	0	49
Dyfed	0	0
Gwent	16	0
Gwynedd	0	2
Mid Glamorgan	1	1
Powys	0	8
South Glamorgan	49	85
West Glamorgan	0	0
Wales	66	145

[1] From 1989 onwards, information on statemented pupils in special schools was collected at September.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement on his policies for children in special schools;

(2) if he will make a statement on the working of the Education Act 1981 concerning children in special schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Our policy for children in special schools, as with other children, is to provide them with the opportunities to make the most of their potential. The Government have undertaken a fundamental review of the relevant provisions of the Education Act 1981 and we are bringing forward proposals to improve the current assessment and statementing process, to give parents the right to express a preference for their child's school and to provide a new appeal system. The details are in the consultation document "Special Education Needs—Access to the System" which was published on 15 July and a copy of which is in the Library of the House. These proposals will benefit not only children in special schools but all children with special educational needs.

Minerals

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning his approach to the review of the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Minerals) Act 1981: Old Mineral Permissions.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The responses to the consultation paper issued in March on old mining permissions are under consideration. Further consultation is likely before any detailed proposals are implemented.

Speed Traps

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what contracts he has awarded to BEAMAX for the installation and maintenance of radar camera and security systems speed traps on the M4, Severn bridge and trunk roads; when they were awarded; by what process of competitive tender; and for how long.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Department has not awarded any contracts to BEAMAX.

Milk Marketing Board

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many milk producers in Wales currently deal with the Milk Marketing Board.

Mr. David Hunt: The figure is 5,289 as at August 1992.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the National Farmers Union and the Farmers Union of Wales in Wales concerning the future of the Milk Marketing Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I am in regular contact with the National Farmers Union and the Farmers Union of Wales and both unions have responded to the consultation document on the future of the England and Wales Milk Marketing Board. These responses will be considered along with others I have received.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the numbers of patients waiting for in-patient treatment on 31 March for each individual health authority *(a)* in total and *(b)* by main speciality for periods (i) under 12 months, (ii) 12 to 24 months and (iii) over 24 months.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The available information on waiting lists in Wales as at 31 March 1992 was published in "Welsh Hospital Waiting List Bulletin: 1992 No. 2" on 23 September and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

The percentage of in-patients waiting over 12 months are shown in tables 1.1-1.10 and those waiting over 24 months are shown in table 2.1.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the numbers of patients waiting for out-patient treatment on 31 March for each individual health authority *(a)* in total and *(b)* by main speciality for periods (i) under 12 months, (ii) 12 to 24 months and (iii) over 24 months.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The available information on waiting lists in Wales as at 31 March 1992 was published in "Welsh Hospital Waiting List Bulletin: 1992 No. 2" on 23 September and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Information is available only on the percentage of out-patients waiting over three months and is shown in tables 1.1-1.10.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of the male and female populations aged 16 years and over are economically active in (a) Blaenau Gwent and (b) Wales.

Mr David Hunt: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) have to date published only a selection of 1991 census results in the county monitor series (CEN 91 CM). The Wales percentages given in the following table are provisional as they are derived directly from the rounded statistics in those monitors. National level results will be published in November 1992.

Percentage of Working Age Group Economically Active, 1991

	Males (16-64 Years) per cent.	*Females (15-59 Years) per cent.*
a. Blaenau Gwent	77·1	58·1
b. Wales	81·2	62·5

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest male unemployment figure in (a) the Shotton travel-to-work area, (b) the Alyn and Deeside constituency and (c) the county of Clwyd.

Mr. David Hunt: The September 1992 male unemployment claimant figures are 5,965, 2,345 and 12,345 for the Shotton, Flint and Rhyl travel-to-work area, Alyn and Deeside constituency and county of Clwyd respectively.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of the number of people in Wales *(a)* who have two jobs and *(b)* who are counted more than once in the employment figures.

Mr. David Hunt: Estimates derived from the Labour Force Survey of 3,000 households in Wales in spring 1992 suggest that 4·3 per cent. of employees had second jobs. Such estimates are subject to sampling variability.

The exact number of people who are counted more than once in compiling the official estimates of employees in employment is not known. These latter estimates are based on figures collected from employers who do not generally know if an employee is filling the post as an additional job.

Welsh World Trade Centre

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to occupy space in the Welsh world trade centre in 1993.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department has no current plans to take office space at the Welsh world trade centre. We will consider taking space at any relevant exhibitions which are held there.

Farming Enterprises

Mr. Morgan To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the NFU Wales and the Farmers Union of Wales regarding the viability of Welsh farming enterprises in Wales following the collapse of the auctioneers and mart-owners King Thomas Lloyd-Jones.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received a number of letters on this matter but have had no formal consultations on this issue with the farming unions.

Water Pollution

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a progress report on the identification, monitoring and classification of private water supplies in Wales for nitrate.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Local authorities are responsible for private water supplies in their areas. Paragraphs 7·7 and 7·8 of Welsh Office circular 68/91 (copies of which are in the Library of the House) specify the timescale for providing me with reports. The information the hon. Gentleman is seeking will not be available centrally until after June 1993.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the surveys that are being carried out to identify the vulnerability of aquifers in Wales;

(2) if he will publish a list of contaminated land sites in Wales which threaten groundwater quality.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The National Rivers Authority is currently producing a series of groundwater vulnerability maps, which will be based on geological and soil characteristics. These will enhance the NRA's ability to assess the risks from a number of factors, including those arising from contaminated land. In addition the authority routinely monitors groundwater, principally that used for potable supplies.

Surveys of potentially contaminated land have been undertaken on behalf of the Welsh Office and the Welsh Development Agency, the most recent of these in 1987-88. A copy of this survey is available in the Library of the House.

Investment

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of his current and forthcoming overseas visit or visits to attract inward investment to Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I have recently returned from an inward investment mission to the United States, Korea, Japan and Hong Kong. I have not yet arranged further visits.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of public investment in Clwyd since 1980; and if he will list the main headings of such investment.

Mr. David Hunt: County estimates of gross domestic fixed capital formation by function of government have, so far, only been prepared for 1987 and 1988. These estimates were published in the Regional Accounts article of the November 1990 issue of Economic Trends (No. 445). The publication of figures for 1989 and 1990 is scheduled for the December 1992 issue.

Dentists

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of dentists now leaving dentistry in Wales and in the United Kingdom for practices abroad.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of dentists in the national health service in Wales who are not accepting new patients.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally. General dental practitioners are independent contractors who are free to decide which patients to accept or reject.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many dentists are awaiting determination of or have declared bankruptcy in Wales in each of the last three years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that my right hon. Friend gave him on 2 June 1992 at cols. *433-35*.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives he proposes to improve working conditions of dentists in the national health service in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The working conditions of general dental practitioners at their practice premises are their own responsibility, subject to health and safety regulations. In broader terms, the Government have initiated a fundamental review of the dental remuneration system. This review is being undertaken by Sir Kenneth Bloomfield who is to report by the end of the year.

Employment Initiatives

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new financial initiatives he intends to introduce to attract new jobs to Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Regional selective assistance continues to prove an effective instrument and remains the cornerstone of our efforts which have already succeeded in securing considerable inward investment and helped many Welsh businesses to expand. Initiatives such as the financial services initiative and IT Wales are kept under review to ensure that they achieve the maximum effect in their target sectors.

Textiles

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made by his Department to date on the promotion of Welsh textiles within other EC member states.

Mr. David Hunt: There are no specific programmes to promote Welsh textiles in other EC member states. However, as part of its garment initiative the WDA is active in helping to develop the Welsh clothing industry.

Anaesthetists

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by regional health authority the current establishment requirement for anaesthetists; and how many are in post.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No establishment requirement figure is set by the Department. The Royal College of Anaesthetists issues guidance to individual hospital units on the numbers and experience of anaesthetists required to satisfy the range of services provided.

Bids for new posts are received by the Department and advice is sought from the Welsh Medical and Dental Manpower Committee.

Provisional figures as at 30 September 1991, the latest figures which are available, show that there were 146 consultant anaesthetists in post in Wales (including locums) with a whole-time equivalent of 131·0.

Brick Making

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit the Butterley brick works, Lane End, Buckley.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no plans to visit Butterley Brick's operation at Buckley at the present time.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in each county in Wales are employed in brick making.

Mr. David Hunt: Brickmaking is not separately identified in employment estimates. In September 1989 there were 800 people employed in Wales in the manufacture of all structural clay products. Figures at a county level may not be published because to do so would breach the guidelines for protecting confidential data relating to a small number of businesses.

Car Leasing Schemes

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what meetings he has had with the chairmen of the non-departmental public bodies in Wales to examine the costs of their executive car leasing schemes.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the total annual cost of executive car leasing schemes for *(a)* chairmen and vice chairmen, *(b)* senior executives and *(c)* middle management executives of each of the non-departmental public bodies in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not held centrally. However, my Department has recently reminded NDPBs of the criteria which they must follow to ensure the cost-effectiveness of any car leasing arrangements.

South Glamorgan Family Health Services Authority

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the terms and conditions and length of working week for Mrs. Janet Sainsbury as chair of the South Glamorgan family health services authority; what other candidates were considered for the post; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The chairman of South Glamorgan family health services authority receives £11,720 for a time commitment of not less than 2½ days per week. A wide range of candidates was considered but their names are confidential.

Local Government

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the structures working group of the Welsh county and district councils and his own officials regarding the most effective future patterns of local government in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government, of which I am chairman, has received and discussed reports from the structures group and its sub-groups on this matter. I am now giving further consideration to the issues raised.

Road Relief Schemes

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of the completion date of the Brynglas tunnels, Malpas road relief schemes.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The current contract completion date is July 1994.

Quarrying

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state his Department's policy towards the creation of coastal super-quarries.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The potential for coastal super-quarries will be taken into account in the current review of mineral planning guidance note 6 on the provision for aggregates in England and Wales. Individual applications will of course be considered on their merits, having full regard to all environmental considerations.

Long-term Illness

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of Welsh households in 1991 included someone with a long-term limiting illness.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: These figures are not available centrally. However, the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) have published a selection of 1991 Census results in the county monitor series (CEN 91 CM). A provisional figure for Wales as a whole can be derived from these rounded county statistics; it is that respondents in 32 per cent. of households adjudged that there were one or more persons in the household with a long-term limiting illness or disability. This included persons whose long term illness or disability was due to old age. National level results are expected to be released by OPCS in November 1992.

Wales Promotional World Tour

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the costs to *(a)* his direct departmental budget, *(b)* the Welsh Development Agency, *(c)* the Wales Tourist Board and *(d)* other public bodies of the current Wales promotional world tour; if he will specify how many persons from each body are attending each leg of the tour; if he will publish a list of *(a)* business meetings, *(b)* cultural events, *(c)* exhibitions and *(d)* social events being undertaken by each group on each leg of the tour; what special literature has been printed for the tour and what arrangements have been made for shipping it; if he will place a copy in the Library of the prior cost-benefit analysis of the resourcing and purposes of the exercise; if he will institute an evaluation of the exercise after its completion and place a copy in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have just returned from an inward investment mission to North America, Korea, Japan and Hong Kong leading a team of up to four officials from the Welsh Office. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman with the costs when I have full details, but I expect them to be in the region of £75,000.

The Welsh Development Agency was represented by three people in the United States, two in Korea, three in Japan and two in Hong Kong. Several of the WDA representatives are based overseas and would have been overseas anyway irrespective of the mission itself.

The Wales Tourist Board was not involved in the mission and no other public bodies were involved.

For reasons of commercial confidentiality, it would not be appropriate to list each engagement, but in the 12 days I undertook 56 official engagements, 32 of which were directly business-related and four were cultural. The remainder consisted of engagements such as ministerial meetings, seminars and media interviews.

No special literature was prepared for the mission. All such missions are carefully planned to ensure good value for money, and locations and engagements are chosen in order to maximise the potential benefits to Wales. Full results will take time to become apparent, but I am confident that the mission will help significantly to maintain Wales's excellent inward investment record.

River Loughor

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will serve a notice on the Welsh region of the National Rivers Authority requiring the stretch of the River Loughor which is categorised as level 3 of the national water classification scheme to meet a system of statutory water quality objectives.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The National Rivers Authority (NRA) recently published its recommendations for a scheme of water quality classification for setting statutory water quality objectives. The authority's recommendations are currently being considered by the Government and we expect to be consulting widely in due course about our own proposals for implementing the scheme with the aim of starting to introduce statutory water quality objectives gradually from 1993.

In the meantime the NRA is determined to prevent any deterioration in the quality of the River Loughor and to achieve improvements, where possible, consistent with the existing non-statutory river quality objectives.

Flood Defences

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to introduce new protective measures to avoid inundation by tidal waters of the Peterstone/St Brides and Crindau areas of Newport, Gwent.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The National Rivers Authority, relevant local authorities and Caldicot and Wentlooge Drainage Board have powers to undertake sea defence works to protect from inundation by tidal waters the Peterstone/St. Brides and Crindau areas of Newport, Gwent. The Department is prepared to grant aid eligible schemes for the improvement of defence in these areas.

Business Projects in Africa

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the work undertaken by his Department in developing Welsh business projects in Africa; and if he will list the projects concerned.

Mr. David Hunt: The Welsh Office does not promote individual overseas business projects. The Department's overseas trade services branch does, however, provide a range of advisory and information services, as well as practical help to Welsh companies who intend to export their goods and services overseas including the continent of Africa.

Air Routes

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the new air routes that have been established linking Cardiff-Wales airport with other European destinations during 1991 and to date in 1992; and what progress has been made by his Department in the development of further new air routes linking Wales with mainland Europe.

Sir Wyn Roberts: New European air routes established out of Cardiff-Wales airport during 1991 and to date in 1992 are as follows:

1991—Scheduled
Belfast City
Brussels
Dublin
Düsseldorf (subsequently cancelled)
Guernsey
Isle of Man
Jersey
Paris

1992—Scheduled
Aberdeen

1992—Chartered
Turkey
Channel Islands
Lyon
Series of European city day trips (Berlin, Vienna, Rome).

The development of further air routes is primarily for the commercial judgment of the airlines and the airport management. However, I understand that new scheduled services to Düsseldorf and Stuttgart may be introduced by the spring of next year.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the departments spending projects that will not be executed or completed because of alterations in the public spending per head formula relating expenditure per head in Wales preferentially to that in England.

Mr. David Hunt: When decisions about future levels of public expenditure have been made, they will be announced in the autumn statement in the normal way.

Community Health Councils

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what have been the outturn sums paid to community health councils in each of the past 10 years and the amount planned for the next financial year; and if he will publish a table showing the sums indexed with the 1981-82 expenditure expressed as 100.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested on outturn expenditure over the past 10 years is given in the table. It should be noted that this relates to accrued expenditure not simply to cash payments. Planned cash provision in 1992-93 amounts to £1 million; but it is not possible, at this stage of the financial year, to make reliable forecasts of outturn expenditure in either accruals or cash terms. Provision for 1993-94 has not yet been determined.

Community Health Councils: Expenditure

Financial Year	*Outturn Expenditure*[1]	*Index*[1] *(1981-82 = 100)*
1981-82	391,973	100·00
1982-83	446,085	106·24
1983-84	459,334	104·55
1984-85	494,656	107·22
1985-86	532,667	109·42
1986-87	555,632	110·51
1987-88	585,557	110·45
1988-89	619,690	109·02
1989-90	664,475	109·67
1990-91	727,760	111·07
1991-92	[2]937,288	133·38

Source: Health authorities annual accounts

[1] Calculated by converting outturn expenditure to constant 1981-82 prices using the GDP deflator index and forming the 1981-82 = 100 indices as presented.

[2] Provisional pending finalisation of 1991-92 accounts.

Faraday Centres

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the Faraday centres established to date in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: At present there are no Faraday centres in the United Kingdom. The Government are currently considering proposals for such centres and is seeking views from industry.

Crown Buildings, Cardiff

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for occupation of the space in the Crown Buildings, Cathays Park, vacated by NCM of Amsterdam.

Mr. David Hunt: During the two years before NCM Credit Insurance Ltd is due to vacate the Crown Building at Cathays Park, my Department will be considering future use in consultation with the Department of Environment (Property Holdings) which is ultimately responsible for re-letting the space.

Orthoptic Services

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on orthoptic services in (a) the Clwyd health authority and (b) Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The management and provision of Orthoptic services in Wales is the responsibility of the district health authorities who assess local need and seek to make appropriate provision.

Homelessness

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of homeless people in (a) Clwyd, (b) Alyn and Deeside district council area and (c) Wrexham Maelor borough council area.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The numbers of persons in households accepted as homeless during the quarter ending 30 June 1992 under part III of the Housing Act 1985 is given as follows:

	Number of persons
Clwyd	602
Alyn and Deeside	160
Wrexham Maelor	250

Hospital Catering

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he had from the Gardner Merchant subsidiary of Forte plc prior to his awarding the South Glamorgan health authority catering contract at three hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is a matter for South Glamorgan health authority to award the contract but departmental guidance indicates that unless there are compelling reasons otherwise, the contract should be awarded to the lowest tenderer. In this case, the Department has indicated that the lowest tender should be accepted. Gardner Merchant sought clarification of tender procedures and how long it would take to resolve the matter. There was no discussion between the Department and Gardner Merchant on the details of its tender.

Development Board for Rural Wales

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the Chairman of the Development Board for Rural Wales concerning the recovery of sums spent without authority on the board's executive car leasing scheme.

Mr. David Hunt: None. However, my Department has written to the chief executive of the developmental board requesting that he consider the recovery of any excess costs incurred as a result of the unauthorised payments.

Correspondence

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to reply to the letters to him dated 11 and 13 August from the hon. Member for Cardiff, West regarding the Welsh Development Agency's employment of unlicensed model agency, SHAPES.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State replied in my absence on 27 August.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the monthly totals and average percentage of the unemployment figures for (a) Wales and (b) the areas covered by the valleys initiative for each year from 1987.

Mr. David Hunt: The unemployment data requested for Wales are available from the NOMIS database, which can be accessed on-line by House of Commons Library staff. Unemployment figures for the Valleys area are given in the table:

Unemployment in the Programme for the Valleys area

	Number[1]	*Rate*[2]
1987		
January	44,703	18·2
February	43,281	17·7
March	42,001	17·1
April	41,817	17·1
May	41,183	16·8
June	39,682	16·2
July	39,646	16·2
August	38,963	15·9
September	40,237	16·4
October	37,998	15·5
November	36,888	15·0
December	37,073	15·1
1988		
January	37,797	15·4
February	37,122	15·1
March	36,234	14·8
April	37,556	15·3
May	35,675	14·6
June	34,435	14·0
July	33,558	13·7
August	33,138	13·5
September	33,391	13·6
October	30,907	12·6
November	30,354	12·4
December	30,292	12·4
1989		
January	30,963	12·6
February	29,812	12·1
March	29,095	11·8
April	28,543	11·6
May	27,411	11·2
June	26,279	10·7
July	26,291	10·7
August	25,714	10·5
September	25,928	10·5
October	24,091	9·8
November	23,296	9·5
December	23,677	9·6
1990		
January	24,764	10·3
February	24,183	10·0
March	23,797	9·9
April	23,474	9·8
May	22,922	9·5
June	22,417	9·3
July	23,146	9·6
August	23,330	9·7
September	23,647	9·8
October	23,411	9·7
November	24,052	10·0
December	25,559	10·6
1991		
January	27,077	11·1
February	27,746	11·4
March	28,995	11·9
April	30,309	12·5
May	30,274	12·5
June	30,144	12·4
July	31,557	13·0
August	31,635	13·0
September	31,751	13·1
October	30,808	12·7
November	31,130	12·8
December	31,987	13·2
1992		
January	33,469	13·8
February	32,934	13·6
March	32,271	13·3
April	32,200	13·3
May	31,443	12·9
June	30,845	12·7
July	31,438	12·9
August	31,901	13·1
September	32,310	13·3

Source: Employment Department.

[1] Unadjusted numbers of unemployed claimants.

[2] Unemployed claimants expressed as a percentage of the work force. 1987 rates use the 1988 work force, 1992 rates use 1991 work force figures.

	Valleys		*Wales*	
	Number	*Rate*	*Number*	*Rate*
1990				
January	24,764	10·3	90,349	6·9
February	24,183	10·0	88,851	6·8
March	23,797	9·9	86,638	6·6
April	23,474	9·8	84,557	6·5
May	22,922	9·5	81,194	6·2
June	22,417	9·3	79,103	6·1
July	23,146	9·6	83,202	6·4
August	23,330	9·7	84,609	6·5
September	23,647	9·8	85,858	6·6
October	23,411	9·7	86,030	6·6
November	24,052	10·0	89,923	6·9
December	25,559	10·6	95,662	7·3
1991				
January	27,077	11·1	101,452	7·8
February	27,746	11·4	104,889	8·1
March	28,995	11·9	108,049	8·3

	Valleys		Wales	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
April	30,309	12·5	110,504	8·5
May	30,274	12·5	110,237	8·5
June	30,144	12·4	109,783	8·4
July	31,557	13·0	115,993	8·9
August	31,635	13·0	118,469	9·1
September	31,751	13·1	118,952	9·1
October	30,808	12·7	117,089	9·0
November	31,130	12·8	119,696	9·2
December	31,987	13·2	122,910	9·4
1992				
January	33,469	13·8	128,755	9·9
February	32,934	13·6	128,105	9·8
March	32,271	13·3	125,871	9·7
April	32,200	13·3	125,661	9·7
May	31,443	12·9	122,902	9·4
June	30,845	12·7	120,512	9·3
July	31,438	12·9	125,156	9·6
August	31,901	13·1	128,391	9·9
September	32,310	13·3	129,317	9·9

Source: Employment Department

Disabled Facilities Grants

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will allocate disabled facilities grants expenditure by local authorities, under the heading of supplementary credit approvals.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I shall be taking decisions on the 1993-94 allocations for housing capital provision in due course.

Abandoned Mines

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what provision he will be making for public inspection of the duplicates of the British Coal abandoned mine records in Wales at his office; what charge will be made for consulting and copying thereof; what account he has taken of the present British Coal charges for the same service; what consultations he has had with the local planning authorities and construction industry professional groups; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Extensive consultations took place with interested parties prior to the publication of Command Paper 2034. The duplicate copy of the catalogue of plans is available for public inspection in the land use records office of my Department in Cardiff. There is no charge for this service.

Caldicot Levels

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on progress achieved in the survey of alternative feeding grounds for wading birds on the Caldicot levels, being undertaken for the Cardiff Bay development corporation; and what provisions he has made of compulsory purchase powers for land assembly.

Mr. David Hunt: The current feasibility study into alternative mitigation measures for birds is in line with the advice of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Countryside Council for Wales. The study is examining the creation of a variety of wetland habitats. The consultants carrying out the study have made an interim presentation and will be making their final report later this year. Cardiff Bay Development Corporation commissioned the study jointly with the Land Authority for Wales. I have made no special provisions for compulsory purchase powers, though the land authority has such powers itself.

Usk Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the Government policy on the Usk barrage proposal.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: When the River Usk Barrage Bill was given a Second Reading in another place on 13 July the Government indicated that they had no objection in principle to the powers being sought by Newport borough council. The borough council has now withdrawn the Private Bill and has indicated that it will consider seeking the necessary authority for the construction of the barrage through the order-making provisions of the Transport and Works Act 1992. In view of my possible involvement in the consideration of the Usk barrage proposal under these provisions it would not be appropriate for me to comment.

Severn Bridge Tolls

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to introduce amendments to the Severn Bridges Act 1992 in order to reduce the levels of tolls.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Government have no plans to reduce the level of tolls at the Severn bridge from the amounts already provided for under the Severn Bridges Act 1992.

Carers in Wales

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of carers in Wales are currently over the age of 65 years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There is no centrally held information on the ages of carers in Wales. The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys carried out a study in 1985 and published results for Great Britain[1] which showed that 19 per cent. of male carers and 17 per cent of female carers were aged 65 or over.

[1] Informal Carers: a study carried out on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Security as part of the 1985 General Household Survey.

Means-tested Education Benefits

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children in Wales qualified for free school meals, uniform or clothing grants and other means-tested educational benefits in 1990-91 and 1991-92; and if he will also provide these figures as a percentage of the total school roll.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The number of pupils who qualified for free school meals in 1990-91 and 1991-92 is as follows:

	1990-91	*1991-92*
Number of Pupils	75,753	87,913
Expressed as the percentage of total on roll	16·1	18·5

Information on uniform or clothing grants and other means-tested educational benefits is not held centrally.

Higher Education Academic Staff

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to set up a pay review body for Welsh higher education academic staff.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None.

Raw Milk

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the new arrangements for the sale of raw milk off farms in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The labelling and testing requirements introduced in 1990 for the sale of raw milk appear to be working well. Interested parties have been consulted on the Milk Marketing Board's proposals for the future of milk marketing. I am considering the responses.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he intends regularly to publish a list of schools considering grant-maintained status.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No.

Roads

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning his policy on strategic roads in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend's policy on roads is set out in "Roads in Wales: Progress and Plans for the 1990s", the 1992 Supplement and in the Welsh Office Department Report (Cm. 1916).

Wages

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of the *(a)* male and *(b)* female Welsh work force receive wages below the national average.

Mr. David Hunt: In April 1992, the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time employees in Great Britain was £304·60.

Information from the April 1992 new earnings survey shows that the proportion of full-time male employees in Wales (on adult rates whose pay was unaffected by absence) earning less than £300 per week was 59·3 per cent. (GB 51·3 per cent.).

The proportion of full-time female employees in Wales earning under £300 per week was 80·9 per cent. (GB 75·9 per cent.).

In interpreting the figures for Wales, it should be borne in mind that because of the shape of the earnings distribution, the percentage of the work force receiving less than national average earnings is more than 50 per cent. even for Great Britain as a whole.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many employees in Blaenau Gwent *(a)* are paid less than £3·40 per hour, *(b)* have weekly or hourly earnings falling below 68 per cent. of adult mean earnings and *(c)* have weekly earnings which do not exceed the lower earnings limit for national insurance liability.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is not available below county level.

Industrial and Economic Development

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take measures to maintain industrial and economic development in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I have today published my consultation paper on the Welsh Economic Council, which I am placing in the Vote Office and the Library of the House. I have also arranged to send a copy to every Member representing Welsh constituencies.

DEFENCE

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what financial provisions, and how much, he has made within his Department in order to look at the potential for deregulation of each of the regulatory measures for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Aitken: My Department's contribution to the Government's deregulation initiative will be provided from within existing resources.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will ask the working group on safety of United Kingdom nuclear weapons to review immediately the procedures for dealing with accidents involving nuclear weapons.

Mr. Aitken: In their report of the 13 July, the working group noted that there are well-developed procedures for dealing with accidents involving nuclear weapons. We regularly practise these arrangments which are overseen by the nuclear weapons safety committee, my Department's permanently constituted senior source of independent advice on nuclear weapon safety.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to cease production of plutonium and highly enriched uranium in the United Kingdom, as part of Her Majesty's Government's efforts to halt nuclear weapon proliferation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 16 July, *Official Report*, column *932-33.*

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he is yet in a position to publish his Department's scientists' review of nuclear weapon safety, with particular reference to accidents involving nuclear weapons road convoys; and if he will make a statement;

(2) further to his answer on 12 June, *Official Report*, column *317*, if he is yet in a position to publish his Department's scientists' review into the safety of nuclear warheads in the wake of the Drell report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 13 July at column *521*, in which publication of the working group's report was announced.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his current estimate of the date of decision on the formal tenders for contractorisation of the Atomic Weapons Establishment pursuant to the passage of the Atomic Weapons Establishment Act 1991 and his letter of 4 June 1992 to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West.

Mr. Aitken: We expect to announce the successful tenderer in early 1993.

RAF Stations

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many of the RAF personnel transferred from RAF Brawdy to RAF Valley will be accommodated in MOD property;

(2) how many of the RAF personnel that will be transferred from RAF Brawdy to RAF Chivenor will be accommodated in MOD property.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All those transferring to both stations will eventually be accommodated in MOD property.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many RAF personnel are planned to be transferred from RAF Brawdy to *(a)* RAF Chivenor, *(b)* RAF Valley and *(c)* elsewhere;

(2) how many RAF personnel have been transferred from RAF Brawdy to *(a)* RAF Chivenor, *(b)* RAF Valley and *(c)* elsewhere following the ending of tactical weapons training at RAF Brawdy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Twenty seven RAF personnel from Brawdy out of an eventual total of 41 have already transferred to RAF Chivenor and 30 out of an eventual total of 44 have been transferred to RAF Valley; 161 service men have been posted elsewhere out of an eventual total of 394.

RAF Stations

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many MOD properties in the vicinity of RAF Valley have been sold in the last (a) 10 years, (b) five years and (c) three years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Sixty-seven have been sold in the past 10 years—two in 1983, five in 1991 and 60 in 1992.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many MOD properties in the vicinity of RAF Chivenor have been sold in the last (a) 10 years, (b) five years and (c) three years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his best estimate of increased accommodation costs to his Department as a result of the transfer of former RAF Brawdy personnel to (a) RAF Chivenor and (b) RAF Valley.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The estimated cost in excess rent allowance thus far is £5,500 at RAF Chivenor and £1,500 at RAF Valley.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many of the RAF personnel already transferred from RAF Brawdy to RAF Valley have been accommodated in MOD property;

(2) how many of the RAF personnel already transferred from RAF Brawdy to RAF Chivenor have been accommodated in MOD property.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Of those personnel already transferred from RAF Brawdy, 11 have been accommodated in MOD property at RAF Chivenor and 23 at RAF Valley.

Corporal Mark Travis

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for St. Helens, North, sent to him on 18 June concerning the imprisonment of RAF Corporal Mark Travis.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence wrote to the hon. Member on 28 July.

Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the future military requirement for the Queen Elizabeth military hospital;

(2) if he will have discussions with the South East Thames health authority about the future availability of the Queen Elizabeth military hospital.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The future requirement for all service hospitals in the United Kingdom, including the Queen Elizabeth military hospital, is still under review. There have, however, been exploratory talks with the South East Thames regional health authority.

Cambodia

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* armed service and *(b)* civilian observers from his Department are currently with the United Nations transitionary authority in Cambodia: what are their rank; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are currently 121 UK military personnel in the United Nations transitionary authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). The full breakdown by service and rank is as follows:

	no.
Royal Navy:	
Lieutenant Commander	1
Lieutenant	6
Warrant Officer	1
Chief Petty Officer	17
Petty Officer	20
Leading Hand	6
Royal Marines:	
Captain	5
Colour Sergeant	1
Sergeant	14
Army:	
Lieutenant Colonel	8
Major	15
Captain	11
Staff Sergeant	2
Sergeant	2
Corporal	7

	no.
Royal Air Force:	
Wing Commander	1
Squadron Leader	1
Flight Lieutenant	3

No civilians from my Department are serving with UNTAC in Cambodia at present.

Low Flying

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is yet in a position to measure the noise levels generated by the F-15E aircraft at low level; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A trial to measure the noise generated by the F-15E aircraft at low level took place in September and the information obtained is being analysed.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by date for the last 12 months the number of complaints of alleged illegal low flying by army helicopters which have been received at Royal Air Force Pitreavie; what were the comparable total figures for *(a)* 12 months, *(b)* 24 months, *(c)* 36 months and *(d)* 48 months ago; how many complaints have subsequently been substantiated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Only one complaint has been received by RAF Pitreavie about low flying by an Army helicopter in the past four years.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list *(a)* by date and *(b)* by location the number of complaints of alleged illegal low flying by Army helicopters that have been received in the eastern district in the last 12 months; what were the comparable total figures for (i) 12 months, (ii) 24 months, (iii) 36 months and (iv) 48 months ago; how many complaints have subsequently been substantiated; and if he will indicate the helicopter squadrons concerned and the types of helicopter involved.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information is not held in the form requested.

Air Crash, North Sea

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the result of the air accident report into the Royal Air Force Buccaneer which crashed into the North sea on 9 July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The RAF board of inquiry into this incident is not yet complete. My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will forward a copy of the military aircraft accident summary to the hon. Member as soon as this is available.

Air Misses

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the result of the air accident report on the two Tornado F3 jets from Royal Air Force Leeming which were involved in a mid-air incident over Alnwick, Northumberland on 16 July; what was the nature of the sorties being carried out; at what height were the aircraft flying at the time of the incident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The RAF board of inquiry into this incident, which took place some 10 nautical miles west of Alnwick, is not yet complete. My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member in due course with a summary of its findings. The aircraft were practising interceptions at some 2,000 feet above ground level when the incident occurred.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the results of the Civil Aviation Authority investigation into the near air-miss over Lincolnshire on 19 August, involving Royal Air Force Tornado aircraft and a civilian light aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This incident is under investigation by the joint airmiss section of the National Air Traffic Services and will then be considered by the joint airmiss working group. My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will forward the hon. Member a copy of the group's findings as soon as these are available.

"Riders"

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is yet in a position to give the costs and formal charges that are being raised by his Department for the use of the Household Cavalry giving assistance to Anglia TV during that company's production of "Riders"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A sum of £210.61 has been recovered in payment for 10 one-hour long riding lessons given to members of the cast.

Bomb Incident, Golspie

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 8 July, *Official Report*, column *184*, in respect of a practice bomb being dropped on 4 June by a United States Air Force jet on to a site of special scientific interest at Golspie, if he will send a copy of the report that his Department received from the United States Air Force to the hon. Member for Don Valley; and if he will now give full details of the amount that has been agreed in way of compensation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will write to the hon. Member regarding the United States air force report. My Department has agreed to pay some £1,000 to Sutherland Estates for time and costs incurred as a result of this incident.

US Air Bases

Mr. Redmond: To asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of *(a)* Royal Air Force Bentwaters and *(b)* Royal Air Force Woodbridge, after the US Air Force leaves these bases in 1993.

Mr. Cann: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has for the future use of the Bentwaters air base after the American departure in 1993.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It was announced locally on 21 August that the RAF had no future use for the twin US bases of RAF Bentwaters/Woodbridge. Alternative defence uses are currently being examined. Should none be identified the bases will be declared surplus and disposed of following consultation with local authorities and other interested parties.

Catterick Army Base

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the result of the short notice visit carried out by Russian military inspectors at the Catterick army base on 22 July under the CFE arms control treaty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The inspection at Catterick was carried out satisfactorily. The Russian inspection team were content with the conduct and outcome of the inspection.

Munitions Dumping

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations he has had with environmental, fishing and maritime representative organisations regarding the proposed dumping of redundant munitions off Porcupine bank; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None. Ministry of Defence sea dumping activities are consistent with international agreements and are carried out in a strictly controlled manner to ensure that they do not cause damage to the marine environment, or interfere with fishing or other legitimate uses of the sea. MOD will terminate all sea dumping of redundant munitions by 1 January 1993 in line with international agreements.

Atomic Weapons Establishment

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the final date for submission of tenders for the contractorisation of the Atomic Weapons Establishment pursuant to his letter to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West, dated 4 June.

Mr. Aitken: The final date for submission of tenders for full contractor operation of the Atomic Weapons Establishment was 1 September 1992.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evaluation he has made of the prospects for the continued use of the Nevada test site by the United Kingdom for its nuclear testing programme, following the vote in the United States Senate to restrict the use of the test site and to halt all nuclear tests by September 1996.

Mr. Aitken: The hon. Member will know that the United States Congress has now enacted legislation imposing a moratorium on nuclear testing until July 1993, with a final end to testing in 1996. The legislation provides for continued use of the Nevada test site by the United Kingdom up to that date. The position after 1996 will depend upon whether any other country tests after that date.

Electro-magnetic Pulse Phenomena

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what study he has made of the potential advantage or threat from the development of weapons utilising electro-magnetic pulse phenomena.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has been aware for many years of the effects of electro-magnetic pulse (EMP) and has conducted and sponsored research into this phenomenon. The MOD has no operational requirement at present for a weapon specifically designed to create EMP effects.

Military Personnel Overseas

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British military personnel are stationed in the United States of America; how many are located in Washington DC; and what is the estimated cost to public funds.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: On 1 October 1992 there were 403 British military personnel based in the USA at an estimated cost of some £25 million in 1992-93; 154 are located in and around the Washington DC metropolitan area and of these 54 are directly attached to the British embassy.

Army Personnel Centre

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is considering York currently as a potential location for some or all of the staff of the proposed integrated Army personnel centre; and when he intends to make a decision about which location or locations will be used for this centre.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: York is one of a number of sites under consideration. The report examining the case for establishing an Army personnel centre is due in November, and I hope to be able to take a decision, subject to consultation with the trade unions, as soon as possible thereafter.

United Nations

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the countries where troops from member countries of the European Community are stationed under the mandate of the United Nations, stating which those countries are and the size and nature of the commitment.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table. EC military contributions cover a wide variety of tasks including the provision of infantry, monitors and observers, and logistics, medical and communications units. The provision of more detailed information on individual contingents would involve disproportionate cost and effort.

EC military contributions to UN operations as at 30 September 1992 (numbers of personnel)

	Cyprus UNFICYP	*Cambodia UNTAC*	*W. Sahara MINURSO*	*Iraq/Kuwait UNIKOM*	*Croatia UNPROFOR I*	*Bosnia*[*] *UNPROFOR II*
Belgium		2			620	100
Denmark	352			44	900	110
France		1,187	30	15	2,619	2,000
Germany		125				
Greece			1			
Ireland	8		6			
Italy			6			
Luxembourg			40			
Netherlands					1,244	400
Portugal[†]						
Spain		2		5		400
United Kingdom	789	121	15	15	360	2,400

	Lebanon UNIFIL	*Jerusalem UNTSO*	*El Salvador ONUSAL*	*India/Pakistan UNMOGIP*	*Angola UNAVEM*
Belgium		2		2	
Denmark		11	7	7	
France	500	24			
Germany					
Greece			7		
Ireland	755	20	8		15
Italy	52	8	5	8	
Luxembourg					
Netherlands		15			15
Portugal[2]					
Spain					15
United Kingdom					

[1] Estimates of contributions pledged but not necessarily deployed.

[2] Have offered a surgical team for UNPROFOR II. Precise numbers not yet known.

Research Establishments

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the full texts of announcements or statements made by the Ministry of Defence since 16 July in relation to the defence research establishments.

Mr. Aitken: I have asked the chief executive of the Defence Research Agency to place copies of all of his agency's press releases since 16 July in the Library of the House.

Antares

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether Admiral in Chief Fleet has yet completed consideration of what further disciplinary action is necessary following the sinking of the Antares; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The commander in chief has completed his consideration of whether further disciplinary action is appropriate and in the light of this and legal advice has concluded that there are no grounds for disciplinary action against any other members of the crew of HMS Trenchant.

Kuwaiti Tank Contract

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the decision by the Kuwaiti Government to award their tank contract to a US supplier; and what estimate he has made of the consequences to Vickers.

Mr. Aitken: My department has not received any official notification of a decision by the Government of Kuwait to buy M1A2 in preference to Challenger 2.

Bosnia

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current deployment of the forces assigned for convoy support in Bosnia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The principal elements comprising the United Kingdom's contribution to UNPROFOR II, shortly to deploy to Bosnia, are 1st Battalion Cheshire Regiment, 2nd Battalion Royal Irish Regiment, 9th/12th Royal Lancers and 35 Engineer Regiment who are all based in Germany. The rest, the support element, are drawn from forces based in Germany and the United Kingdom.

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current position regarding the involvement of the Governments of *(a)* Germany, *(b)* Italy and *(c)* Spain in the European fighter aircraft project; what further discussions he plans with the Defence Ministers of each of the three Governments; and when he expects to be able to report the full position to the House.

Mr. Aitken: All four partners are continuing to participate in the development phase of EFA which is proceeding according to the previously agreed programme except that, as agreed by the four Governments on 4 August, no new contracts are being let while studies into ways of reducing the cost of the programme are in progress. Germany has indicated that it does not intend to join the production phase of the project as presently proposed but it was not the intention in any case to take decisions on production until mid-1993 at the earliest.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State plans to meet his German, Italian and Spanish colleagues in December to discuss the results of the studies commissioned on 4 August. My right hon. and learned Friend will report to the House when there are any significant developments.

Procurement

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* all statements made by the Ministry of Defence on defence procurement matters since 16 July.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has issued three press releases on defence procurement matters since 16 July:

a. 21 July, on greater competition in defence procurement;

b. 29 July, on the seeking of tenders for a new Ocean Survey vessel;

c. 2 August, on a £300 million contract award to British Aerospace for Harrier training aircraft.

I will place copies of these in the Library of the House.

Trident

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to complete his consideration of the arrangements for refitting and servicing Trident submarines; if he will make the outcome public through an oral statement in the House; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Consideration of the options for the future arrangements for refitting Trident submarines is continuing. I hope that we shall be in a position to announce proposals before the end of the year. The House will be kept informed.

North Channel Incident

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has about the incident in the north channel involving the USS Sturgeon and the FV Lupina; what action is being taken in relation to this incident; and if he will make a statement

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The submarine USS Sturgeon snagged the nets of the FV Lupina at approximately 10.00 pm on 16 September while operating submerged in the Clyde submarine exercise areas. The submarine surfaced and contacted the fishing vessel to ensure that the boat and her crew were safe. There were no injuries and the fishing vessel was able to proceed under its own power. The submarine's presence had been notified under the SUBFACTS arrangements and the crew of the US submarine were briefed on the operating procedures to be observed when in the proximity of fishing vessels. The incident is currently being investigated by the US authorities. When their report has been completed, we will consider whether any changes to procedures, beyond those already discussed with the fishing industry in the fishing industry safety group, are warranted.

Search and Rescue

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the result of his consideration of the search and rescue services in Scotland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I hope to make an announcement about the future provision of military search and rescue around the UK very shortly.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what financial provisions, and how much, he has made within his Department in order to look at the potential for deregulation of each of the regulatory measures for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Burt: The Department's deregulation activities are co-ordinated by a departmental deregulation unit which is staffed by a senior executive officer, with management and clerical support. In addition, other parts of the Department assess, as necessary, the impact on business of policy and procedures for which they are responsible and the potential for deregulation. Separate figures on the cost of this activity are not available.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what assessment he has made of the number of staff required to deal with the present level of claims for disability living allowance; and how many are actually in post;

(2) how many staff have been transferred from the invalid care allowance unit to the disability living allowance unit to assist in dealing with claims since January 1991; and if he will list the dates of transfer and the number transferred on each of those dates;

(3) whether staff transferred from the invalid care allowance unit to the disability living allowance unit to assist in dealing with claims will return to their previous post once the backlog has been reduced.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He wrote to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many people in the Warwickshire, North constituency submitted claims for disability living allowance more than three months ago whose claims are still outstanding;

(2) how many claims for disability living allowance from people living in north Warwickshire are still outstanding; and what is the anticipated average length of time before they will be determined.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for *(a)* the care component, *(b)* the mobility component and *(c)* both components of disability living allowance have been received in each month to date; how many were decided in each month; and how many remained outstanding at the end of each month.

Mr. Scott: The information for *(a)* and *(b)* is not available in the form requested.

	DLA claims received	*DLA claims decided*[1]	*DLA claims outstanding*
February	72,000	2,000	71,000
March	124,000	15,000	179,000
April	68,000	22,000	225,000
May	59,000	32,000	251,000
June	47,000	48,000	248,000
July	44,000	66,000	221,000
August	41,000	71,000	185,000
September	44,000	78,000	148,000

Notes:

[1] Claims decided = awards plus refusals; does not include cases withdrawn, defective or otherwise disposed of. Includes new and top up claims. Rounded to nearest thousand.

All figures are provisional and may be subject to amendment.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will list, in monthly order, the number of claimants still awaiting for their claims to be actioned by his Department's disability living allowance unit in Blackpool; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list by month for the last 12 months the number of claims that have been actioned by his Department's disability living allowance unit in Blackpool; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list for the last 12 months the average time taken by his Department's disability living allowance unit in Blackpool to complete a claim; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He wrote to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of claims for disability living allowance were cleared in 30 days in each month to date at each disability benefit centre; and what was the success rate for claims at each centre.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He wrote to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to allow people of all ages to apply for disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to amend the age conditions for claiming disability living allowance.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of the decisions on claims for each component of disability living allowance in each month to date were favourable; how many awards were made at each rate and, for those which were unfavourable, what were the reasons for refusal.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

New claims—number of awards made

February	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*
1,100	7,700	8,800	11,000	15,400	26,200	25,900	30,100

Reasons for refusal[1]	86 per cent on disability grounds. 13·5 per cent on age grounds. 0·5 per cent on other grounds.

Rate of awards (February—September)	
Higher rate care only	4,300
Middle rate care only	6,100
Lower rate care only	12,600
Higher rate mobility only	35,100
Lower rate mobility only	9,600
Higher rate care and higher rate mobility	14,400
Higher rate care and lower rate mobility	2,800
Middle rate care and higher rate mobility	7,800
Middle rate care and lower rate mobility	6,700
Lower rate care and higher rate mobility	12,900
Lower rate care and lower rate mobility	13,900

Top up claims from existing beneficiaries of AA and MobA—number of awards made

February	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*
200	2,600	5,600	11,800	18,500	18,700	21,400	19,700

Reasons for refusal[1]	99·5 per cent. on disability grounds. 0·5 per cent. on age/other grounds.

Rate of awards (February—September)	
Higher rate care	3,800
Middle rate care	13,000
Lower rate care	34,100
Higher rate mobility	5,300
Lower rate mobility	42,200

Notes:

[1] Percentage of those cases where a reason for refusal was recorded.

All figures have been rounded to nearest hundred. Figures should be treated as provisional and may be subject to amendment.

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list, by parliamentary constituency, the number of applications for disability living allowance so far approved under the new regulations and the number of applications still outstanding; and if he will indicate the average length of time between application and approval.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Mr Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the meeting of the chief executive of the Benefits Agency about his meeting in September with representatives of disability organisations to discuss their complaints about the administration of the disability living allowance; when he now expects the agency's backlog of work on the processing of claims to be cleared.

Mr. Scott: We do not receive formal reports of the meetings attended by Mr Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He wrote to the hon. Member about this and the administration of disability living allowance. Copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what study he has made of complaints to the Benefits Agency about delays in processing claims for the disability living allowance; how many of such complaints he and the agency received in each whole month since claims for the allowance were invited; what action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He wrote to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information office.

Attendance and Mobility Allowance

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for attendance or mobility allowance under review or subject to appeal have been waiting for up to 18 months to be determined.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Mr Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Road Accident Compensation

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what efforts are being undertaken by his Department to ensure improved compensation settlements and speedy decisions on benefit entitlement for victims of road accidents.

Miss Widdecombe: Decisions on benefit entitlement are made as quickly as possible. The Benefits Agency customer charter defines the standards of service and the clearance times which its customers can expect. The agency is continually looking for ways to improve its service.

The Department cannot intervene in settlement negotiations between the accident victim and the compensator.

Social Fund

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the total numbers of maternity payments made from the social fund in Wales in 1989-90 and 1990-91; and what was the total value of the payments made in each year.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He wrote to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Lone Parents

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much in total has been deducted from social security benefits paid to lone parents as a direct result of the new regulations on maintenance payments.

Mr. Burt: The new child support scheme and its associated regulations do not come into force until 5 April 1993.

Lone Parents

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will make it his policy to strengthen regulations to prevent harassment of lone parents by social security officials to name and pursue absent parents for maintenance payments;

(2) if he will make it his policy to replace the current benefits penalty on lone mothers refusing to co-operate with the Child Support Agency in detecting fathers with a small disregard in income support.

Mr. Burt: There is currently no requirement for a mother to name the father of her child when claiming benefits, though more than three-quarters of never-married mothers do so voluntarily. I have recently reinforced guidelines to social security offices to ensure best possible practice in relation to sensitive inquiries. From April 1993, when the Child Support Agency becomes operational, there will be a legal requirement for parents getting prescribed benefits to co-operate in obtaining maintenance for their children, unless compliance would risk causing harm or undue distress to the parent with care or to any child living with her.

A disregard of maintenance, in income support, would not be helpful for the majority of lone parents, who want to work now or in the near future.

We have no plans to change our policy on these matters.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to restore the real value of one-parent benefit to its 1990 level.

Mr. Burt: No. All lone parents gained at least £2 a week (extra) from last year's increase in child benefit, and from April this year we increased both child benefit and one parent benefit in line with prices.

Child Benefit

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to restore the value of child benefit to its 1985 level.

Mr. Burt: No, although child benefit will of course remain the cornerstone of our policies for family support and will continue to be paid to all families in respect of all children.

Benefit Offices, Manchester

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will list which of his Department's benefit offices in Greater Manchester have underspent their budgets so far this year for *(a)* emergency payments and *(b)* emergency loans; and which have overspent;

(2) which benefit offices in Greater Manchester consider that being forced out of the family home by domestic

violence is sufficiently high a priority to warrant the payment of a grant to provide furniture to establish a new home; and which have set criteria which restrict any help in such circumstances to a loan.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He wrote to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Income Support

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total number of people over the age of 60 years in Wales who are currently in receipt of income support.

Mr. Burt: The number of claimants and their partners over age 60 receiving income support in Wales is 98,000.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many young people between the ages of 18 years and 24 years and living away from home are currently in receipt of the full over 25 years rate of income support.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 2 June at col. *483*.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many, and what percentage, of working claimants have had their income support withdrawn as a consequence of the introduction of the 16-hour rule in (a) Ebbw Vale benefit office, (b) Abertillery benefit office, (c) Wales and (d) England.

Mr. Burt: No one who was working, or whose partner was working, between 16 and 24 hours a week and receiving income support at the point of change has had that benefit withdrawn as a consequence of the change in the hours threshold in income support and family credit, unless he has claimed family credit and receives more than he did from income support.

Vaccine Damage

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to introduce proposals to amend the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979 to allow discretion in awarding payments outside the established time limits to those who were not aware of the provisions of the Act.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so. The time limits in the scheme are already generous. Claims can be made within the six years following vaccination or, in the case of a child vaccinated before the age of two, the six years following the second birthday. To extend the time limits for claiming would increase the problems of obtaining medical and other relevant evidence, making it more difficult to confirm entitlement.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what research on invalidity benefit is being carried out by or for his Department; and when it is due for completion.

Mr. Scott: The Department has commissioned a programme of research about the growth in the numbers of people receiving invalidity benefit. The programme consists of a number of related studies: a small scale preliminary study of invalidity benefit recipients and GPs; large scale surveys of current recipients and new claimants; a comparative study of the growth of incapacity benefit caseloads in the UK and other countries; and an in-depth study of the GP's role in relation to the benefit. Field work for some of these studies was completed earlier in the year; other elements are expected to be completed in the course of 1993.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households in the constituency of Caernarfon qualify for payments under the cold weather payments scheme.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He wrote to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households in Birmingham, Northfield qualify for payments under the cold weather payments scheme.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the Social Fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He wrote to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many householders in the Birmingham, Yardley constituency qualify for payments under the cold weather payments scheme.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He wrote to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Benefits, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each of the benefits for which his Department is responsible in the Doncaster area during the current 12 months, the percentage of claimants who were successful in their claim; and if he will give comparative figures for *(a)* 24 months, *(b)* 36 months and *(c)* 48 months ago.

Mr. Burt: The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He wrote to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library.

Disability Payments

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to grant payments of severe disability income support premiums regardless of whether the claimant is living alone.

Mr. Burt: No. The disability or higher pensioner premiums are included in the calculation of income support, housing benefit or community charge benefit for disabled people, whether or not they live alone. The severe disability premium is, and always has been, intended to give additional help to those severely disabled people who, because they live independently and do not have a carer receiving invalid care allowance, are most likely to need to rely on bought-in care. We have no plans to change this policy.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated cost for 1992-93 of *(a)* disability living allowance and *(b)* disability working allowance, respectively.

Mr. Scott: The estimated costs were published in the 1992 departmental report. These figures will be revised in due course to reflect actual experience of the new benefits.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for *(a)* disability working allowance and *(b)* disability living allowance received from claimants in Wales are still awaiting a decision; what is the average delay in processing such claims; and what are the comparable figures for England and Scotland.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability working allowance and disability living allowance are a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He wrote to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for *(a)* disability working allowance and *(b)* disability living allowance have been received from residents in Blaenau Gwent; if he will publish a breakdown of how many of these claims have resulted in an award, been unsuccessful or are still awaiting a decision; and how many awards are actually in payment.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in *(a)* Blaenau Gwent and *(b)* Wales have received payments from the disabled living fund.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested. However, on 6 October the independent living fund had 97 clients in Gwent and 877 in Wales as a whole.

Disability Working Allowance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of the decisions on claims for disability working allowance, in each month to date, were favourable; and for those which were unfavourable, what were the reasons for refusal.

Mr. Scott: The information requested on decisions for each month is as follows:

	March	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*
Awards made	162	314	317	295	296	284	446
Claims disallowed	3,046	3,534	2,349	2,402	2,545	1,675	1,300

The information requested about reasons for refusal is extracted from an analysis of weekly data and converted to monthly periods:

	March	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*
Not in remunerative work	1,669	2,253	1,339	1,362	1,728	984	684
Income exceeds DWA level	118	314	268	274	379	245	253
No qualifying benefit	578	1,289	548	453	632	395	393
Other reasons	287	189	75	69	82	51	60

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for disability working allowance have been received in each month to date; how many were decided in each month; how many remained outstanding at the end of each month; and what were the comparable numbers expected before the benefit commenced.

Mr. Scott: The information requested for each month is as follows:

	March	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*
Claims received	4,153	4,124	2,570	2,700	2,344	2, 081	2,085
Claims decided	3,208	3,848	2,666	2,697	2,841	1,959	1,746
Claims outstanding	870	1,011	834	743	678	693	758

The claims outstanding at the end of each month are awaiting the outcome of further enquiries about the claim; there have been no delays in dealing with claims.

Information was not available before the benefit commenced to make a reliable estimate of the number of claims which might be expected.

Pensions

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to consult further on the equalisation of the state pension age for men and women; and if he will indicate the expected timetable for progress.

Miss Widdecombe: We have been meeting the representatives of various interested organisations and while doing so have continued to receive representations which arrived after the consultation period finished on June 30. After considering the views expressed, we will announce our proposals in due course.

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will introduce proposals to amend the Social Security Act 1975 relating specifically to the Persons Abroad Regulations SI 1975/563 so that those of ethnic minority backgrounds who leave Britain to live abroad permanently have their pensions index-linked;

(2) if he will make a statement concerning the countries excluded from index-linked pension increases to individuals.

Miss Widdecombe: We have no plans to amend the regulations in the way suggested. Annual pension increases are payable to British pensioners living in 32 countries outside Great Britain. We have no plans to extend payment of such increases to pensioners living elsewhere.

Severe Hardship Payments

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many severe hardship payments were awarded to young people *(a)* living at home with their parents and *(b)* living away from home, in each year since 1988-89.

Mr. Burt: The available information is in the table. Details of housing status were first collected from December 1990.

Awards of Severe Hardship

	at home	*away from home*
December 1990—March 1991	1,440	8,387
April 1991—March 1992	11,548	43,289
April 1992—August 1992	10,388	26,119

Source: Severe Hardship Claims Unit

Child Support

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if guidelines will be given to social security officers to ensure that exemptions from naming fathers under the Child Support Act 1991 are granted with consistency.

Mr. Burt: Guidance and training will be given.

Departmental Staff

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the staffing levels in his Department's offices in *(a)* Mid-Derbyshire and *(b)* South Derbyshire in 1990-91 and 1991-92 and what they will be in 1992-93, broken down by benefit type and by grade of staff.

Mr. Burt: The resourcing of offices are matters for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive of the Contributions Agency and Ms. Ros Heppelwhite, the chief executive of the child support unit. I have asked Mr. Michael Bichard to reply.

Christmas Bonus

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what the level of the Christmas bonus would have been in 1992 if it had been increased annually at *(a)* the rate of increase in prices and *(b)* the rate of increase in earnings.

Miss Widdecombe: The Christmas bonus, which is paid regardless of need and which no Government have increased, would now be worth £62·30 had it been increased annually since 1972 in line with prices; £87·90 had it been increased annually in line with average earnings.

Fraud

Ms. Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people were successfully prosecuted for social security fraud in the London borough of Camden between January and December 1991.

Miss Widdecombe: The investigation of social security benefit fraud is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He wrote to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Ms. Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what definitions he intends to use and what guidelines he intends to produce to enable his Department's staff to distinguish between a scrounger and a genuine social security claimant.

Mr. Burt: Parliament has laid down the conditions of entitlement to benefit. Decisions on entitlement to benefit are taken by independent adjudication officers. It is for the chief adjudication officer, rather than the Secretary of State, to advise how they should interpret the legislation.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the totals of money recovered as a result of social security fraud investigations in the past 10 years; and what sums were recovered in each of the past 10 years expressed as a percentage of the numbers of staff employed to detect fraud.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not held. However, the Benefits Agency fraud investigations in 1991-92 employed 2,853 staff at a cost of £62·7 million and detected fraud to the estimated value of £416 million.

Child Benefit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, whether he will publish tables similar to those in his answer of 11 May, *Official Report,* columns *43-44,* showing the combined value of child benefit and child dependency increases, including figures for April 1992 and showing equivalent values at April 1992 instead of 1991 prices.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the tables.

National insurance widows and invalidity pensioners

A	B	C	D		E			
Uprating date	*Rate of child benefit plus child dependency increases*	*Equivalent value of column B amounts at April 1992 prices*	*Gross male weekly average earnings, with amounts in column B as percentage*		*Equivalent weekly earnings net of income tax and National Insurance contributions, with amounts in column B as percentage*			
					Single person		*Married couple*	
	£	£	£	*Per cent.*	£	*Per cent.*	£	*Per cent.*
November 1979	11·10	25·57	114·10	(9·7)	79·90	(13·9)	83·60	(13·3)
November 1980	12·25	24·47	135·10	(9·1)	93·40	(13·1)	97·80	(12·5)
November 1981	12·95	23·11	149·50	(8·7)	101·00	(12·8)	105·40	(12·3)
November 1982	13·80	23·17	160·60	(8·6)	107·40	(12·8)	112·50	(12·3)
November 1983	14·10	22·58	172·40	(8·2)	115·50	(12·2)	121·30	(11·6)
November 1984	14·50	22·13	187·40	(7·7)	125·90	(11·5)	132·50	(10·9)
November 1985	15·05	21·78	199·50	(7·5)	134·40	(11·2)	141·60	(10·6)
July 1986	15·15	21·56	210·90	(7·2)	143·80	(10·5)	151·20	(10·0)
April 1987	15·30	20·86	224·00	(6·8)	155·90	(9·8)	163·00	(9·4)
April 1988	15·65	20·53	245·80	(6·4)	174·80	(9·0)	182·00	(8·6)
April 1989	16·20	19·67	269·50	(6·0)	191·30	(8·5)	198·90	(8·1)
April 1990	16·90	18·75	295·60	(5·7)	212·80	(7·9)	221·10	(7·6)
April 1991	[1]17·95	18·72	318·90	(5·6)	230·00	(7·8)	238·30	(7·5)
October 1991	[2]18·95	19·47	330·00	(5·7)	237·20	(8·0)	245·50	(7·7)
October 1991	[3]18·20	18·70	330·00	(5·5)	237·20	(7·7)	245·50	(7·4)
April 1992	[2]19·40	19·40	337·50	(5·7)	235·30	(8·2)	301·30	(6·4)
April 1992	[3]18·65	18·65	337·50	(5·5)	235·30	(7·9)	301·30	(6·2)

[1] Where the new higher rate of child benefit for the eldest qualifying child applied, the child dependency increase was adjusted so that the total level of support remained the same for all children.

[2] Rate for the eldest or only child.

[3] Rate for each other child.

War widows

A	B	C	D		E			
Uprating date	*Rate of child benefit plus war widow's child's allowance*	*Equivalent value of column B amounts at April 1992 prices*	*Gross male weekly average earnings, with amounts in column B as percentage*		*Equivalent weekly earnings net of income tax and National Insurance contributions, with amounts in column B as percentage*			
					Single person		*Married couple*	
	£	£	£	*Per cent.*	£	*Per cent.*	£	*Per cent.*
November 1979	14·00	32·25	114·10	(12·3)	79·90	(17·5)	83·60	(16·7)
November 1980	15·35	30·66	135·10	(11·4)	93·40	(16·4)	97·80	(15·7)
November 1981	16·10	28·73	149·50	(10·8)	101·00	(15·9)	105·40	(15·3)
November 1982	17·10	28·71	160·60	(10·6)	107·40	(15·9)	112·50	(15·2)
November 1983	17·45	27·95	172·40	(10·1)	115·50	(15·1)	121·30	(14·4)
November 1984	17·90	27·32	187·40	(9·6)	125·90	(14·2)	132·50	(13·5)
November 1985	18·55	26·84	199·50	(9·3)	134·40	(13·8)	141·60	(13·1)
July 1986	18·65	26·55	210·90	(8·8)	143·80	(13·0)	151·20	(12·3)
April 1987	18·85	25·70	224·00	(8·4)	155·90	(12·1)	163·00	(11·6)
April 1988	19·25	25·25	245·80	(7·8)	174·80	(11·0)	182·00	(10·6)
April 1989	19·85	24·10	269·50	(7·4)	191·30	(10·4)	198·90	(10·0)
April 1990	20·65	22·91	295·60	(7·0)	212·80	(9·7)	221·10	(9·3)
April 1991	[1]21·90	22·84	318·90	(6·9)	230·00	(9·5)	238·30	(9·2)
October 1991	[2]22·90	23·53	330·00	(6·9)	237·20	(9·7)	245·50	(9·3)
October 1991	[3]22·15	22·76	333·00	(6·7)	237·20	(9·3)	245·50	(9·0)
April 1992	[2]23·40	23·40	337·50	(6·9)	235·30	(9·9)	301·30	(7·8)
April 1992	[3]22·65	22·65	337·50	(6·7)	235·30	(9·6)	301·30	(7·5)

[1] Where the new higher rate of child benefit for the eldest qualifying child applied, the war widow's child's allowance was adjusted so that the total level of support remained the same for all children.

[2] Rate for the eldest or only child.

[3] Rate for each other child.

Benefits

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to substitute selectivity for the principle of universality as the basis for payment of any social security benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: None.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Ecu Loan

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the ecu worth in sterling at the time that the 10 billion ecu loan was negotiated.

Mr. Nelson: The revolving credit facility agreed on 4 September was for the equivalent of ecu 5 billion. At the date of the agreement the closing ecu: sterling market rate was 1·3919 to the pound.

Currency Reserves

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the level of the currency reserves on *(a)* 14 September and *(b)* 18 September.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the level of currency reserves on *(a)* 14 September and *(b)* 16 September.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much was in the foreign reserves on 14, 15, 16 and 17 September.

Mr. Nelson: The level of the United Kingdom's foreign exchange reserves at the end of each month are published on the second working day of the next month. The level at the end of September was published on Friday 2 October. There are no plans to publish these figures more frequently.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer who audits the use of foreign exchange reserves; and when they will report on the use of the funds during the period 14 to 16 September.

Mr. Nelson: Transactions affecting the United Kingdom foreign exchange reserves are made through the exchange equalisation account. The EEA is audited by the National Audit Office. The account is not published but is certified each year by the Comptroller and Auditor General, when the accounts of the Consolidated Fund and the National Loan Fund are published.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the gain/loss from the reserves for each month from April and the total up to and including 16 September.

Mr. Nelson: The overall change in the level of the United Kingdom foreign exchange reserves at the end of each month between April and September 1992 is given in the table:

1992	*$ millions*
April	+748
May	+29
June	−104
July	+50
August	−1,300
September	−1,773

There are no plans to publish these figures more frequently.

Foreign Exchange Markets

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will now make it his practice to answer questions on the extent to which it has intervened in the foreign exchange markets in support of its exchange rate objectives.

Mr. Nelson: No.

Sterling

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment the Treasury has made as to the causes of the recent pressure on sterling and the degree to which it reflected (a) speculation and (b) underlying economic factors.

Mr. Nelson: The main underlying cause of tensions in the ERM has been the persistence of high interest rates in Germany, imposed to counter the inflationary effects of reunification, combined with the lowest interest rates in 30 years in the USA. Speculation, in the lead-up to the French referendum, caused these tensions to come to a head on 16 September.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will now accept the recommendations of Session 1988-89 from the third report of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee on international monetary co-ordination (HC 384) about making public the amount of the intervention, gains and losses to the United Kingdom Exchequer of measures to support the pound sterling.

Mr. Nelson: No.

ECOFIN

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was discussed at the last meeting of ECOFIN; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The Economic and Finance Council met twice in formal session during the Recess. The meeting on 27 July was reported to the House by means of a report deposited in the Library. The Council also met on 28 September in Brussels with the Chancellor presiding. I represented the United Kingdom. Members of the Council also met informally in Bath on 4 to 6 September.

On 28 September, the Council discussed the future financing of the Community. A majority of member states made clear that they continued to believe that the Commission's proposals were excessive and the Council was close to a consensus on the need to make cuts in the Commission's proposals for internal spending and for administration. But wide divergences of opinion remain on major items such as agriculture, cohesion, the structure of own resources, and thus the overall level of spending. There was also some discussion of the Commission's report on the United Kingdom abatement. I made clear that we would not accept any adverse change to the abatement.

The Council agreed to establish a working group of officials with the aim of enhancing the fight against fraud against the Community budget and to report back to ECOFIN in November. The Council also set a work programme for officials to examine the proposed carbon/energy tax and to report back to ECOFIN in December.

A balance of payments loan to Bulgaria was also discussed but without agreement.

The Council also discussed recent monetary events in preparation for the Special European Council.

Currency

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what matters relating to currency he discussed at the meeting he attended in Brussels on 12 and 13 September.

Mr. Nelson: The Chancellor did not attend any meetings in Brussels on 12 and 13 September.

Privatisation

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much money was spent on advertising of privatisation sales for each sale since 1979.

Mr. Dorrell: The table shows the cost to the Government of advertising in each privatisation by flotation or secondary share sale since BT. Information on the advertising costs of earlier sales is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Advertising costs in privatisations

£ million

Share Offer	*Year*	*Advertising cost (ex. VAT)*
BT	1984	9·7
Britoil	1985	3·0
Cable & Wireless	1985	2·2
British Aerospace	1985	1·7
British Gas	1986	21·4
British Airways	1987	2·8
Rolls-Royce	1987	1·6
BAA	1987	4·9
BP	1987	18·3
British Steel	1988	4·9
Water	1989	15·3
Regional Electricity Companies	1990	14·2
Generating Companies	1991	5·6
Scottish Electricity Companies	1991	5·3
BT	1991	17·1

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount of debt written off in each privatisation and sale of Government assets since 1979 for each company privatised.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's answer of 3 March, *Official Report*, col. *124*.

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current number of shareholdings in each of the companies privatised since 1979.

Mr. Dorrell: The table shows the number of shareholdings in each of the companies privatised since 1979. Where Her Majesty's Government retained a shareholding on privatisation, together with the size and date of any subsequent share disposals, this has also been shown.

Shareholdings[1] in Privatised and Former Government-Controlled Companies

Company	*Date of Privatisation*	*Size of share register*			*Proportion of shares retained by HMG percentage*	*Proportion and dates of subsequent disposals percentage*
		Initial	*Highest since Privatisation[3]*	*Current*		
British Petroleum	December 1977[2]	n/a		550,821 (31 Dec 91)	51	[4] 5·17/Nov 79: 7·12/Sep 83: 31·5/Sep 87: 0·09/Oct 90 on 1.1.91 HMG held about 1·88
British Aerospace	February 1981	27,179	120,200 (Dec 86)	87,700 (31 Dec 91)	48·43	48·43/10.5.85
Cable and Wireless	October 1981	27,320	210,994 (31 Mar 86)	166,179 (31 Mar 90)	50·64	27·54/Nov 83: 23·1/Dec 85
Amersham International	February 1982	10,051		5,243 (29 May 92)	nil	
NFC	February 1982	10,300		60,000 (Feb 92)	nil	
Britoil	November 1982	37,257	245,556 (31 Dec 85)	owned by BP	49·0	49·0/8.8.85
Associated British Ports	February 1983	37,205		14,694 (26 June 92)	48·5	48·5/17.4.84
Enterprise Oil	June 1984	13,695	14,166 (June 85)	10,811 (31 Dec 90)	nil	
Jaguar	July 1984	125,000		owned by Ford	nil[5]	
BT	November 1984	2,139,520	2,931,570 (1 Feb 92)	2,758,996 (26 Aug 92)	49·8	0·8/Dec 87: 25·9/Nov 91
British Gas	December 1986	4,407,079		2,285,325 (31 Mar 91)	3·3	1·6/Jan 90: 1·6/July 90
British Airways	February 1987	1·2m		314,039 (15 May 90)	2·5	1·0/June 87: 1·0/March 90
Rolls-Royce	May 1987	1,988,966		640,055 (31 Dec 90)	0·4	0·4 sold during 1987
BAA	July 1987	2,187,500		798,643 (1 June 90)	4·36	1·42/Aug 90
British Steel	December 1988	650,553		335,224 (30 Mar 91)	0·05	0·04 disposed of during 1989. On 12.11.90 HMG held about 0·002
Water and Sewerage Companies	December 1989	2·65m[6]		1,106,564[7] (27 June 91)	1·62	
Regional Electricity Companies	December 1990	8·86m[6]		2,975,119[7] (7 Aug 92)	n/a	

Company	Date of Privatisation	Size of share register Initial	Highest since Privatisation[3]	Current	Proportion of shares retained by HMG percentage	Proportion and dates of subsequent disposals percentage
Generating Companies	March 1991	1·91m[8]		1·7m[7] (Jan 92)	40	
Scottish Electricity Companies	June 1991	1·81m[9]		1·6m[7] (June 92)	3·5	

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[1] For single company privatisations, these figures are not an exact guide to the number of shareholders because some shareholdings are held jointly in more than one name (e.g., for members of employee share schemes only the trustees are shown on share registers).

[2] HM Government obtained a majority holding in 1914 but this never reached 100 per cent. The 1977 sale is shown as the first disposal of recent times.

[3] Where the largest register of shareholdings was not immediately following privatisation (this usually followed a secondary offer).

[4] These proportions do not sum to 51 per cent because of rights issues.

[5] Subsidiary of BL plc.

[6] The offer allowed for holdings by individuals in any or all of the companies in the offer and therefore holders may appear on more than one register.

[7] Shareholders may appear on the register of more than one company.

[8] The offer required pulic applicants to apply for shares in both companies and the figure shown is that of allocations in the offer.

[9] The offer required non-customer public applicants to apply for shares in both companies and the figure shown is that of allocations in the offer.

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give a breakdown of administrative costs set out in a similar manner to that in his answer to the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) of 5 March, *Official Report*, column *244*, for the share offers relating to *(a)* British Gas, *(b)* the electricity generating companies, *(c)* the electricity distribution companies, *(d)* the two Scottish electricity companies and *(e)* the water companies.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to page 18 of the report by the National Audit Office on the sale of British Gas (House of Commons paper 22 published June 1987) and to the replies given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy on 31 January 1992 at column *723*; by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland on 31 January 1992 at column *722*; and by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment on 3 April at column *570-71*.

European Central Bank

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures will be required to ensure uniformity of European central bank notes under article 16 of the protocol to the Maastricht treaty on European central banks.

Mr. Nelson: There is no requirement under article 16 for uniformity of bank notes, whether issued by the European central bank or other banks within the Community. Article 16 requires the ECB to respect as far as possible existing practices regarding the issue and design of bank notes.

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what rules and practices the Government propose to change in the field of statistical collection pursuant to article 5 of the protocol to the Maastricht treaty relating to European central banks; and what will be the role of the European central bank.

Mr. Nelson: No proposals have yet been made to ministers on the statistical requirements relating to the role of the European central bank. The role of the ECB in this area would be as set out in Article 5 of the protocol to the treaty on the statute of the European system of central banks and the European central bank.

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans the Government have to make the Bank of England independent under article 7 of the protocol to the Maastricht treaty relating to European central banks.

Mr. Nelson: The Government have no plans at present to make the Bank of England independent under article 7 of the protocol to the Maastricht treaty setting out the statute for the European central banks. According to the protocol to the Maastricht treaty on certain provisions relating to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, article 7 would only apply to the United Kingdom if, at some future date, the United Kingdom were to notify the Council of Ministers that it wished to move to stage 3 of the European economic and monetary union.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what financial provisions, and how much, he has made within his Department in order to look at the potential for deregulation of each of the regulatory measures for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Dorrell: The Chancellor's departments have a number of staff dedicated to looking at the potential for deregulation throughout the economy. These total 11 at an annual salary cost of about £340,000. In addition, other staff also spend some of their time working on deregulation issues as part of their duties. It is therefore not possible to quantify exactly the total effort devoted to this subject.

Developing Countries (Debt Relief)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what additional foreign exchange savings would accrue to developing countries if the Trinidad terms originally proposed by the Prime Minister had been accepted by the Paris club compared to the terms currently in use;

(2) what foreign exchange savings have been achieved by developing countries whose debt has been processed by the Paris club under the Trinidad terms.

Mr. Nelson: The debt reduction provided under Trinidad terms is assessed in present value terms and this cannot be reliably translated into estimates of foreign exchange earnings. Trinidad terms are designed to deliver up to 50 per cent. reduction in the present value of debts consolidated under the agreements. It is not possible to anticipate the outcome of consideration of reduction of the whole stock of debt, which creditors are committed to undertake provided that certain conditions are met.

The debt relief agreed to by creditors at the Paris Club is informed by and related to an independent estimate of the future foreign exchange financing needs of individual debtors.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list, for each country benefiting from debt relief under the Trinidad terms, *(a)* how the debt to be dealt with is calculated, *(b)* the percentage of total external debt of each country that this constitutes and *(c)* the level of relief and rescheduling that has been given.

Mr. Nelson: The details of individual debtors' positions are confidential to the country concerned. Debts eligible for Trinidad terms debt reduction are medium and long term bilateral official debt which are contracted before a specified cut-off date and which have not previously been subject to a concessional debt restructuring agreement at the Paris Club. The amount of relief provided is dependent upon the distribution of debt between individual creditors and the method of debt relief chosen by each creditor.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many developing countries have benefited from the Trinidad debt relief terms; which countries are due to be dealt with by the Paris Club; and when such action will be taken.

Mr. Nelson: Eight countries have so far benefited from Trinidad terms debt reduction at the Paris Club. The future programme of the Paris Club is driven by requests from the debtor countries.

Developmental Public Bodies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has yet issued guidance to Departments about the general responsibilities of the boards of new developmental public bodies, pursuant to the note to the Public Accounts Committee [PAC 69] dated 28 February; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Dorrell: Some guidance on the responsibilities of boards of non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) is already contained in the recently revised NDPB Guide for Departments. A copy has been placed in the Library. As noted in the Treasury minute, on the 11th report of the Public Accounts Committee, which is being laid before Parliament today, it is proposed to provide additional guidance shortly. The Treasury is currently consulting departments on content and coverage.

Canary Wharf

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Treasury, Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise jobs he proposes to move to Canary Wharf.

Mr. Dorrell: Customs and Excise plans to relocate the 130 staff in its Stratford excise and VAT office to Docklands, but not necessarily Canary Wharf, in August 1993.

London Transport

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the net effect on the public sector borrowing requirement of £100 million extra funding of capital investment by London Transport, including tax receipts, national insurance payments, and reductions in social security payments; and if he will estimate any crowding out.

Mr. Portillo: It is not possible to provide reliable estimates of the net effects.

Public Service Pensions

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will specify which categories of public servants and service men with preserved pension rights have the right to transfer to personal pension plans and indicate from which earliest date of leaving public service employment that entitlement stands.

Mr. Nelson: All former public servants and members of the armed forces whose last day of pensionable service was on or after 1 January 1986 may transfer their preserved public service pension rights to an appropriate personal pension plan.

Those in post on or after 6 April 1988 who choose to opt out of their occupational pension scheme without leaving public service employment or the armed forces may transfer their preserved rights in respect of service from 6 April 1988 to an appropriate personal pension plan. If they subsequently leave the public service or the armed forces, they may transfer the value of any benefits remaining in their occupational scheme to an appropriate personal pension plan.

These arrangements are fully in accordance with the Social Security Acts 1985 and 1986.

Civil Servants

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table giving the number of officials in the top four grades of the civil service in the Department of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Defence, the Treasury, the Foreign Office, Inland Revenue, the Home Office and the Departments of the Environment, Employment, Transport, Health, Social Security and Education, and the number and percentage in each case from Oxbridge colleges and the number of women and of disabled people in each case.

Mr. Lamont: The table gives the total number of staff and the number of women in grades 1-4 in the selected Departments. Complete information relating to colleges attended and the number of disabled people in these grades is not held centrally.

Grades 1-4 staff in post at 1 April 1992, by selected department

	Total	*Women*
Department of Trade and Industry	62	6
Ministry of Defence	103	3
HM Treasury	39	2
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	143	6
Inland Revenue	65	—
Home Office	42	9
Department of the Environment	77	8
Department of Employment	24	2
Department of Transport	42	—

	Total	Women
Department of Health	66	18
Department of Social Security	31	6
Department of Education and Science	31	3

Ministry Objectives

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether each division and branch in the Treasury is given individual specific annual objectives along the lines of those specified in the MINIM system in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Nelson: Although the Treasury has no equivalent to MAFF's MINIM system, the Treasury's internal annual resource allocation system requires each group and division to set objectives for their future work programmes. These objectives are drawn up within the framework of the roles and strategic objectives for the department as a whole and which are published on pages 14 to 21 of the 1992 Departmental Report for the Chancellor's Departments—CM 1918.

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how statistics relating to the consumer price index of the member states of the European Community are to be adjusted so as to take into account differences in national definitions under the protocol of the convergence criteria referred to in article 109j of the treaty establishing the European Community.

Mr. Nelson: The European Community Statistical Office (Eurostat) is planning to set up a working party of representatives of member states statistical offices to consider the technical issues involved in producing harmonised consumer price indices.

Tilbury/Gravesend Ferry

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will, in accordance with section 1(4) of the Crown Estate Act 1961, use his good offices to determine the dispute about the ancient rights of ferry between Tilbury and Gravesend, between the Crown Estate Commissioners and Whitehorse Ferries Ltd.; and if he will direct the restoration and continuation of the service until such times as the dispute has been resolved.

Mr. Lamont: The service was restored by Whitehorse Ferries Ltd. within a few days and I understand that the Crown Estate Commissioners and Whitehorse Ferries Ltd. reached agreement on the ferry franchise in early August.

Crown Estate Commissioners

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the Crown Estate Commissioners are subject to value added tax in respect of all revenues they accrue and transactions they enter into from leases, licences and rents relating to property they control and manage in respect of the Crown estate.

Mr. Lamont: The Crown Estate Commissioners are registered for value added tax for their business activities. They account for VAT according to the normal rules, which would include transactions involving land and property.

VAT

181. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if it remains Government policy to retain permanently the ability to apply a zero rate of VAT to books, newspapers and periodicals.

Sir John Cope: Yes. The Government remain committed to the permanent retention of the right to maintain all existing zero rates.

Third-world Debt

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total tax relief for banks against written-off third-world debt in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Provisions for doubtful sovereign debt by banks operating in the United Kingdom are estimated to have reduced corporation tax receipts in the last five years by the following amounts:

	£ million
1987-88	240
1988-89	550
1989-90	360
1990-91	720
1991-92 (provisional)	180

I regret that further information is not available centrally.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total level of bad debt to the private sector in the third world; and what are the comparative figures for the past five years.

Mr. Nelson: Information requested is not readily available and could only be provided at a disproportionate cost. Information on provisions made by British banks for their exposure to problem country debtors is contained in the Bank of England's annual Banking Act report, copies of which are available in the Library.

National and Provincial Building Society

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received concerning the claim by the National and Provincial building society for the repayment of £29 million allegedly overpaid as tax on savings in 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: A number of representatives have been received. The issues were fully considered during the Finance Bill debates.

Interest Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how many points United Kingdom interest rates have been reduced *(a)* since leaving the ERM and *(b)* between joining the ERM and August 1992.

Mr. Nelson: Between joining the ERM and August 1992, United Kingdom bank base rates were reduced by 5 points, from 15 to 10 per cent. They have since been reduced to 9 per cent.

National Lottery

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to close down the premium bond draw on the introduction of the national lottery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Nelson: I have no such plans.

Voluntary Organisations (Taxation)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to offer parity for voluntary organisations with local government in taxation matters.

Mr. Nelson: No. I see no reason why voluntary organisations should be treated as if they were local authorities.

Non-departmental Bodies

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent consideration has been given by Her Majesty's Treasury to the need to draw to the attention of non-departmental bodies the rules governing payment for untaken leave and the obtaining of the prior approval of the Treasury Solicitor before the making of agreements with employees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Portillo: Establishment officers of non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) were reminded of the need to ensure observance of the general principles of sound management and the provisions relating to payment for untaken leave in a letter circulated by the Treasury on 5 October.

NDPBs, as employers in their own right, seek legal advice whenever necessary. It would not be appropriate to require NDPBs to obtain legal advice specifically from the Treasury Solicitor but it would be open to the sponsor department, if a matter were raised with it, to consult its own lawyers or the Treasury Solicitor.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the ending of the Barnett formula relating to public expenditure per head in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to that in England and the United Kingdom average.

Mr. Portillo: No decisions have yet been taken about future levels of public expenditure. When they are, they will be announced in the autumn statement in the normal way.

Foreign Exchange Markets

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his practice to answer questions on the level of Government intervention in the foreign exchange markets in support of exchange rate objectives.

Mr. Nelson: I have no plans to change the long-standing practice of successive Governments not to provide details of intervention operations.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether it remains his policy to tax invalidity benefit.

Mr. Dorrell: It remains the Government's intention to bring invalidity benefit into taxation at a suitable opportunity.

Economic and Monetary Union

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the proposed date for the start of the final stage of economic and monetary union agreed to in the Maastricht treaty; and what stage the United Kingdom has reached.

Mr. Nelson: The starting date for the third stage of economic and monetary union will be set in accordance with the provisions of article 109j of the treaty on European union. Along with all other member states, the United Kingdom is presently participating in the first stage which began on 1 July 1990.

First-time Home Buyers

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to develop a scheme to stimulate the housing market by increasing mortgage interest tax relief and reducing stamp duty for first-time buyers only; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The Government have received a number of such suggestions in recent weeks, all of which are considered carefully.

Council Tax

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the form of competitive tender arrangements for the supply of estate agency services for the valuation and banding exercise for the introduction of the council tax in Wales; and if he will give the cost of the exercise, broken down by payments to each firm of estate agents or chartered surveyors employed and in which local authority area they were employed.

Mr. Nelson: The competitive tendering arrangements for the award of contracts to private sector firms for the valuation banding of domestic properties for the council tax in Wales were undertaken by the Valuation Office Agency.

The exercise was based on the established public sector procurement process of press advertising, pre-qualification and sealed bid tendering. The process throughout was the subject of consultation with the main valuers' professional institutions.

The pre-qualification stage involved an operational assessment by the agency of firms who registered an interest in assisting with the valuation banding, and an assessment of financial viability by independent consultants. Those firms successful at this stage were invited to tender.

The evaluation of bids and the authorisation of the award of contracts to successful firms was undertaken by a tender evaluation board. The board comprised representatives from the agency, the Welsh Office and the professional institutions.

The total cost of the contracts awarded to private sector firms, which were completed earlier this year, amounted to £1,406,142. It is not possible to disclose the payments to each contractor, on the grounds of commercial confidence.

The district council areas in Wales where contracts were awarded, and the contractors employed in these areas is shown in the table.

District council area	*Contractor*
Aberconwy	Nationwide Estate Agents; J. Hampson & Co.
Alyn and Deeside	Dixon Webb
Blaenau Gwent	Morgan Knight; Scotts
Brecknock	King Thomas Lloyd-Jones & Co.
Cardiff	Connell Estate Agents; Black Horse Agencies; Peter Alan Ltd; James Jones & Henton
Ceredigion	Evans Bros; King Thomas Lloyd-Jones & Co.
Colwyn	Kitching Bell; J. Hampson & Co.
Cynon Valley	Lanyon Davies & Evans
Delyn	Kitching Bell; J. Hampson & Co.
Dwyfor	Bob Parry & Co. Ltd.
Glyndwr	Kitching Bell
Islwyn	Morgan Knight
Llanelli	W. Griffiths Son & Lewis
Lliw Valley	Foote & Halfpenny; Fairwood Surveyors & Valuers
Meirionnydd	Farmers Marts (R. G. Jones) Ltd.
Merthyr Tydfil	William Graham & Co.
Monmouth	William Graham & Co; Russell Baldwin & Bright; Colleys Professional Services
Montgomeryshire	Farmers Marts (R. G. Jones) Ltd; Norman R. Lloyd & Co; Morris Marshall & Pool
Neath	Foote & Halfpenny; Peter Alan Ltd.
Newport	William Graham & Co; Black Horse Agencies
Ogwr	Payton Jewell Caines & Hurry; Peter Alan Ltd; CRGP Bute UK
Port Talbot	Payton Jewell Caines & Hurry
Preseli Pembrokeshire	Evans Bros; King Thomas Lloyd-Jones & Co.
Radnor	King Thomas Lloyd-Jones & Co.
Rhuddlan	J. Hampson & Co.
Rhymney Valley	William Graham & Co.
South Prembrokeshire	Evans Bros
Swansea	Fairwood Surveyors & Valuers
Taff-Ely	CRGP Bute UK
Torfaen	William Graham & Co.
Vale of Glamorgan	Kemps; Martin Cotsen & Co.
Ynys Môn—Isle of Anglesey	N. W. Burnell & Associate; Swetenhams Royal Life Estates

Average Family Income

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the relative position of Wales on the table of average family incomes compared with other standard regions of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nelson: Estimates of gross normal weekly household income for Wales and the standard regions of the United Kingdom are shown in the table. The estimates are based on two years results from the 1989 and 1990 family expenditure surveys.

Average gross normal weekly household income[1] *1989 and 1990*

Region	*£/week*
North	265·62
Yorks and Humberside	263·53
North East	289·75
East Midlands	311·67
West Midlands	295·87
East Anglia	325·08
Greater London	402·22
South East except Greater London	391·51
South West	317·36
Wales	263·09
Scotland	227·48
Northern Ireland	232·69
All United Kingdom	319·36

[1] Gross normal weekly household income is the total of wages and salaries, self-employment, income, investment, pensions and other sources for all household members. It also includes an imputed income component for owner occupiers and those who occupy their dwelling rent-free.

Child Benefit

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate has been made of the revenue which would be obtained by taxing child benefit.

Mr. Dorrell: The estimated direct revenue yield in 1992-93 from making child benefit liable to tax would be about £600 million. This assumes that child benefit received by married couples would be taxed as the mother's income.

Currency Changes

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give figures for the percentage change in the retail prices index and the percentage change in the level of sterling compared with *(a)* the deutschmark and *(b)* the US dollar for each calendar year since 1979.

Mr. Nelson: Recent annual figures for retail prices and exchange rates can be found in the *Economic Trends* published by the Central Statistical Office, and figures for earlier years are published in corresponding tables in *Economic Trends* annual supplement.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many staff his Department currently employs; what are the total personnel costs; and what were the staffing levels and personnel costs in 1970.

Mr. Nelson *[pursuant to his answer, 14 July 1992, c. 527]:* The answer unfortunately used incorrect figures for average staff in post for 1991-92. The correct figure is 2,928 and not 3,192 as stated.

SCOTLAND

Water and Sewerage

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, for each region, the water supply zones where the water authorities have assessed that there is a risk of United Kingdom standards for lead in water not always being met stating for each the expected date for compliance; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The public water supply zones in Scotland where mainland authorities have reported that, after the end of 1991, there was a risk of the United Kingdom standard for lead not always being met and where, consequently, further action was required by the regulations, are listed in the table. The expected date for compliance is also stated where this has been agreed.

In almost half of the 77 zones listed, remedial action has either been taken, or is planned to be taken before the end of this year.

Following earlier improvements by water authorities, statutory random sampling last year indicated that, compared with 1990, samples failing the lead standard dropped from more than 4 per cent. to under 2 per cent. However, compliance with the standard cannot be guaranteed until lead pipes and fittings, mainly within consumers own properties, are removed.

Authority/Supply Zone	*Expected Date for Compliance or Date Completed*
Borders	
Cockburnspath	—[1]
Earnscleugh	1994
Hawick—Acreknowe	—[1]
Innerleithen	1993
Oxton	—[1]
Philiphaugh	1992
Selkirk	—[1]
Tweedsmuir	1993
West Linton	1992
Yarrowfeus	1992 (completed)
Central	
Alloa	1992 (completed)
Dumfries & Galloway	
Castle Douglas	1993[2]
Creetown	1993[2]
Landheads	1993[2]
Langholm	1993[2]
Moffat	1993[2]
New Abbey	1993[2]
Newton Stewart	1993[2]
Palnure	1993[2]
Sanquhar	1993[2]
Fife	
Newburgh	1992 (completed)
Grampian	
Aboyne	1992 (completed)
Airyhall, Aberdeen	—[1]
Ballater	—[3]
Banff	1992 (completed)
Craigie East, Aberdeen	—[1]
Dufftown	1993
Forres	1992 (completed)
Mannofield South, Aberdeen	—[1]
New Pitsligo	—[3]
Tomintoul	1992 (completed)
Highland—assessment not yet available	
Lothian	
Alnwickhill—Joppa	1991 (completed)
Alnwickhill—Leith	1991 (completed)
Alnwickhill—Newington	1991 (completed)
Alnwickhill—Portobello	1991 (completed)
Chalkieside	1991 (completed)
Deans	1992 (completed)
Dechmont Law	1992 (completed)
Eastcraigs	1992 (completed)
Fairmilehead Direct	1991 (completed)
Firhill Mid	1991 (completed)
Firhill North	1991 (completed)
Firhill South	1991 (completed)
Firhill West	1991 (completed)
Humbie	1992 (completed)
Kinleith	1995[3]
Marchbank/Harlaw	1995[3]
Rosebery East	—[3]
Rosebery West	—[3]
Turduff	1995[3]
Tayside	
Aberfeldy	1996[3]
Acharn	1996[3]
Balnaguard	1996[3]
Benachally	1996[3]
Camserney and Weem	1996[3]
Clash	1996[3]
Fearnan	1996[3]
Fingask	1996[3]
Glenfarg	1996[3]
Glenogil	1996[3]
Grandtully	1996[3]
Kenmore	1996[3]
Kinloch Rannoch	1996[3]
Pitagowan and Calvine	1996[3]
Pitlochry	1996[3]
Strathclyde	
Ardeer	1992
Barrhead/Auchenback	1993
Crookfur/Newton Mearns	1993
Girvan North	1992
Inverclyde West	—[3]
Irvine	1992
Kilmarnock South	1992
Leven Valley	—[3]
Prestwick	1992
Troon and Kilwinning	1992
Saltcoats/North Stevenston	1992
Whiting Bay	—[3]

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[1] Further investigation of treatment required.
[2] Further assessment of risk to be carried out by the date given.
[3] Further information required from water authority.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate, for each region, what investment is needed at 1992 prices to meet the requirement to end dumping of sewage sludge at sea after 1998; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Only Strathclyde and Lothian regional councils are affected by the ending of sewage sludge dumping at sea. Councils are presently completing reviews of their sludge disposal strategies. At current prices, possible investments associated with the cessation of dumping are estimated by the regional councils at £70 million for Strathclyde and £21 million for Lothian.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of food poisoning have been notified in each year since 1979; and if will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The numbers of cases of food poisoning notified in Scotland since 1979 are as follows:

Year	*Notifications*
1979	2,657
1980	2,299
1981	2,920
1982	2,880
1983	2,632
1984	2,331
1985	1,967
1986	2,436
1987	2,480
1988	2,998
1989	3,197
1990	3,024
1991	2,938

TRANSPORT

Rail Services

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the chairman of British Rail about rail services to and from Darwen, Lancashire.

Mr. Freeman: None. The level of service on the line is a matter for British Rail and the Greater Manchester passenger executive.

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the reduction in Sunday rail services to and from Darwen, Lancashire, Following publication of the citizen's charter.

Mr. Freeman: One. The level of service on this line is a matter for British Rail and the Greater Manchester passenger transport executive.

Coal

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the number of million tonne miles of coal carried by railways and coastal and inland shipping in or around the United Kingdom in 1990 and 1991, and his estimate of the amount likely to be carried thereafter, following implementation of the current plans for reduced use of coal.

Mr. Freeman: Statistics of coal and coke movements in 1990 and 1991 are given in table 1·9 of Transport Statistics Great Britain 1992, which was published in September. The figures for rail and water, including coastal and inland waterway movements, are as follows:

Billion tonne-kilometres

	1990	*1991*
Rail	5·0	[1]5·0
Water	1·4	[2]1·7

[1] 1991-92 financial year

[2] provisional

It is for British Rail Trainload Freight and the shipping industry to make their own estimates of the amount of coal and coke they expect to carry.

Car Safety

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action is currently undertaken by his Department to encourage car manufacturers to take into account the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists when designing their cars.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The United Kingdom is at the forefront of moves within Europe to make the fronts of cars less harmful to pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists in the event of a collision and is currently co-operating in the drafting of an EC directive. The Government welcome the fact that manufacturers are already incorporating in their cars some of the measures which are proposed in the directive and hope that they will be able to move further in this direction.

Traffic Accidents

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of children under school-leaving age were involved in road traffic accidents in the United Kingdom in 1991; and what information he has on the equivalent figures for each European Community and European Free Trade Association country.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There were 46,126 reported road casualties aged under 16 years in the United Kingdom during 1991, which represents a rate of 0·40 per 100 population. Comparable data for other EC and EFTA countries are not available. Instead, the table shows road fatalities aged under 15 in those countries and the corresponding fatality rates per million population in that age group.

Child[1] road fatalities and fatality rates: EC and EFTA countries: 1990

Number/rate per million population

Country	*Fatalities*	*Fatality rate*
EC		
Belgium[2]	94	52
Denmark	48	54
France	524	46
Germany	554	44
Greece	93	[3]46
Ireland	46	48
Italy	247	26
Luxembourg[2]	5	78
Netherlands	100	37
Portugal[2]	190	94
Spain	399	51

Country	*Fatalities*	*Fatality rate*
United Kingdom	394	36
EFTA		
Austria	67	50
Finland	45	47
Iceland	3	47
Norway	18	22
Sweden	35	23
Switzerland	47	41

[1] Aged under 15.

[2] 1989 data.

[3] Based on 1988 population.

Source: IRTAD database (OECD) and UNECE.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of children under school-leaving age were injured in road traffic accidents in each United Kingdom region in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The table shows the number of reported road accident casualties aged under 16 in each United Kingdom region in 1991, and the corresponding casualty rates per 100 population in that age group as follows:

Child[1] casualties and casualty rates[2], by region: United Kingdom 1991

Number/rate per 100 population

Regions	*Number of casualties*	*Casualty rate*
England		
North	2,591	0·42
North West	6,554	0·50
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,230	0·42
East Midlands	3,205	0·40
West Midlands	4,303	0·40
East Anglia	1,557	0·38
South East	12,798	0·37
South West	2,854	0·32
England total	38,092	0·40
Wales	2,343	0·40
Scotland	4,156	0·41
Northern Ireland	1,535	0·36
United Kingdom total	46,126	0·40

[1] Aged under 16. Excludes age not reported.

[2] 1990 population estimates used to calculate rate.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a figure showing the average cost to the Exchequer of each road traffic accident, including a figure for the average cost of medical care.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The total costs of road accidents are updated each year and published in the Department of Transport publication, "Highways Economic Note No 1" and in "Road Accidents Great Britain":

Direct costs to the Exchequer include medical costs, social security payments, police costs and lost revenue from taxation due to loss of earnings. The table shows average total cost, average cost to the Exchequer excluding lost taxation revenue for which no estimate is available, and also medical costs.

	Average total cost £	*Average cost to Exchequer* £	*Average medical and ambulance costs* £
Fatal accidents	762,800	12,600	1,620
Serious accidents	26,500	4,600	2,970
Slight accidents	2,500	500	150
All injury accidents	20,400	1,400	700

Ports

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he will be taking in the remainder of 1992 to promote investment into British ports within the wider investment infrastructure of the Community, to place British ports in a position level to that of ports in other Community countries.

Mr. Norris: This Government's policies have led to a vigorous flow of private sector investment into United Kingdom ports. We welcome the initiative by the European Commission to set up a member states' group on ports and trans-European networks, to identify opportunities for expanding the role of ports and shipping services in freight transport within the Community. We also welcome the statement, in the working documents circulated to the first meeting on 1 October, stressing the need to maintain the principle of free and fair competition between ports.

Car Advertisements

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what efforts are being undertaken by his Department to discourage car manufacturers from referring to the aquisition of speed as a central feature of their advertising campaigns.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Advertising Standards Authority and the Independent Television Commission have responsibility for setting standards for acceptable advertisements. These standards prohibit any advertisement which places undue emphasis on speed or encourages unlawful or unsafe driving practices. The Advertising Standards Authority issued further advice to advertising practitioners, following discussions in 1990. This advice has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of advertisements found to be in breach of the standards. At a further meeting last July, the authority agreed to maintain its close monitoring of the use of speed in car advertising.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what financial provisions, and how much, he has made within his Department in order to look at the potential for deregulation of each of the regulatory measures for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Norris: It is not possible to place a financial figure on the Department's involvement with deregulation. The Department is continually seeking opportunities for deregulation in transport and a high proportion of its current policies are directed at this aim. In addition, whenever new legislation or regulation is being considered by the Department, the Department examines closely the cost impact of such measures, especially on business.

Regional Airlines

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to paragraph 13.53 of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report MMC2, BAA plc, published in 1991; if he will make it his policy that interests of United Kingdom regional airlines could be safeguarded under section 41 of the Airports Act 1986; what plans he has to act to protect the interests of such airlines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend has noted the view the MMC expressed on the structure of charges at BAA plc's London airports.

The Government look for healthy competition in the aviation market and seek to protect the interests of both consumers and operators against anti-competitive practices. Section 41 of the Airports Act 1986 gives the Civil Aviation Authority the power to impose conditions on an airport operator to remedy specific conduct which unreasonably discriminates against any class of airport user or unfairly exploits that operator's bargaining position.

Road Works

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what estimates he has made of the potential benefits to road users of the use of trenchless technology;

(2) what research he has funded into the cost benefit of trenchless technology.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: In 1989 the Department commissioned the transport research laboratory to assess the use of trenchless construction methods in road works in a three-year project, at a cost of £90,000. The project is intended to provide details of the potential savings to road users as a result of more widespread use of trenchless methods, and to provide information about what, if any, additional direct costs would be incurred by using trenchless methods. An interim report was produced in July 1991, and a final report, covering evaluation of methods, economics and potential for application, is due in the spring of 1993.

Associated with this project is another one, begun in May 1992, which is being carried out by the Construction Industry Research and Information Association under the title "RP 456: Planning and Investigation for the Use of Trenchless and Minimum Excavation Technology in the Installation, Replacement and Renovation of Underground Services". The report on this project is expected in 1993.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if it is his policy to encourage highway authorities and undertakers to take account of delays to road users when planning road works.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Yes. The relevant provisions of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 will come into force on 1 January 1993. They will require street authorities, normally the local highway authorities, to co-ordinate undertakers' street works and works for their own road purposes, and will impose a duty on undertakers to co-operate with the street authority and other undertakers, one of the aims being to minimise inconvenience to users of the street. We shall shortly be publishing a code of practice giving practical guidance on the carrying out of these duties.

I expect these provisions to prove effective in reducing delays associated with undertakers' and highway authorities' works in the road. I shall be monitoring the situation closely.

The Act provides an additional reserve power to make regulations imposing charges for occupation of the highway where undertakers' works are unreasonably prolonged. We shall not hesitate to implement this provision if we need to do so.

High Winds

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the information available to him on the incidence and effect of high winds on the Dartford/Thurrock bridge.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Since the Queen Elizabeth II bridge came into use in October 1991, it has only once been closed because of high winds. Speed restrictions and lane closures due to high winds have been imposed for a total of some 71 hours.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many fishing vessels are registered in the United Kingdom but beneficially owned in each other EC member state.

Mr. Norris: There are now some 57 Spanish, 21 Dutch and two Danish fishing vessels registered in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) to what degree a fishing vessel is required to show a genuine economic link with the United Kingdom to qualify for registrations and licensing with United Kingdom authorities;

(2) what information he has on the names of fishing vessels registered in the United Kingdom and beneficially owned in other EC member states of the owners of these boats and the United Kingdom link which allows them to be British registered.

Mr. Norris: Any vessel fishing for profit is required to give certain details including details of ownership and management and the name of vessel before it can be registered in the United Kingdom.

In line with the requirements of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988 we continue to require that any fishing vessel on the United Kingdom register must be managed and the operations directed and controlled from within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the claim for compensation by fishing vessels from his Department for the period deregistered will be based on the net earnings of the British companies which owned the vessels concerned prior to 31 March 1989.

Mr. Norris: The applicants seek damages under three heads; expenses, losses consequent on the sale of vessels and losses consequent on the need to provide bonds, fines and legal expenses. The Government do not, however, accept that they are under any liability to pay compensation.

Railway Tracks

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss British Rail's plans to sell redundant and little-used railway track.

Mr. Freeman: The Secretary of State and I meet the chairman of British Rail regularly to discuss various matters. The board's objectives require it to divest itself of all underused or surplus land and property as rapidly as possible, at a proper commercial price.

The procedure currently followed by BR for the disposal of disused trackbed is as follows:

- (i) Discussions with the various BR businesses to establish that the land is no longer required for operational purposes and that no future operational use has been identified by them. The land is then handed over to the British Rail Property Board (BRPB) for disposal.
- (ii) Notification by BRPB to local authorities that it intends to sell the land so that they can approach the board with their requirement to purchase at the earliest possible date.
- (iii) If there is no approach from the local authority, BRPB notifies statutory undertakers, MOD, British Coal and the Department to see if there are any objections to the sale.
- (iv) If there are no objections, BRPB proceeds with the sale.

Motorway Accidents

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the number of accidents which have occurred on motorways as a result of vehicles hitting tyre debris or swerving to avoid such debris.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The information requested is not available. However of the 6,287 motorway injury accidents in Great Britain in 1991, 209 involved vehicles hitting an object on the carriageway that was not a vehicle load, a previous accident or an animal. This accounts for 3 per cent. of all motorway injury accidents.

Air Misses

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his Answer of 12 June, *Official Report*, column *298*, when the hon. Member can expect to receive the report of the CAA/Ministry of Defence investigation into the air near-miss that occurred on 1 July over Currock hill gliding site.

Mr. Norris: I am advised by the Civil Aviation Authority that this incident, involving a Cadedonian Airways triStar and a glider, over Currock hill gliding site on 31 May 1992, has been examined by the independent joint airmiss working group. The findings of the group will be available in the spring of next year. It will feature in the Civil Aviation Authority's regular publication "UK Airmisses Involving Commercial Air Transport". Arrangements have been made for the hon. Member to receive a copy when it is available.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 7 July, *Official Report*, column *109*, when the hon. Member can expect to receive the report from the joint CAA/Ministry of Defence investigation into the air near-misses that occurred on *(a)* 26 June over south Wales and *(b)* 25 June, 15 miles north of Grimsby.

Mr. Norris: The air miss report filed with the Civil Aviation Authority in respect of the incidents involving respectively:

1. An Air UK Fokker 27 and a Royal Air Force Tornado, north of Grimsby on 25 June 1992; and
2. A United Airlines boeing 767 and a Venezuelan-registered Falcon 50 south west of Ebbw Vale on 26 June 1992;

have been examined by the independent joint air miss working group. The group's assessment of each incident will be published along with others by the Civil Aviation Authority in the spring of 1993 and I have made arrangments for the hon. Member to receive a copy of this document when it is available.

Passenger Ferries

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has had with his counterpart in the Irish Republic concerning the vetting of sewerage system safety in design and operation on Welsh-Irish passenger ferry services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: My officials have been in regular contact with the Irish Department of the Marine, and the Polish authorities, since the tragic accident on the Celtic Pride on 12 August. My surveyors agreed with the operators and the Irish administration a programme for the implementation of modifications to the sewerage system, to provide a permanent solution to the venting problems which caused the accident. Following completion of these modifications, and subsequent tests on the ship in an operational condition, the ship has now been allowed to continue operations. However, monitoring of the situation on board the ship continues on a regular basis.

My Department, and the Irish administration, have circulated an urgent notice to all ferry companies operating from United Kingdom and Irish ports, about the checks to be made on sewerage systems. The Irish administration is currently conducting an inquiry into the tragedy, and will provide my Department with full details of its findings and any recommendations.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last visited Oxleas wood; when he last had communication with the European Commission regarding the east London river crossing; and if he will make a statement

Mr. Norris: I visited Oxleas wood in May. The United Kingdom sent its response to the European Commission's article 169 letter in December 1991. The Commission announced on 31 July that it will be proceeding to reasoned opinion on the alleged non-compliance with the EC Directive on Environmental Assessment. No further communication has been received.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the original estimate of the cost of construction of the east London river crossing; what is his current estimate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The original estimated cost of the east London river crossing, as set out in the White Paper "Policy for Roads: England 1980" Cmnd. 7908, was £90 million, for construction works only, at 1978 prices.

Following detailed development of the scheme, including substantial changes discussed at the two public inquiries, the current estimated cost including land is about £300 million at 1989 prices.

Air Routes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what concessions his Department made to allow an American airline to have a direct air route between Glasgow and Washington; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Under the Bermuda 2 air services agreement, the Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom each have the right to designate an airline or airlines to operate services on routes between Glasgow and a number of United States gateway cities, including Washington. These rights were negotiated as part of the original agreement in 1977.

London Transport

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he proposes to alter the capital programmes of London Transport.

Mr. Norris: London Transport's external financing requirement for the three years ahead is reviewed annually. I cannot anticipate the Chancellor's autumn statement announcement on the financial provision for the years 1993-94 to 1995-96.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what capital spending has been authorised for London Transport on *(a)* bus replacement and *(b)* the underground railways in each of the last five years; and what sums have been published for the next two years.

Mr. Norris: The appointment of capital spending between bus purchase, the undergound railways and other types of investment is a matter for London Transport not the Government. The table which gives the information on spending for the past five years is as follows:

	£ million cash				
	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Bus purchase	3·1	8·5	15·3	15·7	23·8
London Underground Limited (inc new lines)	213	215	302	458	368

Disaggregated figures for the next two years are not available, but the total London Transport investment implied by the 1991 settlement was £1,519 million in 1993-94 and £1,370 million in 1994-95.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what investment plans he approved in 1991 for London Transport.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend does not approve LT investment plans. However, the levels of capital investment implied by the 1991 autumn statement for LT, including new lines, for the next three years are:

Year	*£ million cash*
1992-93	1,197
1993-94	1,519
1994-95	1,370

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the change in unit costs for bus travel in London over the past 10 years.

Mr. Norris: The following figures show local bus operating costs in London over the past 10 years. They comprise services operated under contract to London Transport, and all operations by London Buses Limited, other than commercial services by London Coaches Limited. They exclude depreciation and renewals, and are rounded to the nearest five pence.

Year	*Cost per bus kilometre (£) 1990-91 prices*
1980	2·15
1981	2·15
1982	2·20
1983	2·20
1984-85	2·20
1985-86	2·05
1986-87	1·90
1987-88	1·80
1988-89	1·80
1989-90	1·70
1990-91	1·65

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the extension and the returns on bus priority and selective vehicle identification schemes for buses in London.

Mr. Norris: The Department of Transport issued advice on bus priority measures last December, and a number of schemes are now being prepared by the London boroughs in conjunction with London Transport. The Government have allocated £1 million for these schemes in the current year.

A selective bus identification trial scheme in the south-east London—north-east Kent area is producing substantial benefits to buses and their passengers. London Buses is now fitting its buses with the equipment necessary to extend the benefits to other parts of outer London.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the economic effects on the efficiency of London Transport's capital programmes of short-term changes in authorised spending.

Mr. Norris: Careful cash control and management of the large stock of projects which LT has in various stages of development enables LT to adjust its capital investment programme from time to time in the light of available resources, as any other business may have to do.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the changes in bus miles and in bus passenger numbers for London Transport bus services compared with out-of-London services.

Mr. Norris: For the past five years, the information requested is as follows:

Bus miles (millions)

	London	*Outside London*
1986-87	173	1,169
1987-88	171	1,283
1988-89	177	1,306
1989-90	181	1,337
1990-91	189	1,330

Passenger journeys (millions)

	London	*Outside London*
1986-87	1,164	4,179
1987-88	1,240	4,081
1988-89	1,240	4,001
1989-90	1,207	3,881
1990-91	1,197	3,654

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the average age of London Transport's buses in each of the last five years.

Mr. Norris: The average age of London Buses Ltd.'s fleet is heavily influenced by the presence of around 650 routemaster vehicles whose average age in 1991 was 27 years. I understand from it that the information is as follows:

Year	*Average age (years)*
1987	9·6
1988	9·5
1989	9·9
1990	10·3
1991	10·3

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are his responsibilities, objectives and targets for public transport in London.

Mr. Norris: The Secretary of State's objectives, targets and responsibilities are set out in the Departmental Report "The Government's Expenditure Plans for Transport 1992-93 to 1994-95". A copy of the report has been placed in the House Library.

Since that report was published, there have been two major developments. First, new quality of service objectives for London Transport bus and underground services were announced. I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) on 2 June, Vol 208, col. *524-26* and on 29 June, Vol 210, col. *388-90*.

Secondly, following publication of the white Paper, Cmd. 2012, "New Opportunities for the Railways", a consultation document—"The Franchising of Passenger Rail Services"—was published on 12 October. A copy has been placed in the House Library. This gives further information on how the franchising system will work and seeks views from prospective franchisees. This is in pursuit of the Government's overall objective for British Rail to extend the involvement of the private sector in the operation of the railways, ensure continuity of services, assure safety, and provide value for money.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in which years since 1972 the capital spending by London Transport has maintained asset standards.

Mr. Norris: Information in the form requested is not held by the Government or by LT.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list link London Transport's *(a)* higher priority projects and *(b)* lower priority projects included in his consideration of capital spending plans.

Mr. Norris: No. It is for LT and its subsidiaries, not the Government, to decide what priority is given to specific investment projects.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what sum of money is neded to prevent an increase in the average age of London Transport's buses.

Mr. Norris: It is not possible to give a precise figure. London Buses Ltd's bus replacement programme is not driven by the aim of maintaining a particular average age of the fleet.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which conclusions and options of the central London rail study have been accepted by him and by London Transport.

Mr. Norris: The central London rail study recommended a major upgrading programme to make the best use of existing infrastructure and proposed two options for new lines. Since then investment in existing infrastructure has been raised to record levels, a Bill has been deposited in Parliament for Crossrail and the route of the Chelsea-Hackney line has been safeguarded.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the import share in London Transport's capital spending.

Mr. Norris: No such calculation is made or could meaningfully be made. It is for London Transport to place orders where best value for money can be obtained.

Canary Wharf

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the numbers who will live within 40 minutes travel time of Canary Wharf if the Jubilee line extension is *(a)* built or *(b)* not built.

Mr. Norris: This information is not available and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

Department of Transport

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people have held the position of *(a)* Secretary of State for Transport, *(b)* Minister for Public Transport, *(c)* Permanent Secretary and *(d)* Deputy Secretary for Public Transport since January 1989.

Mr. Norris: Four people have held the position of Secretary of State for Transport since January 1989. Two people have held the position of Minister of State for Public Transport since January 1989. Two people have held the position of permanent secretary and three people have held the position of deputy secretary for public transport since January 1989.

Bus Deregulation

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider modern stored value and integrated ticketing before deregulation of buses in London.

Mr. Norris: I understand that London Transport is currently undertaking a trial of stored value ticketing on bus route 212 in north London. London Underground is also developing a stored value ticketing system and London Transport intends that both systems should be compatible. On British Rail services, stored value ticketing is not so appropriate because of the cost and safety implications of providing ticket gates at all stations.

Capital Spending

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates or research his Department has published on the economic and financial effects of sudden changes in capital spending.

Mr. MacGregor: None.

London Underground

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what sustained level of investment in London's underground was endorsed or recommended in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report.

Mr. Norris: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission report of 5 June 1991 into London Underground Limited, LUL, did not endorse or recommend any specific level of investment in London Underground.

Transpennine Roads

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he proposes to take regarding transpennine road links following publication of the recent study undertaken on this subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There are a number of schemes in the national roads programme to improve transpennine road links. These include widening M62 between junctions 18 and 24; provision of a new M1/M62 link; improvements to A628/A616 from M67 to Stocksbridge and improvements to A66.

I will be better placed to make a statement regarding transpennine roads strategy once the public consultation period has finished on 5 March and all responses have been considered. At this stage the Government are not committed to any of the strategies in the consultants' report.

A140

Mr. Cann: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many fatalities have occurred on the A140 between Norwich and the A45 in the last 10 years.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Forty-nine. The figures for the years 1982 to 1992, to 30 September, are as follows:

Year	*Number of fatalities*
1982	3
1983	6
1984	7
1985	1
1986	2
1987	3
1988	3
1989	12
1990	3
1991	5
1992	4

These figures relate to the road between its junctions with the Norwich outer ring road and the A45.

Bus Stops (Information Systems)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated financial return and the estimated value to passengers and potential passengers of real time information systems at bus stops.

Mr. Norris: London Transport plans to start trials of Countdown in November. The purpose of those trials is to establish the cost, benefits and practicability of real time passenger information systems.

Victoria Line

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment has has made of the economic value of the Victoria line.

Mr. Norris: None. The practice of carrying out backchecks on investments for which Government approval has been given is a relatively new one, and this has not been done in the case of the Victoria line.

Transport Security Annual Report

Sir Paul Beresford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will publish the 1991-92 annual report of the director and co-ordinator of transport security.

Mr. MacGregor: Copies of the report have been placed in the Library of the House.

Red Star

Sir Paul Beresford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the future of the British Railways Board parcels service, Red Star.

Mr. MacGregor: I have received representations from the British Railways Board seeking approval to the early trade sale of Red Star, and on 7 October I announced my agreement to that proposal. The detailed sale arrangements will be drawn up by the board, subject to Government scrutiny in the usual way. I welcome the board's commitment to Red Star privatisation. An early sale is the best way to revitalise the business and return it to profitability.

Passenger Railway Services

Sir Paul Beresford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how he plans to consult potential franchisees on his proposals for franchising passenger railway services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I published a consultation document on 12 October with the aim of seeking the views of potential franchisees on the areas, geographically and in terms of specific activities, which may be of interest, and on the ways in which the franchising of passenger services might best be carried out. This should ensure that we implement franchising in the most market oriented way, so maximising competition and ensuring value for money. I have placed copies of this document in the Library.

DVOIT

Sir Paul Beresford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for the future of the DVOIT executive agency.

Mr. MacGregor: Following a review of its activities, DVOIT will be the first next steps agency to be privatised. Under the citizens charter we are committed to improving service to the public. This means introducing the market to many areas of government. Privatisation brings choice and efficiency, and I am confident that the privatisation of DVOIT will lead to continuing improvements in value for money in the IT services provided for my Department.

A1 Red Route

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he has taken on the Transport Research Laboratory technical paper TD/TP/173/92 about the patronage of businesses on the A1 red route.

Mr. Norris: I have noted with interest that the shopping activity section of the technical paper reproduces the findings published in the autumn monitoring report on the red route pilot scheme. Those findings support the view that trading activity depends more on the type of business being conducted and the economic climate than on red route measures.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish his Department's estimates of the change in patronage of businesses along the A1 red route between its opening and the latest available date.

Mr. Norris: All monitoring reports including surveys of shopping activity at sites along the pilot red route have been published and copied to the hon. Member.

East Suffolk Railway Line

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the expressions of interest he has received from potential operators wishing to franchise the East Suffolk railway line.

Mr. Freeman: Before the issue of the consultation document on 12 October we had received expressions of interest about running franchised passenger railway services from around 50 companies. I am sure that the consultation document will engender further interest. At this early stage, it is for the companies themselves to indicate publicly whether they are interested in particular services.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will visit and travel upon the east Suffolk railway line to study the possibilities for its future development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I would be delighted to travel on the east Suffolk line when I am next visiting my hon. Friend's constituency.

Rail Accident, Walton-on-the-Naze

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the report of the inspector of railways on the accident at Walton-on-the-Naze in August 1987 will be published; when the inspector's inquiries were completed; when the report was completed; what are the reasons for the delay in publishing the report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Although the inspector's inquiries were completed in 1988 it has not yet been possible to publish a report due to continuing pressure of work. His principal findings were published in the *Official Report* on 21 October 1991, col. *466*, and he discussed them with British Rail shortly after the completion of his inquiries. BR have taken remedial action to prevent any recurrence.

I have asked the Health and Safety Commission to ensure publication of more detailed recommendations and conclusions by 31 December 1992.

Transport, London

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are his latest estimates for the respective construction and running costs and the contribution to London's economy and to London's transport system of *(a)* Crossrail, *(b)* the Hackney to Chelsea underground line and *(c)* the Hackney, Chelsea and East Putney underground line.

Mr. Norris: The latest estimates for the construction and operating costs of Crossrail, at 1990 prices, but reassessed in 1991, are £1,704 million for construction and £14·5 million per annum for operating costs. The latest estimates for the construction and operating costs of the Chelsea-Hackney line, at 1990 prices, are £1,776 million for construction and £31 million per annum for operating costs. The latest estimates for the net present value —NPV—of the costs and benefits of the two schemes, made in October 1990 for the Chelsea-Hackney line ahd in 1991 for Crossrail are reproduced in the table as follows:

(Cost)-Benefit	*Crossrail £ million (March 1990 prices, NPV at 1 October 1990)*	*Chelsea-Hackney line £ million (March 1990 prices NPV at 31 March 1990)*
Capital cost	(1,354)	(1,3[illegible]0)
Operating cost	(95)	(204)
Extra revenue to LUL/NSE	321	358
Funding gap	(1,128)	(1,146)
Passenger benefits	1,170	1,182
Road user benefit	393	395

(Cost)-Benefit	*Crossrail £ million (March 1990 prices, NPV at 1 October 1990)*	*Chelsea-Hackney line £ million (March 1990 prices NPV at 31 March 1990)*
Net benefit	435	431
Benefit:cost ratio	1 . 30 : 1	1 . 29 : 1

There are currently no plans for a Hackney, Chelsea and East Putney underground line. London Underground Limited is, however, reviewing the costs and benefits of an alternative alignment of the Chelsea-Hackney line via Sands End and Wandsworth and expects to report on the outcome in 1993.

Cars

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of *(a)* Welsh and *(b)* English households in 1991 (i) had no car available to them and (ii) had two or more cars.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Information on car ownership is given in Transport Statistics Great Britain. Table 3.13(b) of the recently published 1992 edition showed that, in 1989, 30 per cent. of Welsh households had no car available to them and that 17 per cent. had two or more cars available to them. The equivalent figures for English households were 33 and 19 per cent. respectively.

Cyclists

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many cyclists were *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured in each of the last five years; and how many in each category were cycling without lights during lighting up times.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Cycling casualties over the past five years are given in the table as follows:

Pedal cycle casualties: by severity of casualty
Great Britain 1987-91

	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Killed	280	227	294	256	242
Seriously injured	4,851	4,652	4,836	4,344	3,946
Slightly injured	21,063	20,970	23,383	21,822	20,615
All casualties	26,194	25,849	28,513	26,422	24,803

Cycle light use is unknown, but cycle casualties occurring during daylight and darkness are shown in the table as follows:

Pedal cycle casualties: by severity of casualty and time of day
Great Britain 1987-91

	1987		*1988*		*1989*		*1990*		*1991*	
	Day	*Dark*	*Day*	*Dark*	*Day*	*Dark*	*Day*	*Dark*	*Day*	*Dark*
Killed	209	71	173	54	226	68	179	77	173	69
Seriously injured	3,858	993	3,669	983	3,841	995	3,436	908	3,156	790
Slightly injured	17,323	3,740	17,008	3,962	19,146	4,237	17,870	3,952	16,752	3,863
All casualties	21,390	4,804	20,850	4,999	23,213	5,300	21,485	4,937	20,080	4,723

Vehicle Registration

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many inquiries have been made to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency by the police service to establish the name and address of the registered keeper of a motor vehicle leading to the detection of a hit-and-run driver.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The police normally obtain names and addresses of the present keepers of vehicles direct from the police national computer, PNC, which contains extracts from the central register maintained by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency. During the past 12 months the police made some 47,000 enquiries of the agency for details of previous keepers not available from the PNC but it is not known how many, if any, of these related to detection of hit-and-run drivers.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current estimate of the effect on the accuracy of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's register of keepers of the failure to notify a change of ownership; and what research is ongoing to establish an improved method for the recording of ownership or keepership of vehicles.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is estimated that less than 3 per cent. of people acquiring vehicles fail to comply with the legal requirement to notify the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency. When offenders are caught using unlicensed vehicles the agency prosecutes both for the offence of failing to notify acquisition of the vehicle and for evading payment of vehicle excise duty. The police have been asked to consider prosecution in other circumstances. Improved methods of recording vehicle keepership are currently being looked at as part of a study into possible further uses of new technology in the vehicle registration and licensing system.

Cannon Street Railway Accident

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when copies of the report of the Health and Safety Commission on the Cannon street railway accident were *(a)* made available to the media, with or without an embargo, *(b)* published by HMSO, *(c)* placed in the Library and *(d)* made available in the Vote Office.

Mr. Freeman: The inspector's report was published by HMSO on 2 September. Unembargoed copies were made available to the media and placed in the House Library on the same day. There is no arrangement to place copies in the Vote Office.

Public Transport

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals Her Majesty's Government have for increasing access to public transport for women with young children.

Mr. Freeman: My Department has a long-standing commitment to improve access to public transport for people with mobility problems. This includes very large numbers of women with young children who are dependent on public transport, as well as elderly people and those with disabilities. We work closely with vehicle designers and manufacturers, public transport operators, local authorities and people with mobility problems as consumers, to promote and encourage greater recognition of their needs. One current example is the Department's support for a demonstration project of low-floor buses, which will provide easier access for all people with mobility problems and which will be of particular benefit to those travelling with prams and baby buggies.

Bus Services

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to improve bus services in England.

Mr. Freeman: Last December I announced a package of measures to help promote bus use, including financial support for bus priority measures.

European Airspace

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to avoid congestion in European airspace and to increase capacity.

Mr. Norris: The previous Secretary of State for Transport, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) chaired a meeting of Transport Ministers of the member states of the European civil aviation conference, ECAC, in London on 17 March. They reached agreement on a number of points, in particular to reaffirm the European en-route strategy, which was launched in 1990 to harmonise and integrate the operations of each country's individual air traffic control systems; to extend that strategy to include central and eastern European members of ECAC; to launch a new ECAC airports strategy to increase air traffic management capacity in the vicinity of airports; and to initiate work on investigations of new technologies and their impact on the later stages of the harmonisation and integration programme.

The United Kingdom continues to play a full part in the implementation of this work in co-operation with other bodies, including EUROCONTROL and the EC Commission. A further major European project is the creation by EUROCONTROL of a central flow management unit near Brussels. This will take on the functions of the national flow management units at London and four other European centres, and should bring major benefits to the management of traffic flows in Europe.

In the United Kingdom, the Civil Aviation Authority has embarked on its largest and most ambitious investment programme, totalling some £750 million, to provide the equipment, facilities and systems which will enable the increasing volume of air traffic to be handled. The two most significant projects are the new en-route centre, NERC, and the central control function, CCF. NERC, near Fareham, will provide a significant increase in airspace capacity in England and Wales. CCF is a radical change in the way in which airspace in London and south-east England is managed, and will also notably improve capacity. Additionally, recruitment of air traffic controllers by the CAA has increased from 67 in 1988-89 to a record level of 290 in 1991-92.

Jubilee Line Extension

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the estimated cost at 1992 or other prices of the proposed Jubilee line extension, together with the amount of that sum falling on public expenditure or contributed from other sources under specific conditions, either in respect of an approved scheme, or one approximating most closely to the requirements of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Norris: The current estimated cost of the Jubilee line extension in cash prices is £1,853 million, £1,415 million of this would fall on the public sector and £438 million on the private sector, based on the contributions originally promised. The particulars of those contributions are contained in the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) on 23 June, to which I refer the hon. Member.

Cargo Flights

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to the implications of the El Al flight crash in Amsterdam for the disposition of cargo flights at United Kingdom airports; if he will give consideration to the safety aspects at United Kingdom airports where the flight paths are over densely populated areas; if he will consider recommending increased use of airports where the flightpaths are over sea and countryside, for cargo flights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Department of Transport has taken advice from the CAA, including the National Air Traffic Services on this important matter.

Cargo flights by United Kingdom airlines are subject to the same airworthiness, maintenance and operational requirements as passenger flights, thus there is no reason to treat them differently from the point of view of the safety of third parties on the ground. Most of the major airports are near large centres of population and some of the flight paths unavoidably pass over built-up areas. The safety implications of the El Al accident for United Kingdom airports have been studied carefully by the

National Air Traffic Services. It will maintain its policy of giving the pilot of an aircraft in distress whatever help he requests to effect a safe landing.

ENVIRONMENT

Homelessness

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households were accepted as homeless in each standard economic region, including Greater London, in each year since 1979 to the latest date available.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) on 17 June, *Official Report*, column *569*.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider how best to help homeless persons who do not qualify for housing benefit because they are not in rented accommodation and cannot afford the deposit and advance rent to enable them to obtain rented accommodation; and if he will discuss with the Housing Corporation whether a starter loan or grant scheme could be devised under its auspices.

Mr. Baldry: Under the Government's rough sleepers initiative, my Department is funding the Notting Hill housing trust to operate a rent deposit fund. Our grant enables NHHT to provide homeless people with the deposits they need to gain access to accommodation in the private rented sector.

This is a 15-month pilot project which is due to finish at the end of June 1993. We will then evaluate the results.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homeless people were recorded in *(a)* 1990 and *(b)* 1979 by English local authorities.

Mr. Baldry: The available information represents the numbers of homeless households for whom local authorities in England accepted responsibility for securing permanent accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 and the Housing Act 1985.

The information is as follows:

Year	*Households accepted as homeless*
1979	55,530
1990	140,350

A new reporting system was introduced for non-metropolitan districts from the fourth quarter 1980 and for the other authorities from the third quarter of 1982. Figures are therefore not strictly comparable over the whole period.

Ms. Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how his Department plans to distinguish between genuine pregnancies and pregnancies conceived purely for purposes of gaining access to priority housing waiting lists.

Mr. Baldry: The homelessness legislation, which can confer priority need for accommodation on pregnant women, makes no such distinction.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial provisions, and how much, he has made within his Department in order to look at the potential for deregulation of each of the regulatory measures for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Redwood: All of my staff with responsibility for particular aspects of policy have the task of seeking opportunities for deregulation. It is not practicable to identify the separate financial and staff provision. I have asked them to identify licences for abolition, and develop less bureaucratic procedures for grants and regulatory action.

Recycled Materials

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce a duty of care for recycled materials.

Mr. Maclean: The duty of care introduced on 1 April under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 covers all controlled waste, including material intended for recycling.

Housing Improvement Grants

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each local authority area in England and Wales the number of mandatory housing improvement grants approved and granted in each year since 1987; and if he will indicate the percentage in respect of housing stock in the private sector.

Mr. Baldry: Two grant systems have been in operation during this period. The first, under the Housing Act 1985, ended in March 1990, although payments continue for grants approved before that date. The second, under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, largely came into force from July 1990 in England and Wales.

Under the earlier system, mandatory grants were given to meet the cost of improving homes by putting in missing standard amenities such as baths, hot and cold water supplies and inside WCs. Discretionary grants were made towards the costs of improving homes to a good standard or to provide additional housing through conversions. In effect all intermediate grants and some special and repair grants were mandatory.

The current system also involves different types of grant. The mandatory elements are renovation grant for repairs required to bring a property up to the fitness standard; disabled facilities grant for essential works to make a dwelling more suitable for occupation by a disabled person; and both the houses in multiple occupation (HMO) grant and the common parts grant where a statutory repairs notice has been served. Grants are otherwise discretionary. All renovation, common parts and HMO grants are payable solely to the private sector.

Tables have been deposited in the Library showing the numbers of mandatory grants paid under the old system from 1987 to 1989. They also show for intermediate grants only the amounts paid to the private sector; a similar breakdown is not available for special or repair grants.

Total payments of intermediate, special and repair grants in 1990 and 1991 are shown in table 4 of "Local Housing Statistics" issue No. 101, a copy of which is in the

Library. Information about the mandatory component of special and repair grants is not available for this period nor can payments of intermediate grants to the private sector be separately identified.

There is no information available about grant approvals under the earlier system.

Mandatory grants paid under the new system are also shown in table 4 of "Local Housing Statistics". Local authority level information about grants approved and of payments of disabled facilities grant to the private sector are not published, and tables have been deposited in the Library showing the available information.

The answer covers English local authorities as the Department is responsible for housing policy only in England.

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each local authority area in England and Wales the number of mandatory housing improvement grants approved but not yet granted; and what the cost to each local authority of meeting those grants will be.

Mr. Baldry: The Department does not collect this data directly. However information is collected on both approvals and grants paid under the improvement grant system established by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, and this question can be answered for some local authorities by comparing the cumulative totals of the grants they have approved with grants paid.

A table prepared on this basis, covering those authorities which have provided the Department with complete information about their grant approvals and payments for the whole period from the start of the scheme in July 1990 to end-June 1992, has been deposited in the Library. The table covers mandatory renovation, houses in multiple occupation, common parts and disabled facilities grants. It relates to English local authorities as the Department is responsible for housing policy only in England.

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the need to review the standard spending assessment criteria for north-east Lancashire to reflect the demand for mandatory housing improvemment grants.

Mr. Robin Squire: We have had a number of representations from local authorities in the north-east Lancashire area concerning the resources available to meet demand for mandatory housing improvement grants. None of these, however, was specifically concerned with standard spending assessments.

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each local authority area in England and Wales the percentage of their annual expenditure relating to the payment of mandatory housing improvements grants for each year since 1987.

Mr. Baldry: I have arranged for the available information to be placed in the Library of the House.

Information for Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Wales.

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has given to local authorities in England and Wales about meeting the demand for mandatory housing improvement grants; and what information he has on the number of authorities that are reducing non-statutory provision of services in order to meet that demand.

Mr. Baldry: Advice was issued to all local housing authorities in England in the Department's Circular 12/90 about the funding arrangements for house renovation grants and the flexibility these provide to help authorities to meet the demand for mandatory grants. It is for authorities to decide the balance between their statutory and non-statutory expenditure within the total resources available to them. Information on this is not systematically collected by the Department. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is responsible for giving advice to local authorities in Wales.

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each local authority area in England and Wales the number of mandatory housing improvement grant applications awaiting approval.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not available in the Department.

City Challenge Bids

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish *(a)* the criteria used to decide which of the city challenge bids were to be supported and which rejected and *(b)* the technical assessments made on each of the city challenge bids.

Mr. Robin Squire: The second round of city challenge, for which bids were required by 22 April, was open to all 57 urban priority areas. Fifty-four bids were received and each was assessed against the aims and criteria set out in the "City Challenge Bidding Guidance 1993-94", which was published in February 1992. A copy of the guidance is in the Library of the House. The assessment process included consideration of the written bids and analysis of projected outputs involving all the relevant Government Departments, regional presentations to officials and meetings with Ministers.

Hedgerows

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the best estimates of the amount of loss of hedgerows in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years; and what proportion of the total amount of hedgerow the same represent.

Mr. Maclean: The information is not available in this form. The survey carried out by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology as part of my Department's countryside survey 1990 contains the most up to date figures. These indicate that between 1984 and 1990 there was a net loss of some 121,000 km—around 76,000 miles—of hedgerows in Great Britain, making up 22 per cent. of the total hedgerow stock. This includes losses due to poor management as well as deliberate removal. There are no figures currently available for Northern Ireland.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration the EC Environment Council has given to the proposal drafted by the European

Commission concerning the effect of the Swedish Government's proposed ban on the use of products containing CFCs and HCFCs on Sweden's plans to join the European Community.

Mr. Maclean: None.

Marine Pollution

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent meeting of the Paris convention on marine pollution; and if he will arrange for the United Kingdom papers presented to the meeting to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Maclean: The Commission established by the Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution from Land-Based Sources (the Paris Convention) held its annual meeting at official level in Paris on 15, 16 and 19 September, and its annual joint meeting with the Commission established by the Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft (the Oslo Convention) on 17 to 19 September. The progress of work by the Paris Commission was reviewed and the final texts of a number of decisions and recommendations were established. I am placing in the Library of the House copies of the papers submitted by the United Kingdom to those meetings.

A joint meeting of the Oslo and Paris commissions at ministerial level was also held in Paris on 21 and 22 September. I represented the United Kingdom. At this meeting we agreed a new Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North east Atlantic. I welcome the co-operation and commitment of all the constracting parties which have allowed us to achieve an agreement which establishes an effective framework for future protection of the marine environment from all kinds of pollution. We also adopted a declaration setting out the aims we shall all pursue under the convention and an action plan for protecting our seas into the next century.

In addition we adopted the decisions and recommendations whose texts had been prepared by the official meetings the previous week. The United Kingdom did not present any papers to this meeting.

Tameside Unitary Development Plan

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to set up a public inquiry into the Tameside unitary development plan.

Mr. Baldry: Tameside metropolitan borough council will, in due course, put their unitary development plan on deposit and invite formal representations. If objections are made at this time the council will arrange an inquiry and the Secretary of State will be asked to appoint an inspector.

Opencast Mining (Asthma)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider the report by J M F Temple and A M Sykes on asthma and opencast mining in the *British Medical Journal* of 15 August 1992 before completing his review of MPG3.

Mr. Baldry: My Department will take into account all representations received that are material to revising the guidelines.

Household Statistics

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of English households in 1991 *(a)* lacked or shared a bath or shower, *(b)* had no inside wc, *(c)* had no central heating or *(d)* lived in a density of more than one per room.

Mr. Baldry: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) has to date published only a selection of 1991 census results in the county monitor series (CEN 91 CM).

The England percentages given are provisional as they are derived directly from the rounded statistics in those monitors. National level results will be released by OPCS in November 1992 and more detailed results in county reports later this year and in 1993.

	Household percent
a) + b) lacking/sharing a bath/shower and/or an inside wc	1·7
c) lacking central heating	18·5
d) living in a density of more than one per room	2·1

European Inspectors

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made with the concept of an inspectorate of European inspectors.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom put a proposal for such an inspectorate to the Environment Council last December. It has attracted support from several quarters including a number of member states. The European Commission is considering whether to make a formal proposal; we shall continue to encourage them to do so.

Waste Water Directive

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the definition of sensitive waters to be applied in compliance with the European Community municipal waste water directive.

Mr. Maclean: A consultation paper on the criteria for identifying sensitive areas and less sensitive areas under the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (UWWTD) and polluted waters under the Nitrates Directive was issued in March this year. We plan to publish the decisions made following consideration of responses in the autumn as part of a second consultation paper. This second paper will make proposals on the basis for identifying sensitive areas (UWWTD) and designating vulnerable zones (Nitrates Directive).

Coastal Superquarries

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's policy towards the creation of coastal superquarries.

Mr. Baldry: My Department considers that coastal superquarries may be able to make a useful contribution to future aggregate requirements in England. Their potential will be taken into account in the current review of "Mineral Planning Guidance Note 6" on the provision for aggregates in England and Wales. Individual applications will of course be considered on their own merits, having full regard to all the environmental implications.

THORP Plant (Discharges)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish, and in what form, the decisions or authorisation of discharges from the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield, including any authorisation for Krypton 85; when such decisions will be made public; and whether he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Maclean: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will shortly issue draft authorisations relating to the BNFL site at Sellafield, including the thermal oxide reprocessing plant (THORP) and Krypton 85 emissions, providing in accordance with normal practice the opportunity for local authorities, public bodies and members of the public to comment. Full consideration will be given to views that are expressed.

I will arrange for copies of the draft authorisations, when issued, to be placed in the Library.

Orimulsion

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to set efficiency standards of between 95 and 100 per cent. efficiency for all electrostatic precipitators which will be operated by the power generators in conjunction with the burning of orimulsion; and if he will ensure that no power station can commence with the burning of orimulsion until such efficiency standards are fully met.

Mr. Maclean: The burning of orimulsion or other fuels at a power station requires an authorisation from HMIP. They set conditions and standards consistent with the use of the best available techniques not entailing excessive cost to prevent or minimise pollution. These normally include limits on the concentration of particulate matter released, as this provides effective protection of the local environment and is easily checked. Efficiency standards for arrestment equipment may also be included, particularly if the process generates a significant amount of particulate matter.

I therefore do not propose to set efficiency standards for electrostatic precipitators. No power station will be authorised unless the enforcing authority considers that it will be able to comply with the conditions which would be included in the authorisation.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment has been made by his Department on the levels of vanadium and nickel to be released into the atmosphere from the proposed burning of orimulsion at the Pembroke power station.

Mr. Maclean: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution (HMIP) is currently considering the application from National Power to burn orimulsion at Pembroke power station. HMIP has a duty to consider fully all available facts in coming to a decision on the determination of an application. In determining the application, an assessment of harm, and the question of limits and consents for releases, including vanadium and nickel, to all media are all being studied by HMIP, as are the techniques and cost implications for means of prevention.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to announce its decision on the National Power application to burn orimulsion at Padiham power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: HMIP has agreed to a request from National Power for an extension of the determination period so that they may present further information to assist its application. In agreeing to this extension, HMIP has indicated to National Power that on the information presented so far it does not believe that the burning of orimulsion at Padiham power station would be justified without further measures to protect the environment.

Toxic Waste Incinerator, Howdon

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be in a position to announce his decision on the application to build a toxic waste incinerator at Howdon.

Mr. Maclean: The decision will be announced shortly.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent discussions his Department has had with its French and German counterparts concerning *(a)* the import of Australian origin PCB toxic waste into the European Community in August and *(b)* the transfrontier trade in hazardous waste between member states of the European Community.

Mr. Maclean: The transfrontier movement of hazardous wastes, including movements within the Community, is being discussed during the negotiations on the draft EC Waste Shipments Regulation. There have been no discussions with our Community partners about Australian PCB wastes.

Landfill Sites

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the date of publication of his Department's guidance to the regulatory authorities on the nature of the completion certificate that will be issued to the owner of landfill sites.

Mr. Maclean: The Department has not yet published this guidance. We shall shortly be issuing a draft of advice on the subject of how surrender of licences should be judged, and we will be inviting comments on that draft.

Oxleas Wood

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last visited Oxleas wood, south-east London; when he last had communication with the European Commission regarding the east London river crossing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: English Nature, my right hon. Friend's advisor on matters relating to sites of special scientific interest, has visited Oxleas wood on several occasions, most recently on 16 July 1992.

There have been a number of exchanges between the Government and the Commission on the East London river crossing in connection with the application of the EIA directive, 85/337 EEC. In July 1992 the Commission announced its decision to issue a reasoned opinion under article 169 of the treaty of Rome. This has not yet been received.

Drinking Water Inspectorate

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward proposals to enhance the independence of the drinking water inspectorate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend on 15 July 1992 to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones), *Official Report*, column 858.

Home Energy Efficiency Scheme

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses in the network installer area including the Birmingham, Northfield constituency have been improved under the home energy efficiency scheme since its inception in 1991.

Mr. Maclean: Within the network installer area which contains the hon. Member's constituency, 1,740 homes have benefited from HEES grant since 1 January 1991.

Business Rates

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications have been made for relief of hardship under section 49 of the Local Government and Finance Act 1988 from small businesses for each year since the introduction of the uniform business rate.

Mr. Robin Squire: Information on the number of applications for relief which have been received by local authorities is not available. In 1990-91, 13 authorities granted hardship relief totalling £23,582. Of the 346 authorities which have so far submitted returns for 1991-92, 47 have granted relief totalling £166,501.

Housing Corporation

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy not to cut the Housing Corporation's £2 billion projected approved development programme.

Mr. Baldry: The Government's public expenditure plans will be announced by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his autumn statement.

Special Housing

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the level of development of special housing units for the elderly and disabled from 1980 to 1992.

Mr. Baldry: Estimates of starts and completions of specialised housing units for the elderly and disabled in England are shown in the publication "Housing and Construction Statistics".

Figures for 1980 to 1990 are in table 6.7 of "Housing and Construction Statistics, Great Britain—1980-1990" and figures for 1991 and the first six months of 1992 are in table 1.5 of "Housing and Construction Statistics, Great Britain June Quarter 1992"—issue 50.

Copies of all these publications are in the Library.

Housing Associations

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how rents are set by housing associations in relation to average income, by region.

Mr. Baldry: For tenants of registered housing associations whose tenancies commenced after 15 January 1989, rents are set by individual housing associations in accordance with their overall rent policy. In setting rents for property provided with the help of public subsidy, associations must have regard to the tenants' guarantee, issued by the Housing Corporation, which requires them to set rents within the reach of those on low incomes, whether or not they are in receipt of housing benefit.

For tenants of registered housing associations whose tenancy began before 15 January 1989 rents are set by the rent officer under the Rent Act 1977. He or she will take into account the age, character, locality and state of repair of dwelling whilst disregarding any shortage of similar accommodation in the area. Rent officers must disregard the personal circumstances—including incomes—of an individual.

Peat Bogs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to save peat bogs from destruction and to treat the threat as a national heritage crisis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Government fully recognise the need for conserving peat bogs which are of nature conservation importance and are actively taking steps to resolve conflicts between peat extraction and nature conservation. As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary announced on 7 July 1992 in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) *Official Report* column *158*, my Department has set up a working group to advise on peat extraction and related matters. We have also commissioned research to prepare guidance on the rehabilitation of peatlands affected by peat extraction and, supported a number of initiatives to safeguard key bogs in England and Wales from further peat extraction.

Council Tax

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has had about council tax reductions for blind people; what replies he has sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department has received three letters about council tax reductions for blind people. One of these was from the right hon. Gentleman. A copy of my right hon. Friend's reply of 2 October is being sent to all local authorities. I will also arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

RECHAR

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the status of Nottinghamshire bids for RECHAR moneys from the EC currently blocked by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Department is not blocking bids for RECHAR moneys in Nottinghamshire. The East

Midlands RECHAR programme committee has recently approved 16 projects which will attract grant worth approximately £2 million.

Groundwater Levels

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what consultations he has had with the National Rivers Authority, the local authority associations and the water companies concerning statutory responsibility for monitoring and regulating rising and falling levels of groundwater underneath urban areas of England and Wales;

(2) what representations he has had concerning responsibility for monitoring and regulating changes in groundwater level.

Mr. Maclean: My Department has regular contact with the National Rivers Authority (NRA) which, under the Water Resources Act 1991, has responsibilities for the general management of water resources in England and Wales. It monitors the quality and levels of groundwater, and regulates abstraction through licences. We receive representations about groundwater matters from time to time.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken by his Department in support of European Community policy on groundwater protection with particular regard to *(a)* education and training schemes and *(b)* improvement in public awareness.

Mr. Maclean: Following the EC ministerial declaration on groundwater in the Hague last year, continued work in England and Wales is being undertaken by the National Rivers Authority. The NRA published a consultation paper in November 1991 setting out proposals for the protection of groundwater, which has increased public awareness of groundwater.

Second London Forum

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received since his announcement of 14 July of the establishment of a second London forum; by what means he expects the knowledge and opinion of London borough councils, all London statutory bodies and agencies, and London civic and amenity organisations will be represented on his proposed body; and if he will reconsider its proposed title.

Sir George Young: We have received a number of representations about our proposals for the London Forum. They include some from civic and amenity societies about the proposed name, and we have undertaken to consider this issue further. The forum will need to establish close working links with other organisations in London in the private, public and voluntary sectors, and we have proposed a formal consultative group to facilitate this process.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the present position of the application by UK Nirex Ltd. to seek permission to *(a)* sink bore holes and *(b)* construct an underground rock research laboratory, in connection with plans to assess the suitability of the area adjoining Sellafield for a radioactive waste repository.

Mr. Maclean: Following UK Nirex's appeal against the Lake District Special Planning Board's refusal to allow its application for planning permission to drill boreholes 8 and 9 in the national park, and Cumbria county council's refusal of planning permission to drill borehole 11 outside the national park, a public inquiry is due to start on 24 November. I understand that the Lake District Special Planning Board has also refused permission to drill borehole 9A in the national park and that Cumbria county council has not yet reached a decision on Nirex's application to drill borehole 13. No application to construct an underground rock research laboratory has been made by Nirex.

Environment Know-How Fund

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list and give full details of projects agreed under the environment know-how fund announced in June 1991.

Mr. Maclean: The environmental know-how fund, which is a dedicated section of the know-how fund for central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, is going well. Some £315,000 has now been spent or committed to over 25 projects, with a further £700,000 or so in the pipeline. Other western Governments are using the know-how fund as a model for their own.

A list of the activities approved since April 1992 under the environmental know-how fund is currently being compiled and I will write to the hon. Member.

Ozone-destroying Chemicals

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new measures he intends to introduce to reduce the use of ozone-destroying chemicals.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom, together with the EC, will be pressing for the phase out dates in the Montreal protocol for the production and consumption of ozone-depleting substances to be brought forward to 1 January 1996 at the latest. We will also be pressing for strict controls on HCFCs to be included in the revised protocol and for methyl bromide to be made a controlled substance. The United Kingdom is also seeking agreement, within the EC, to new phase out schedules for ozone depleting chemicals, which will be included in a revised EC regulation.

Nottingham City Council

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much capital receipts from council house sales and so on are currently held and unable to be spent by Nottingham city council due to current restrictions; and what were the figures for each of the years since the restrictions were introduced.

Mr. Robin Squire: Separate figures for set aside capital receipts are not held centrally. Such receipts are included within an authority's provision for credit liabilities. That provision is available for repaying debt and meeting payments under credit arrangements. The provision for credit liabilities, and the outstanding debt, reported by Nottingham city council were as follows:

	Provision for Credit Liabilities (£ million)	*Outstanding Debt (£ million)*
1 April 1990	41	[1]—
1 April 1991	52	355
1 April 1992	61	356

[1] Not available.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will lift restrictions on Nottingham city council to allow it to spend the capital receipts which it currently holds.

Mr. Robin Squire: Local authorities may currently spend 25 per cent. of their capital receipts from the sale of council houses and 50 per cent. of most other receipts. The balance may be used to meet credit liabilities. If authorities were allowed to spend a larger proportion of their receipts, the total of spending by the public sector and the public sector borrowing requirement would be increased. We therefore have no plans to change these arrangements.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to receive the second report from the Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment; and if he will make a statement on progress made to date in implementing the actions Her Majesty's Government agreed to undertake arising from recommendations made in the first Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment report.

Mr. Eggar: The Government received the second report of the Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment (ACBE) in July and published it together with the Government's response on 22 September. A separate report on progress in implementing the recommendations of ACBE's first report was published the same day. I am sending the hon. Member a copy of both publications, which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Environmental Schemes

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the proportion of awards to applications made by industries, respectively, to the *(a)* environmental management options scheme, *(b)* environmental technology innovations scheme and *(c)* Euroenviron scheme, as managed by his Department; and if he will indicate for each scheme the average lead time, respectively, between application and award or notification of rejection.

Mr. Eggar: The Department's three environmental technology support schemes all entail a two stage application process. The figures given below therefore indicate the proportion of applications rejected at each stage. The average lead times quoted include the time taken to find project partners and the time taken by applicants to submit Stage 2 applications and provide information needed to enable the appraisal to take place, as well as the time taken to undertake technical and financial appraisals by DTI and the scheme consultants. The environmental technology innovation scheme (ETIS) is jointly administered by DTI and DoE and figures for applications referred to DoE are also included. The information requested is as follows:

Departmental Environmental Management Options Scheme (Demos)

Applications approved

Proportion of stage 1 applications invited to stage 2:	36 per cent.
Of these, proportion as yet received by DTI:	30 per cent.
Stage 2 applications approved:	19 per cent.

Average lead times

Stage 1 application to final approval:	11 months
Rejected at stage 1:	9 weeks
Rejected at stage 2:	7 months

Environmental Technology Innovation Scheme (ETIS)

DTI

Applications approved

Proportion of Stage 1 applications invited to Stage 2:	19 per cent.
Of these, proportion as yet received by DTI:	35 per cent.
Stage 2 applications approved:	38 per cent.

Average lead times

Stage 1 application to final approval:	10 months
Rejected at stage 1:	7 weeks
Rejected at stage 2:	5 months

DoE

Applications approved

Proportion of stage 1 applications invited to stage 2:	16 per cent.
Of these, proportion as yet received by DoE:	20 per cent.
Proportion of stage 2 applications approved:	86 per cent.

Average lead times

Stage 1 application to final approval:	10 months
Rejected at stage 2:	None

Note: At stage 1, a joint decision is taken as to which Department will deal with the application. Broadly speaking, DoE deal with applications which are standards related and DTI with the rest.

Euroenviron

Applications approved

Proportion of stage 1 applications invited to stage 2:	100 per cent.
Of these, proportion as yet received by DTI:	17 per cent.
Proportion of stage 2 applications approved:	75 per cent.

Note: There are a number of applications in the pipeline which may yet proceed to stage 2.

Average lead times

From stage 1 to final approval:	9 months
Rejected at stage 1:	None rejected
Rejected at stage 2:	None

Note: If applicants invited to stage 2 do not proceed any further with their application after 12 months, they are notified that no further action will be taken until such time as they decide to resurrect their project proposal.

Cleaner Technology Database

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has for establishing a clearing house database of information on cleaner technology.

Mr. Eggar: My Department intends to support the establishment of a centre to provide information and advice on cleaner technology. A feasibility study carried out this year showed a demand for it and work is currently in hand to determine the services to be offered and the mechanisms of operation.

Industrial Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many copies of his new departmental publication "Cutting your Losses" on industrial waste minimisation have been printed; to whom they have been distributed or made available; and at what total cost to date.

Mr. Eggar: A total of 30,000 copies of "Cutting Your Losses 2" have been printed.

They have been distributed or made available to a wide range of companies and organisations across the United Kingdom. These include targeted companies in the waste producing and waste management industries and in potentially highly polluting sectors of industry, trade associations and chambers of commerce, local authorities and waste disposal authorities, national business organisations, environmental voluntary organisations, technological institutions and research establishments, DTI regional offices, DoE and other Government Departments. In addition many companies and individuals requesting the booklet have received copies on an ad hoc basis.

The total cost to date of producing and distributing the publication is £87,887.

Eastern Europe

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what commitments were made by the United Kingdom to provide financial and technical aid to the nuclear industries of eastern European countries during the meeting of OECD member states in Brussels held in mid-September.

Mr. Eggar: The meeting of the G24 nuclear safety working group on 14 and 15 September was held to develop further the arrangements for the coordination of nuclear safety assistance to the countries of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and not for the purpose of making additional commitments of assistance. The United Kingdom will be playing an important part in the provision of such assistance both bilaterally and through the European Community's PHARE and TACIS programmes.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many reportable incidents at the B205 reprocessing plant at Sellafield have been brought to the attention of his Department and predecessor departments with responsibility for British Nuclear Fuels, since the system of reporting radiological incidents was established.

Mr. Eggar: The arrangements for reporting nuclear incidents at civil nuclear installations to my Department and its precursor were most recently revised in 1987. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) to a question from the then Member for Sherwood, Mr. Stewart, *Official Report*, 30 April 1987, c. *203-4*.

Since April 1987 there have been four "formally reportable" incidents involving Building B205. These occurred in 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1992. Details have been contained in weekly site newsletters which have been made available to the Library of the House.

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what communications his Department has received in regard to the environmental safety issues posed by the movement of plutonium since 10 August.

Mr. Eggar: My Department has received a number of such communications. The carriage of plutonium is only allowed subject to compliance with stringent international standards. Appropriate measures are taken to ensure the security of these movements.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what financial provisions, and how much, he has made within his Department in order to look at the potential for deregulation of each of the regulatory measures for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Responsibility for identifying and exploiting the potential for deregulation is shared by Ministers and by all those advising Ministers on the formulation, implementation and enforcement of regulations. DTI has a departmental deregulation unit which is responsible to me for promoting progress within DTI under the Government's deregulation initiative. For the current financial year, the unit's running costs are approximately £100,000. The central deregulation unit is also located in my Department. It is responsible for driving forward the Deregulation Initiative across the whole of Whitehall generally by assisting all departmental deregulation units. The aim of the deregulation initiative is to reduce significantly administrative and regulatory burdens on business. The initiative has three main objectives: better existing regulation, by cutting unnecessary burdens on business and reducing compliance and enforcement costs; effective new regulation, by ensuring that potential costs and the views of business are accounted for in framing and implementing new regulation; and greater official awareness of the views and needs of business.

Secondments

Mr. Sproat: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give the number of civil servants seconded from his Department to the private sector in each year since 11 June 1987 and the number of those from the private sector seconded to his Department in each year since 1987.

Mr. Eggar: The number of DTI staff on secondment to the private sector in each year since 11 June 1987 and the number of those from the private sector on secondment to DTI over the same period were as follows:

11 June 1987—31 December Calendar Year	*Secondments to DTI*	*Secondments from DTI*
1987	35	26
1988	37	28
1989	44	49
1990	44	70
1991	43	62

Privatisation

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list in respect of each privatisation since 1979 within his Department and the Department of Energy *(a)* the loss or profit of each company in the five years prior to privatisation and *(b)* the grants and loans made to the companies over the same period.

Mr. Eggar: The information cannot be provided except at disproportionate cost. Such information as is readily available on the finances of privatised bodies when they were in the public sector can be found in the following published sources:

For the years up to and including 1989: Parts 2 of the annual volume "The Government's Expenditure Plans".

For 1990 and 1991: the annual Statistical Supplement to the Autumn Statement.

These were published by HMSO in the Command series and are available in the House of Commons Library.

Car Industry Exhibition

Mr. Mills: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the car and car component industry to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall during the week starting 7 December.

Mr. Sainsbury: Yes, I look forward to opening the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders exhibition in the Upper Waiting Hall on 7 December 1992 in celebration of their 90th anniversary.

Mersey Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what representations he has received concerning the use of the non-fossil fuel levy and the Mersey barrage project and funding proposals for it;

(2) if he will make a statement on the funding of the Mersey barrage project; what representations he has received concerning funding instruments for the project; what proposals he has for a government contribution towards the cost of final design studios; and what consultations he has had with the private sector shareholders in the Mersey Barrage Company, shipping navigation and nature conservation interests concerning outstanding objections.

Mr. Eggar: Results of the work undertaken to date on the Mersey barrage, indicate that the construction of a tidal energy barrage across the river Mersey could generate electricity at 8·2 p/kWh (8 per cent. discount rate, 1991 prices). It now seems very unlikely that these costs could be substantially reduced by further work.

The financing plan developed by the Mersey Barrage Company (MBC) is detailed in its phase III report. This envisages a 25-year contract with a purchase price of 6·75p/kWh as part of the a future round under the non-fossil fuel obligation. The plan assumes that the equivalent of 2p/kWh of this, to be discounted at zero per cent. in real terms, would be paid as advance payments during construction. This advance payment equates to a £700 million contribution towards the barrage's estimated construction costs of around £1 billion. The remaining 4·75p/kWh would be paid over the first 25 years of the barrage's operation.

My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and I met representatives of the MBC, including shareholders, to discuss possible ways forward for further studies into the proposed Mersey barrage, last July. We discussed suggestions by the MBC for a fourth stage of studies. It is estimated that these would cost £12 million, and would take the barrage up to the stage of requiring parliamentary approval for construction, subject to the availability of an appropriate funding mechanism.

As well as electricity generation, a Mersey barrage has a number of non energy costs and benefits, such as improved leisure facilities and an effect on local wildlife and shipping, that need to be considered. The most recent studies of the barrage were aimed at reducing the uncertainty associated with these issues, and I was aware of the findings of the work. In coming to a decision on further funding for the barrage there was a need to weigh the cost to the electricity consumer of financing the barrage, with consideration of the other costs and benefits of the barrage. On balance my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and I told the MBC that we could not justify the expenditure of public money for the studies they suggested.

We await the final report of the most recent studies into the proposed barrage, and will, of course, consider any further proposals from the MBC.

European Energy Chapter

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what date the basic protocol of the European energy chapter was signed on behalf of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: The basic agreement of the European energy chapter is currently under negotiation.

Companies House

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the terms of reference, method of appointment and cost of the consultancy study into the future operation and role of Companies house.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Terms of reference for the consultancy study on the future operation and role of Companies house were contained in a Department of Trade and Industry press notice issued on 14 October. Consultants for this work were engaged using the Department's normal competitive tendering procedures, under which consultancy costs remain commercially confidential.

Research and Technology

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much funding is currently allocated by his Department towards long-term research programmes for research and technology organisations; and if he will list the research and technology organisations currently given funding for such research.

Mr. Leigh: The funding currently committed for research programmes at research and technology organisations is £29 million during the current year and the following two years. The organisations currently receiving support for their research programmes are shown on the attached list.

Research and Technology Organisations currently receiving DTI funding:

AMTRI: Advanced Manufacturing Technology Research Institute
BHRA: British Hydromechanics Research Association
BCRA: British Ceramic Research Association
BCIRA: British Cast Iron Research Association
BGIRA: British Glass Industry Research Association
BLC: British Leather Confederation
BMT: British Maritime Technology
BTTG: British Textile Technology Group
BNF Metals Technology Centre
CATRA: Cutlery & Allied Trades Association
Contract Flooring Association
ERA Technology Ltd.
FCRA: Fabric Care Research Association
Fulmer Materials Technology
FIRA: Furniture Industry Research Association
MIRA: The Motor Industry Research Association
NCC: National Computing Centre
PERA: Production Engineering Research Association
PIRA: Paper, Printing & Packaging Research Association
PRA: The Paint Research Association
Rapra Technology Ltd.
Ricardo Consulting Engineers Ltd.
SATRA Footwear Technology Centre
SCRATA: Steel Castings Research & Trade Association
SIRA Ltd.
SRAMA: Spring Research & Manufacturers Association
TWI: The Welding Institute
TRADA: Timber Research and Development Association

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to establish an Industrial Research and Technology Council.

Mr. Leigh: No plans exist to establish such a council.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will make it his policy to require Faraday centres to operate as a network, to include other research and technology organisations and to provide a full service of assistance with innovation;

(2) what steps are being undertaken by his Department to enhance the status, role and capability of intermediate organisations engaged in technology development and transfer.

Mr. Leigh: My Department is currently consulting widely on the needs of industry which could be met by intermediate organisations and on what improvements, if any, are necessary to enhance their present capabilities. The Faraday proposals, presented to Government by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales's working group on innovation, and their possible networking are being considered as part of this process.

A pilot programme has already been initiated to test the feasibility of enhancing the training and technology transfer role of five intermediate organisations via the training of postgraduate students. I refer the right hon. Gentleman to my Department's press release of 4 June 1992 (P/92/346).

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the work that his information unit has commissioned for Segal Quince Wickstead on the difficulties technologists have in convincing providers of finance of the merits of their case; and what action he is taking to encourage the development within banks of the expertise needed to recognise the soundness of technological proposals.

Mr. Leigh: Following discussions about support for innovative firms between the then Secretary of State and the clearing banks, the DTI innovation unit commissioned, in April 1992, a market assessment study of smaller firms' needs for better information about lending. The consultants, Segal Quince Wickstead, reported in August 1992 that whilst there is already a considerable amount of helpful information and advice already available in the market, little is directed towards the specific requirements of technology-based firms.

The Segal Quince Wickstead report has been circulated to about 30 key providers of capital and advice to small firms for their comments which are presently being received. When these have been analysed, my Department will discuss the conclusions with a consortium of banks and venture capital sources to determine what further action might be taken, hopefully on a joint basis.

My Department's innovation unit, in common with other parts of the Department such as small firms division and the regional offices, maintains a constant dialogue with providers of capital for small firms. The Department has supplied speakers for training courses organised internally by banks for their own staff and also to a wide range of other seminars and events concerned with improving understanding of this important topic.

Innovation and Manufacturing

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what efforts are being undertaken by his Department to strengthen the ties between innovation and manufacturing in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Leigh: DTI continues to encourage innovation in manufacturing industry through regional and development grant schemes, technology transfer and best practice awareness programmes and through the work of its innovation unit. The unit works closely with industry to educate the financial and business community about the importance nationally of innovation. The president's recent reorganisation of the Department has created sectoral divisions which, through an active dialogue with companies, will be better placed to champion the needs of industry throughout Government. This joint approach with industry is geared to improve United Kingdom firms' competitiveness, both nationally and internationally.

Civil Research and Development

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures are currently undertaken to encourage increased expenditure by United Kingdom companies on civil research and development.

Mr. Leigh: The Government seek to encourage companies to invest more in research and development by creating the right economic climate, for example, by reducing the tax burden on business. The main rate of corporation tax, at 33 per cent. is now the lowest in any G7 or EC country. In addition, the Government provide some £300 million per annum to United Kingdom companies through a variety of schemes designed to stimulate additional expenditure on research and development. The Government also seek to educate the financial community about the importance of research and development through, for example, the work of the DTI's innovation unit.

Airports

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the cross-subsidies that Stansted airport receives from Heathrow and Gatwick airports and the effect on other regional airports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no plans to refer this question to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Under the Airports Act 1986 the economic regulation of airports is a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority. The authority has discretionary powers to prevent subsidies which might harm other airports.

Postal Services

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade over what parts of the United Kingdom and over approximately what proportion of the area of the United Kingdom the delivery of letters and parcels is still combined at the point of final delivery.

Mr. Leigh: The information is not readily available to answer the hon. Member's question precisely. In major conurbations most, if not all, deliveries are exclusively letter or parcel. Parcel Force currently chooses to contract out parcel delivery to Royal Mail where this makes economic sense. The combined service mainly occurs in predominantly rural areas of the United Kingdom and, despite covering fairly large areas of the country, only relates to a very low population density.

Assisted Area Status

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received concerning assisted area status for the boroughs of Rossendale and Blackburn.

Mr. Sainsbury: My noble Friend Baroness Denton met a deputation of Members of Parliament and local government officials on 5 October. Written representations which include Rossendale and/or Blackburn have been received from the following organisations:

Lancashire county council;
Blackburn borough council;
Hyndburn and Rossendale borough councils (for Accrington and Rossendale travel-to-work area);
Rossendale borough council;
A consortium of East Lancashire boroughs (Blackburn, Burnley, Pendle, Hyndburn, Ribble Valley, and Rossendale).

In addition, numerous letters of support from local businesses were included with the submissions from Blackburn, Hyndburn and Rossendale.

Footwear

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he has now received from the European Commission an analysis of the economic case for the proposal to impose quantitative restrictions on imports of Chinese footwear;

(2) what representations he has received concerning the European Commission's proposal to impose quantitative restrictions on imports of Chinese footwear; and what has been the balance of those representations between support for and opposition to the proposal.

Mr. Needham: I have received many representations about the Commission's proposal divided broadly between footwear manufacturers who, with the exception of the largest United Kingdom producer, supported it and consumer, retail and importing interests who opposed it. I have recently written to all hon. Members who have expressed an interest in the matter to explain why, in the light of these representations and of the Commission's further economic analysis presented in late July, the Government have decided to oppose the proposal. A copy of my letter has been placed in the Library of the House.

Cloth Imports

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received concerning the import of cloth treated with pentachlorophenol into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Needham: We have received a number of letters calling for a ban on imports of pentachlorophenol-treated cloth and for a relaxation of effluent emission standards. We do not regard an import ban as practicable or consistent with the polluter-pays principle. Effluent emission standards are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Trade Statistics

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of the United Kingdom's trade in each of the past five years was in (1) US dollars, (2) sterling, (3) ECUs, (4) French francs, (5) German marks, (6) Danish kroner, (7) Irish punts, (8) Italian lire, (9) Greek drachmas, (10) Dutch guilders, (11) Spanish pesetas, (12) Belgian francs and (13) Portuguese escudos.

Mr. Needham: The information is not available. For purposes of official statistics all United Kingdom trade is valued in sterling.

Wind Power

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his Department's assessment of the proportion of United Kingdom energy requirements that could be supplied by wind power; and what action is being taken by the Government to make maximum use of this energy source.

Mr. Eggar: The Government is encouraging the exploitation of the potential for wind energy in the United Kingdom consistent with economic and environmental constraints, through measures including a comprehensive programme of research, development and demonstration and the orders under the non-fossil fuel obligation. The contribution from wind power is subject to many uncertainties including future fuel prices. My Department has estimated it could be equivalent to up to 10 per cent. of current electricity consumption by 2025.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 20 October 1992

TRANSPORT

Motorways (Toilets)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what new initiatives he intends to introduce to increase the number of toilets on motorways.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We announced on 6 August a substantial deregulation in the provision of motorway service areas—MSAs. This followed on from the commitment we gave in the citizens charter for more MSAs more quickly. In future MSAs may be more frequent—every 15 miles instead of around 30 miles; and the private sector, not the Department of Transport, will take the initiative in finding and acquiring sites and obtaining planning permission for the development of MSAs. We believe that the surest solution is to free the market to provide.

British Rail Provincial Business

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for the publication of British Rail's final response to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the provincial business sector.

Mr. Freeman: I have placed a copy of British Rail's response in the Library of the House. BR accepted all 41 recommendations that were addressed to it. Many have already been fully implemented, and BR has set out the action that it is taking, or intends to take, to implement the remainder. One recommendation, concerning the role of local authorities in supporting rail services, and the scope for creation of new passenger transport authorities, is a matter for the Government. Under the Government's proposals for the privatisation of British Rail, passenger transport authorities will continue their responsibilities for local services in their areas, and other local authorities will continue to have powers to contribute to enhanced rail services.

Our White Paper on the privatisation of BR sets out in detail our proposals for the future structure and financing of rail services; these proposals will lead to a fundamental reform of the railway, under which the private sector will progressively take over the operation of passenger services. We believe that the involvement of the private sector will bring a greater focus on the passenger and, therefore, lead to a more attractive and efficient network of passenger services. It would not be sensible to contemplate major changes in the role of local authorities until experience has been gained of the operation of the new franchising regime.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends publishing the paper on upgrading the railway network to continental freight loading gauge, referred to in the Government's response to the Transport Select Committee's report on preparations for the opening of the channel tunnel, second report, Session 1991-92.

Mr. Freeman: A paper setting out the practical and other problems associated with upgrading to a large continental loading gauge was published yesterday. I have placed copies in the Library of the House.

Ports

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are being taken within Government to consider issues relating to health and safety and training within British ports following the winding-up of the British Ports Federation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Steps are being taken within the industry to enable the health and safety and training activities currently being undertaken by the British Ports Federation to continue after the winding up of the federation later this year. These are currently still under discussion, but it is hoped that a positive outcome can be announced shortly.

Traffic Accidents

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many children *(a)* under the age of five years and *(b)* between the age of five years and 16 years were involved in road traffic accidents within each United Kingdom region in each year since 1985.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The table shows the number of reported road accident casualties aged under 16 by age group in each United Kingdom region in each year from 1985 to 1991.

Child[1] casualties—by region and age group: United Kingdom 1985-1991

Region	*Year*	*0-4*	*5-15*	*Total*
England				
North	1985	413	2,295	2,708
	1986	447	2,208	2,655
	1987	437	2,090	2,527
	1988	416	2,100	2,516
	1989	474	2,206	2,680
	1990	511	2,214	2,725
	1991	465	2,126	2,591
North West	1985	1,039	5,677	6,716
	1986	1,058	5,358	6,416
	1987	1,024	5,394	6,418
	1988	1,181	5,423	6,604
	1989	1,253	5,586	6,839
	1990	1,292	5,810	7,102
	1991	1,225	5,329	6,554
Yorkshire and Humberside	1985	696	3,723	4,419
	1986	649	3,591	4,240
	1987	622	3,534	4,156
	1988	702	3,496	4,198
	1989	785	3,771	4,556
	1990	759	3,858	4,617
	1991	677	3,553	4,230
East Midlands	1985	443	2,918	3,361
	1986	444	2,728	3,172
	1987	444	2,582	3,026
	1988	515	2,729	3,244
	1989	539	2,871	3,410
	1990	503	2,931	3,434
	1991	485	2,720	3,205

Region	*Year*	*0-4*	*5-15*	*Total*
West Midlands	1985	620	3,925	4,545
	1986	572	3,706	4,278
	1987	568	3,491	4,059
	1988	599	3,578	4,177
	1989	637	3,682	4,319
	1990	682	4,019	4,701
	1991	650	3,653	4,303
East Anglia	1985	242	1,314	1,556
	1986	187	1,315	1,502
	1987	195	1,338	1,533
	1988	273	1,380	1,653
	1989	236	1,418	1,654
	1990	264	1,416	1,680
	1991	250	1,307	1,557
South East	1985	1,973	12,959	14,932
	1986	2,016	12,416	14,432
	1987	2,065	11,763	13,828
	1988	2,111	11,825	13,936
	1989	2,239	12,249	14,488
	1990	2,192	12,130	14,322
	1991	1,984	10,814	12,798
South West	1985	409	2,864	3,273
	1986	379	2,646	3,025
	1987	386	2,420	2,806
	1988	396	2,562	2,958
	1989	420	2,553	2,973
	1990	423	2,567	2,990
	1991	668	2,186	2,854
England total[2]	1985	5,835	35,675	41,510
	1986	5,752	33,968	39,720
	1987	5,741	32,612	38,353
	1988	6,194	33,119	39,313
	1989	6,583	34,336	40,919
	1990	6,626	34,945	41,571
	1991	6,404	31,688	38,092
Wales	1985	363	1,849	2,212
	1986	365	1,816	2,181
	1987	356	1,799	2,155
	1988	404	1,883	2,287
	1989	436	2,071	2,507
	1990	415	2,045	2,460
	1991	411	1,932	2,343
Scotland	1985	772	4,284	5,056
	1986	759	3,883	4,642
	1987	699	3,745	4,444
	1988	733	3,579	4,312
	1989	731	3,750	4,481
	1990	795	3,814	4,609
	1991	735	3,421	4,156
Northern Ireland	[3]1985	—	—	—
	1986	273	1,220	1,493
	1987	292	1,246	1,538
	1988	305	1,321	1,626
	1989	371	1,333	1,704
	1990	355	1,424	1,779
	1991	315	1,220	1,535
United Kingdom[2]	[3]1985	—	—	—
	1986	7,149	40,887	48,036
	1987	7,088	39,402	46,490
	1988	7,636	39,902	47,538
	1989	8,121	41,490	49,611
	1990	8,191	42,228	50,419
	1991	7,865	38,261	46,126

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[1] Aged under 16. Does not include age not reported.

[2] Includes region not reported.

[3] 1985 data for Northern Ireland not available.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the result of his Department's research into the incidence and causes of tyre failures among heavy goods vehicles on motorways.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: A survey of tyre tread debris left by 157 tyres on the M4 motorway was carried out between June and October 1991. The debris consisted of 72—46 per cent.—new—first used—tyres and 84—54 per cent. retreads. Only one piece of debris was of unknown type.

Tyre failure by heavy goods vehicles on motorways is almost invariably the result of tyres overheating. This can be a consequence of overloading, under-inflation—or both —running under-inflated following a penetration or running for long periods at higher speeds than those for which the tyres were designed at their maximum load.

I have arranged for a copy of the Transport Research Laboratory's working paper—Ref.: WP/VS/222—to be placed in the Library.

Transport Infrastructure

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how he estimates the value of regeneration benefits of transport infrastructure improvements.

Mr. MacGregor: Regeneration benefits, unlike the other benefits of a transport scheme, are predominantly benefits to the locality often achieved at the cost of less activity elsewhere. They are, therefore, counted "below the line" in a scheme appraisal, not as part of the gains to the national economy. This is standard Government practice in the appraisal of industrial and regional assistance.

Attempts at valuation generally focus on forecast increases in the value of commercial and industrial land in the immediate area. In any valuation, care must be taken to avoid double counting of benefits included in the transport appraisal and to allow for the fact that some activity may well be diverted from elsewhere in the local area.

Public Transport

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research is currently undertaken or sponsored by his Department into improved transport for women and children.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My Department has a long-standing programme of research into the transport needs of people with mobility problems, including women, children, elderly people and those with disabilities.

Current projects include work on the design and operation of fully accessible low floor buses, the development of design standards for bus and coach stations—jointly funded with the passenger transport executives—and the use of unstaffed railway stations by people with mobility problems—jointly funded with British Rail. My Department is also conducting research into the incidence of assaults on bus passengers.

Schemes (EC Funding)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of transport schemes which have attracted EC funding since 1979.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: These schemes include projects by the Department of Transport, nationalised industries, local authorities and the private sector, and details could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Cycling

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will carry out a study of the Dutch Government's bicycles first master plan and publish an assessment of what lessons apply to strategic transport planning in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have seen the Dutch bicycle master plan, which forms part of a range of traffic and transport policies.

The bicycle master plan contains a considerable number of proposals aimed at increasing cycle usage. These are not all new. Indeed, some reflect current United Kingdom policy and practice, such as measures to increase safety, and to improve the range and quality of facilities for cyclists.

I have no plans to publish an assessment of the bicycle master plan, but its contents will clearly influence our ideas on how cycling should develop in the United Kingdom.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list details of all his Department's expenditure in 1992-93 designed to improve safety for cyclists.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Although no separate figures are available, much of my Department's expenditure on road safety will improve safety for cyclists, for example that on publicity aimed at preventing drinking and driving, and on new technology to help catch and prosecute bad drivers. Every trunk road bypass that the Department funds and every local road bypass that they support through transport supplementary grant improves road safety for all vulnerable road users, including cyclists.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will instigate a public information campaign on the dangers of and penalties for riding a bicycle across a pedestrian crossing and through red traffic lights.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 19 October 1992]*: The Highway Code includes good advice for cyclists on road behaviour and the need to obey the law. This advice will be expanded in the revised edition of the code and I shall draw particular attention to this when it is published early next year.

Street Works

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to require highway authorities to inform residents or traders of impending street works.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The flow of information will be improved by the relevant provisions of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991, which will come into force on 1 January 1993. They will require street authorities—normally the local highway authorities—to co-ordinate undertakers' street works and works for their own road purposes, and will impose a duty of co-operation on the undertakers. We shall shortly be publishing a code of practice giving practical guidance on the carrying out of these duties. The code will draw the attention of the promoting undertaker of works to the importance of giving advance information and warning to affected frontagers not only about disruption to their services but if their access is to be affected for any length of time.

A12

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what figures on volume and weight of traffic using the A12 at Wrentham he is using since the 1984 figures; how the figures have changed up to August 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 19 October 1992]*: Current traffic information is compiled from roadside interviews, traffic counts and journey time surveys carried out in October 1990. A permanent automatic count of traffic is also taken on the A12 south of Wrentham.

Traffic figures available in 1984 on the A12 south of Wrentham were in excess of 6,000 vehicles per day. A comparable figure for August 1992 is in excess of 10,000 vehicles per day. These are the highest daily flows of the year. The present A12 is capable of carrying these levels of traffic.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the likely time scale for a public consultation exercise on the proposed bypass of Wrentham on the A12.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 19 October 1992]*: The present programmed date for public consultation about the options for improving the A12 from south of Wrentham to Kessingland, including a bypass of Wrentham, is early next year.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Associations

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what actions Her Majesty's Government have taken to reduce the incidence of housing associations leaving homes unjustifiably empty for long periods.

Mr. Baldry: There has been a steady decrease over the past five years in the incidence of empty property owned by housing associations. The supervision of the management of associations is the statutory responsibility of the Housing Corporation and I will ask the corporation to write to the hon. Member with further information.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals Her Majesty's Government have to ensure secure tenancies for all housing association tenants.

Mr. Baldry: The majority of the tenants of housing associations are secure tenants. For those taking up a tenancy since 1989, the status is normally that of assured tenants. These assured tenants of housing associations have rights conferred by statute and additional contractual rights by virtue of the Housing Corporation's "Tenants' Guarantee", which give them security of tenure broadly similar to that enjoyed by secure tenants. There are no plans to change this framework.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the ways in which tenants are represented on housing association boards of management.

Mr. Baldry: The supervision of the management of registered housing associations is the statutory responsibility of the Housing Corporation, which has an active strategy for increasing the participation of tenants in the management of their associations. I will ask the Housing Corporation to write to the hon. Member with further information.

NATIONAL FINANCE

House Purchase

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures he proposes to take to assist borrowers with negative equity who wish to move house.

Mr. Nelson: The Government propose to remove two potential legal and tax obstacles to borrowers with negative equity who wish to move.

First, the Building Societies Commission, with the consent of the Treasury, is to raise the limit which building societies can lend unsecured from £10,000 to £25,000 per person. This will enable societies, in appropriate cases, to advance top-up necessary loans to borrowers with substantial negative equity. The necessary secondary legislation will be laid before the House at the earliest opportunity.

Secondly, changes are proposed to allow the security of one property to be exchanged for another against the original mortgage loan, without the loss of mortgage interest relief. The Inland Revenue hopes to give effect to the proposed changes within the next few weeks.

EC Budget Council

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting of European Ministers at the Budget Council in July.

Sir John Cope: The Budget Council met in Brussels on 23 July. As President of the Budget Council I chaired the meeting, and the Economic Secretary represented the United Kingdom. The Council established a first reading draft budget for 1993 totalling 65·7 billion ecu—£51·7 billion—in commitment appropriations and 62·9 billion ecu—£49·5 billion—in payment appropriations. The latter represents 1·07 per cent. of Community GNP, compared with the own resources ceiling of 1·2 per cent.

The draft budget established by the Council constrained the increase in non-compulsory expenditure to 3·79 per cent. for commitments and to 7·2 per cent.—the "maximum rate"—for payments. This involved reductions of 3,570 million ecu—£2,811 million—in commitments and 3,383 million ecu—£2,664 million—in payments of the proposals put forward by the Commission in its preliminary draft budget. The provision for agriculture takes full account of CAP reform; and is 2·6 billion ecu —£2·05 billion—below the agriculture guideline. Financial provision was not made for the cohesion fund agreed at Maastricht, which the Lisbon European Council agreed should be set up early in 1993, pending a decision on the amount which is expected to be taken at the European Council in Edinburgh.

An explanatory memorandum on the Council's draft budget was submitted to the House on 9 October.

The summary table compares the outcome of the Budget Council to the proposals in the Commission's preliminary draft budget by reference to the main areas of spending:

	Preliminary Draft Budget[1]		*Draft Budget*	
	mecu	*£ million*[2]	*mecu*	*£ million*
Commitment appropriations				
1. Agricultural Guarantee	34,062	26,820	34,042	26,805
2. Structural Operations	22,046	17,359	20,119	15,842
3. Internal policies, including R & D	4,440	3,496	3,375	2,657
4. External Policies, including aid	4,150	3,267	3,818	3,006
5. Administration	3,577	2,816	3,349	2,637
6. Monetary Reserve	1,000	787	1,000	787
Total: Commitment appropriations	69,274	54,456	65,704	51,735
of which:				
compulsory	36,505	28,744	36,459	28,708
non-compulsory	32,769	25,802	29,245	23,028
Total: Payment appropriations	66,309	52,212	62,926	49,548
of which:				
compulsory	36,458	28,707	36,406	28,666
non-compulsory	29,851	23,505	26,520	20,882

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[1] including letter of amendment No. 1 to the PDB [illegible]93.

[2] Throughout this reply the rate of £1 = 1·2700 ecu has been used for conversions relating to 1993 expenditure (the rate notified in the Official Journal as prevailing on the last working day of last month (30 September)). The rate of £1 = 1·396 ecu has been used for 1992 expenditure (the rate set for United Kingdom contributions from VAT and the Fourth Resource in 1992).

The Budget Council also adopted the supplementary and amending budget No. 3 for 1992. An explanatory memorandum was submitted to the House on 14 September. This supplementary budget gives budgetary effect to the decision to revise the financial perspective on which an explanatory memorandum was submitted on 9 July. It covers increased payment appropriations for the structural funds in the new German Länder and four programmes under the third research framework programme. The supplementary budget also makes provision to return to a member state a significant proportion of the expected surplus in the agriculture budget. In the proposed supplementary budget the agricultural budget is reduced by 2,875 million ecu—£2,059 million—with 2,175 million ecu—£1,558 million —of that money being returned to member states through a reduction in contributions; the remainder is utilised for other Community policies.

The European Parliament will consider the draft budget for 1993 at its plenary in late October—the 26th to 30th. The Parliament's amendments and modifications will be considered at the second Budget Council on 17 November. The European Parliament's second reading is set for mid-December.

Economic and Monetary Union

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which EC countries currently fulfil the requirements for convergence set out in the Maastricht treaty protocols; in what ways the others fail; and how far the United Kingdom is away from each of the criteria.

Mr. Nelson: Article 109j of the Maastricht treaty gives to the Council the responsibility for determining whether a member state has met the necessary conditions for the adoption of a single currency. The Council is required to make this judgment, taking into account reports from the Commission and the European Monetary Institute on the extent to which a member state complies with criteria concerning the rate of inflation; the Government's fiscal position; observance of the normal fluctuation margins within the ERM; and long-term interest rate levels. In addition, the reports must take account of the number of other factors, including the developments of the ecu, the integration of markets, balance of payments on current account, and the development of unit labour costs and other price indices.

The protocol on the convergence criteria, attached to the treaty, sets out figures for the convergence criteria regarding inflation and long-term interest rates. In addition, the protocol on the excessive deficit procedure, sets out reference values for fiscal criteria, which, if breached, would prompt a Commission report to the Council on the fiscal position of a member state—such a report being the basis on which the Council would judge whether an excessive deficit existed. The position of each member state, in respect of the figures and reference values set out in the protocols, is given in the table.

	Latest inflation[1]	*Budget balance*[2]	*General government debt*[3]	*Long term bond yield*[4]	*ERM narrow band*[5]
Belgium	2·1	−6·2	129·7	8·9	Yes
Denmark	2·1	−2·0	71·7	9·0	Yes
France	2·7	−1·7	48·4	9·1	Yes
Germany[6]	3·5	−3·1	44·9	8·3	Yes
Greece	15·3	−16·5	103·3	n/a	No
Ireland	2·8	−2·3	99·8	8·9	Yes
Italy	5·2	−10·2	101·7	11·9	No
Luxembourg	3·1	2·5	6·3	7·9	Yes
Netherlands	3·5	−3·9	79·7	8·4	Yes
Portugal	9·2	−6·4	68·6	11·5	No
Spain	5·7	−4·4	45·6	11·7	No
United Kingdom	3·6	−2·0	39·9	9·0	No

[1] August 1992; percentage change of consumer prices over previous 12 months.

[2] 1991 General government financial balance (as a percentage of GDP).

[3] 1991 Gross debt of general government (as a percentage of GDP).

[4] June 1992; yield on fixed interest government securities.

[5] Membership of the narrow band of the ERM for at least two years, without devaluing on own initiative.

[6] Inflation and government debt figures are for western Germany.

Source: OECD and Eurostat.

DEFENCE

Queen Victoria School

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the Queen Victoria school will be established as an executive agency.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Queen Victoria school began to operate as an executive agency with effect from 1 April 1992. The framework document has been printed and copies will be placed in the Library of both Houses. The targets which have been set for the school in its first year of operation as an agency are as follows:

Academic and Curriculum

1. Annually, to achieve:
   - *(a)* for S4 pupils, at least three standard grade passes at grade 1 to 3 for 90 per cent. of pupils; and
   - *(b)* at least five standard grade passes at grade 1 to 3 for 60 per cent. of pupils;
   - *(c)* for S5/6 pupils, at least three higher grade passes at grade A to C for 60 per cent. of pupils or Scottish Vocational Education Council (Scotvec) equivalent.

2. By 31 August 1992, to develop a "5 to 14 Development Programme" in line with the Scottish Office Education Department—SOED—recommendations including a system for parental response on quality and choice.

Pastoral

3. To respond to recommendations of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools on pastoral provision and organisation with six months of receipt of that report.

Extra Curricular Provision

4. To maintain and enrich at least 50 extra curricular activities, both physical and cultural, involving pupils aged 10 to 15 in at least three per week and those aged 16 to 18 in at least two.

Management

5. By March 1993, to assess and report on pay and grading structures in the school and associated allowances and rents.

6. To implement teacher appraisal and development procedures in line with SOED guidelines and timetable, including a pastoral element.

7. By April 1993, to develop management and financial information systems, including baseline pupil per capita costs, that satisfy all management and accounting requirements.

8. By April 1993, to identify areas for efficiency savings in order to:—
   - *(a)* reduce pupil per capita costs by 2 per cent. in financial year 1993-94 while at least maintaining present standards.
   - *(b)* set targets for future years.

9. By June 1993, to examine the feasibility of admitting girls and fee-paying pupils, and the extent of provision required for them.

10. By June 1993, to develop and implement a strategy for income generation using the school's facilities.

Statistical Services

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the future management of statistical and related services within his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A review of Defence Statistics has been completed, and I am pleased to announce its establishment as a defence support agency from 1 July 1992, with the title the Defence Analytical Service Agency —DASA.

The DASA provides a variety of professional statistical and other analytical services which are essential to the conduct of the Ministry of Defence's business operations. As well as producing many of my Department's statistics, including those to Parliament, the Armed Forces Pay Review Body and the Top Salaries Review Body, it offers advice and assistance to a wide range of customers in my Department on areas such as manpower planning, financial management, logistic projects and personnel surveys.

The DASA is part of the Government statistical service. The chief executive is the head of profession for staff in the statistical grades in the Ministry of Defence, and chief statistical adviser to my Department. The first chief executive is Mr. Paul Altobell. The key targets that have been set for the agency in its first year of operation are as follows. I have arranged for copies of the framework document to be placed in the Library of both Houses.

Level and quality of service

1. About three-quarters of the agency's business is suitable by service level agreements—SLAs—with customers, which set out targets and standards for the level of service, timeliness and quality of work. For this part of the business key targets are:—

a. To introduce, in 1992-93, SLAs for 45 per cent. of this work and to increase this coverage to 75 per cent. and 100 per cent. in the following two years.

b. In 1992-93, to meet 95 per cent. of the targets set in the established SLAs.

2. For the remaining parts of the business—that for which SLAs are not appropriate—the key target is:—

To establish, by April 1993, project control mechanisms which will include objectives, programmes and targets.3. To extend to all branches of the agency by October

1992 the measurement of perceived customer satisfaction, through the use of customer assessment questionnaires, and to establish customer satisfaction targets for future years.

Efficiency and use of resources

4. To implement the PROSPECT reductions in manpower of 10 per cent. in 1992-93 and 10 per cent. in 1993-94 with minimum reduction in output.

5. To increase efficiency in the production of regular statistical reports by 5 per cent. in 1992-93 and a further 10 per cent. over the next two years.

Management systems

6. To develop by April 1993 a task costing system to measure the resources used to produce the various outputs of the agency.

7. To complete by April 1993 a feasibility study to determine the potential for market testing and to establish a timetable for future work.

Duke of York's Royal Military School

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the Duke of York's royal military school will be established as an executive agency.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Duke of York's royal military school began to operate as an executive agency with effect from 1 April 1992. The framework document has been printed and copies will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses. The targets which have been set for the school in its first year of operation are as follows:

Academic and Curriculum

1. *(a)* Annually, at 16 plus, to achieve at least six General Certificates of Secondary Education passes at grades A to C for 70 per cent. of pupils;

(b) Annually, at 18 plus, to achieve at least three A-level passes for 90 per cent. of pupils with 40 per cent. of all passes at grades A or B; for Business and Technology Education Council—BTEC—national diploma courses, 100 per cent. award rate.

2. By April 1993, to complete a curriculum review.

Pastoral

3. By September 1994, to define and introduce a set of common guidelines of boarding provisions, as recommended by Her Majesty's inspectors of schools.

4. To ensure continuing compliance with the provisions of the Children Act 1989, and to respond to the local authority social services department inspection within six months of receipt of that report.

Management and Development

5. By April 1993, to develop management and financial information systems, including baseline pupil per capita costs, that satisfy all management and accounting requirements;

6. By 1 April 1993, to achieve savings equivalent to 1·5 per cent. of the gross budgetary allocation and to establish future targets in specified areas of expenditure and revenue;

7. By September 1993, to complete policy reviews and implementation plans for co-education and other extensions to the pupil catchment area;

8. By April 1993, to review the school pay/grading structures for teaching and non-teaching staff, and to make proposals;

9. By April 1993, to produce an agreed teacher appraisal scheme for implementation in financial year 1993-94.

Isle of Rona

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current programme being carried out by his Department's establishment at the Isle of Rona, Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter delegated to the Defence Research Agency under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive of the Defence Research Agency to reply direct to the hon. Member.

In today's written answer the Minister of State for Defence Procurement informed you that I would be replying directly to the following question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the current programme being carried out by his Department's establishment at the Isle of Rona, Scotland, and if he will make a statement.

The Defence Research Agency uses the facilities on Rona to measure the noise generated by ships and submarines as they move through the water. This is a continuous programme since vessels are measured as they are brought into service and checked periodically throughout their lives.

Research Establishments

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the establishment of each of the defence research establishments in 1990 and 1991; and what is the current establishment of each and that projected for 1993 and 1994.

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter delegated to the Defence Research Agency under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

In his written reply on 19 October the Secretary of State for Defence informed you that I would be replying directly to the question:

> To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the establishment of each of the Defence Research Establishments in 1990 and 1991 and what is the current establishment of each and that projected for 1993 and 1994.

On 1 April 1990 the total number of staff employed in the four establishments which later formed the Defence Research Agency was 11,912. The Defence Research Agency was set up on 1 April 1991 and on that day its staff numbered 12,027.

Since 1 April 1991 a number of DRA staff have transferred to the new Test and Evaluation organisation and some of the MOD's Quality Assurance staff have joined the DRA. I also released a number of staff through a Voluntary Redundancy Scheme earlier this year. At present the DRA establishment is 11,267.

As you know I have recently announced a rationalisation strategy for the DRA which, if given Ministerial approval, could result in a further reduction in DRA staff numbers of some 2,000 by 1994-95.

Contracts

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the extent and nature of all contracts between the Ministry of Defence and SERCO.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has let some 183 contracts with SERCO since 1982 with a total value of more than £350 million. SERCO provides my Department with a wide range of technical services, including running communications facilities, technical training and the operation of the ballistic missile early warning system at Fylingdales.

Electro-magnetic Gun

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for of Defence what is the nature of the work being undertaken by the Ministry of Defence establishment at Dundrennan involving research into an electro-magnetic gun; for whom the work is being carried out; and under what contractual arrangements.

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter delegated to the Defence Research Agency under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

In his written answer today the Minister of State for Defence Procurement said that I would be replying directly to the following question:

> To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the nature of the work being undertaken by the Ministry of Defence establishment at Dundrennan involving research into an electromagnetic gun; for whom the work is being carried out; and under what contractual arrangements.

The Defence Research Agency is in the process of establishing a research electromagnetic gun range at the MOD trials site at Kirkcudbright, Kirkcudbrightshire. This facility is being constructed as part of a research programme to assess the feasibility of using electromagnetic propulsion to enhance the armour penetrating performance of tank gunnery.

The research programme is being carried out for the Master General of the Ordnance to enable him to assess more precisely the potential military value of any future tank gunnery system based upon electromagnetic propulsion.

The installation work at Kirkcudbright which is jointly funded with the US Government is being carried out by Marconi Radar & Control Systems on a fixed priced contract. Work started in 1989 and is expected to be complete by mid 1993.

Military Exercises

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the nature, purpose, duration and extent of all military exercises undertaken in south-west Scotland during 1992 up to the current date; and what percentage this represents of all those carried out in the United Kingdom for the same period.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will write to the hon. Member.

Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the meeting of the Defence Ministers of the nations collaborating in the European fighter aircraft programme on 4 August.

Mr. Aitken: My right hon. and learned Friend met his Spanish, Italian and German counterparts in Madrid on 4 August. Studies were set in hand to consider ways of reducing costs in the EFA programme and to review the operational requirement in the light of the recent changes in the international security situation. Both studies are due to be completed by the end of October, and the Ministers plan to meet again in December to discuss the results.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the total cost to all four participating countries in pounds sterling of the development programe of the European fighter aircraft programme; how much of that figure has already been spent; and if he will give a breakdown by participating country.

Mr. Aitken: The total cost to the four partner nations of developing EFA is estimated at about £8·5 billion, of which the United Kingdom share is about £2·7 billion. Virtually all of this is now contractually committed. Bills paid to date by the United Kingdom amount to a little over £1 billion.

We do not maintain records of the progress of expenditure by our partners. Work was allocated at the start of development in the ratio: United Kingdom 33 per cent., Germany 33 per cent., Italy 21 per cent., Spain 13 per cent. Each nation meets the cost of common work performed by its industry and the whole cost of any national-specific requirements.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to meet his counterparts from Germany, Italy and Spain to discuss the future of the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Aitken: My right. hon. and learned Friend plans to meet his German, Italian and Spanish counterparts in December to discuss the results of the studies they commissioned on 4 August. It is possible that they may have some preliminary discussions when they meet on other bilateral or multilateral occasions.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the engineering facilities in the United Kingdom, giving the name of the company and the geographical location where over 50 people are working on the development of the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Aitken: The three main British companies involved in the development of EFA are British Aerospace—principally, the Warton facility—Rolls-Royce—Bristol—and GEC—principally, the Rochester, Edinburgh and Stanmore facilities. There are approaching 300 companies in the United Kingdom acting as sub-contractors or suppliers. It would not be possible without disproportionate cost to identify the facilities of those companies with over 50 people engaged on work connected with EFA.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British jobs are currently dependent on the European fighter aircraft development programme.

Mr. Aitken: Approximately 9,400 people in the United Kingdom are directly employed on work connected with the development of EFA. When EFA enters the production phase, we estimate that this number will rise to around 28,000.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Training Board

Mr. Conway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if authority for staff grading changes within the Agricultural Training Board has removed the need for his Department's approval.

Mr. Curry: When approving staff grading changes the chief executive of the Agricultural Training Board is required to abide by the normal rules on maintenance on national civil service grading standards and the need for economy. Where the creation of a new post is involved the procedures described in the reply given to my hon. Friend on 19 October, *Official Report*, column 95, also have to be followed.

EC Fisheries Council

Mr. Luff: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Fisheries Council held in Luxembourg on 19 October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I chaired this meeting of the Council. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, represented the United Kingdom.

The Council agreed, subject to the opinion of the European Parliament, to a regulation revising the regime for the common organisation of the market in fishery products. A satisfactory balance was achieved between constraining Community expenditure on market suport and the need to protect fishermen from excessive price fluctuations.

The Council further agreed a regulation to prohibit EC vessels anywhere from undertaking fisheries involving encirclements with purse seine nets on marine mammals when aiming to catch tuna and other species of fish.

The Council also discussed the Commission's proposals for future multi-annual guidance programmes, agreeing the need to set realistic targets for the reduction in member states' fishing and to allow member states flexibility in how they achieve them.

The Council had its first discussion on the important draft regulations intended to replace the basic common fisheries policy regulation and control regulation. These regulations have been proposed by the Commission following Council discussion of the mid-term review of the CFP. The Council also agreed that a further proposal for a Community licensing system for waters in the North-West Atlantic Fisheries Convention Organisation area should be considered in taking account of discussion on the two major proposals.

The United Kingdom pressed for Community action on the rules for the minimum landings size for lobsters.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Overseas Representation

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those countries in which there is no British embassy or high commission.

Mr. Goodlad: There is no British embassy, high commission or other resident representation staffed from the United Kingdom in the following countries, although members of the diplomatic service are accredited to and visit the majority of them:

Afghanistan, Andorra, Armenia, Belarus, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Georgia, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Iraq, North Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Liberia, Lichtenstein, Maldives, Mali, Marshall Island, Mauritania, Micronesia, Moldova, Monaco, Nauru, Niger, Rwanda, St. Kitts and Nevis, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia, Surinam, Tajikistan, Togo, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uzbekistan and Western Samoa.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take the necessary action to close the embassy in London of the former Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. There are good reasons for maintaining contact with the authorities in Belgrade.

Vietnamese Migrants

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Vietnamese migrants.

Mr. Goodlad: A further 118 Vietnamese illegal immigrants were repatriated from Hong Kong under the orderly repatriation programme on two flights, 60 on 4 August and 58 on 10 October. All had undergone the UN High Commissioner for Refugees approved screening and appeal procedures and found not to be refugees.

The UNHCR's voluntary repatriation programme is proving most successful. More than 28,000 have already been repatriated under this system from the region without a single substantiated report of persecution. We hope that all non-refugees now in Hong Kong will decide to follow them. The clearing of the Hong Kong camps will enable genuine refugees to be properly looked after and resettled as appropriate.

Deaths Abroad

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the criteria for refusing the burial or cremation of United Kingdom nationals whose bodies are returned following death abroad; and if he will give the number of such refusals in each year from 1986.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply.

Whether or not a body repatriated from abroad is accepted for burial or cremation is ultimately a matter for the burial or cremation authority, which will need to be satisfied that the prescribed documentation has been supplied. Such refusals do not have to be reported, so their numbers are unknown.

Spain

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are available to relatives of United Kingdom nationals who die in Spain to secure an examination by British doctors.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply.

In the case of United Kingdom nationals whose bodies are returned to this country following death in Spain, it is at the discretion of the relatives whether to arrange an examination by British doctors. When a body is repatriated to England and Wales, the coroner has a duty to investigate cases where the death was violent, unnatural, or sudden and unknown cause. To assist him in his inquiries the coroner has powers to arrange a post-mortem examination. These duties and powers do not apply in other parts of the United Kingdom.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime Costs

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the estimated cost of crime to the community in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Jack: There is no reliable annual assessment of the total cost of crime to England and Wales. Estimated expenditure in 1990-91 by criminal justice agencies in England and Wales including the police, the Forensic Science Service agency, the Crown prosecution service, criminal legal aid, the Crown court, magistrates' courts, and the prison and probation service was £7·5 billion.

Parents' Accountability

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on proposals to make parents more accountable for the behaviour of their children.

Mr. Jack: Powers for courts to involve parents when their children offend were strengthened by changes introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 1991 on 1 October. We shall monitor the new arrangements carefully.

Illegal Immigration

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which department of the Metropolitan police now undertakes the work done between 1974 and 1989 by the national illegal immigration intelligence unit of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There is no unit within the Metropolitan police which gathers information on illegal immigration. That function rests with the Home Office immigration department.

Asylum

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what number of asylum refusals *(a)* leave the United Kingdom voluntarily, *(b)* are deported and *(c)* remain.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Readily available information is given in the table. Fuller information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Refusals[1] of applications for asylum in the United Kingdom, and removals[1] or voluntary departures[1] of asylum applicants, excluding dependents, 1990 to 1992

	Refusals				*Removals[2] and voluntary departures[2]*		
	Total refused	*Refused asylum and exceptional leave after determination*	*Refused on safe third country grounds*	*Refused under paragraph 101 of Immigration Rules[3]*	*Port asylum applicants: removals*	*Port asylum applicants: voluntary departures[4]*	*In country asylum applicants removed under enforcement powers, or departing voluntarily following enforcement action[5]*
1990	710	710	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]
1991	3,240	2,185	270	785	[6]	[6]	[6]
1992 January-September	11,865	1,975	415	9,475	395	145	305

[1] Figures rounded to the nearest 5.

[2] Removals and voluntary departures do not necessarily relate to decisions in the same time period.

[3] For failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period, including failure to respond to two invitations to interview to establish identity.

[4] Includes any voluntary departure up to and including notification of the decision on the asylum application but excludes any subsequent departure.

[5] May understate. Figures exclude voluntary departures other than in enforcement cases.

[6] Not available.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum claims have been rejected under paragraph 101 of the Immigration Rules each month since the introduction of that paragraph, expressed as a number of rejections and as a percentage of total claims received in that month.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A provision that an application for variation of leave may be refused on the ground of failure to provide within a reasonable period of time evidence to establish the claim under the Immigration Rules has been in force since 1 March 1980—currently paragraph 101 of HC 251. Figures for asylum applications refused under this provision were not separately identifiable prior to December 1991. Information from that date is given in the table.

Refusals[1,2] under paragraph 101 of the Immigration Rules of applications for asylum in the United Kingdom, and such refusals as a percentage of applications[2] received, excluding dependants, December 1991 to September 1992

	Refusals under Para 101 of Immigration Rules	*Refusals under Para 101 of Immigration Rules as percentage of asylum applications received in the same month Per cent.*
December 1991	785	36
January 1992	1,210	56
February 1992	1,120	79
March 1992	1,615	101
April 1992	935	65
May 1992	735	54
June 1992	1,025	63
July 1992	1,010	46
August 1992	840	47
September 1992	985	38

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[1] Figures rounded to the nearest 5, percentages rounded to the nearest whole per cent.

[2] Refusals do not necessarily relate to applications made in the same month.

Asylum

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many amendments were proposed to the 1991-92 Asylum Bill *(a)* by the Government and *(b)* by the Opposition; and what percentage was agreed to by the Committee.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Including new clauses, a total of 154 amendments to the Asylum Bill were tabled between its introduction and Third Reading. One hundred and fifteen were selected. Of these, six were Government amendments. No amendments were made during the Committee stage.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest monthly figure for the number of asylum applicants; and what was the comparable number for the same month in 1991.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is given in the table.

Applications[1] received for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants
September 1991 to September 1992

	Applications
1991	
September	3,525
October	4,375
November	3,790
December	2,210
1992	
January	2,165
February	1,420
March	1,595
April	1,440
May	1,370
June	1,615
July	2,180
August	1,790
September	2,590

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[1] Figures rounded to the nearest 5.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish [illegible]tailed information on asylum applicants to the Uni[illegible] Kingdom in the past 18 months, which indicate th[illegible]umber of applications, their countries of origin, the number granted refugee status, exceptional leave to remain, refusals, and the nationalities of those refused.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is given in the table.

Applications received for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, and decisions,[1][2][3] by nationality,
1 April 1991—30 September 1992.

Nationality	*Applications*	*Decisions*						
		Granted asylum	*Granted exceptional leave*	*Total refused*	*Refused asylum and exceptional leave after determination*	*Refused on safe third country grounds*	*Refused under para 101 of Immigration Rules[4]*	*Total Decisions*
EUROPE AND AMERICAS								
Bulgaria	390	*	5	45	30	—	15	55
Colombia	265	15	25	30	20	5	5	65
Romania	620	5	15	110	80	5	25	135
Turkey	2,685	305	730	520	135	75	310	1,555
USSR	375	15	30	25	10	5	5	65
Others	3,315	15	15	180	45	75	65	205
Total	7,650	350	820	910	320	165	425	2,080
AFRICA								
Angola	4,550	10	10	2,605	365	25	2,215	2,625
Congo	315	*	—	180	30	5	150	185
Ethiopia	1,640	55	1,375	155	15	25	115	1,585
Ghana	2,930	10	30	965	245	30	685	1,005
Nigeria	655	*	*	160	55	10	95	165
Somalia	2,445	45	1,910	295	15	60	220	2,250
Sudan	1,455	75	40	120	5	5	110	240
Togo/Ivory Coast	1,930	—	—	965	25	5	935	965
Uganda	815	15	245	280	140	10	130	545
Zaire	6,260	10	10	3,470	665	120	2,690	3,495
Others	3,805	10	70	1,880	125	25	1,725	1,960
Total	26,805	310	3,695	11,080	1,685	320	9,075	15,085
MIDDLE EAST								
Iran	645	95	150	45	20	5	20	290
Iraq	1,160	125	265	40	10	10	20	430
Lebanon	520	15	170	55	30	15	10	245
Others	650	25	70	90	40	20	30	185
Total	2,970	260	650	230	100	50	80	1,145
ASIA								
China	665	25	55	30	15	—	20	115
India	2,600	*	515	1,160	780	75	300	1,675
Pakistan	3,565	5	400	980	505	10	265	1,390

Nationality	*Applications*	*Decisions*						
		Granted asylum	*Granted exceptional leave*	*Total refused*	*Refused asylum and exceptional leave after determination*	*Refused on safe third country grounds*	*Refused under para 101 of Immigration Rules*[4]	*Total Decisions*
Sri Lanka	3,805	45	2,940	90	15	30	45	3,075
Others	1,160	20	280	230	175	5	50	530
Total	11,795	100	4,205	2,495	1,695	120	670	6,795
Other and Nationality not recorded	—	5	5	20	15	*	—	30
Grand Total	49,225	1,030	9,375	14,730	3,815	660	10,260	25,135

[1] Provisional figures, rounded to the nearest 5 with * = 1 or 2.

[2] Decisions figures are likely to understate because of delays in recording.

[3] Decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made in the same period.

[4] For failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period, including failure to respond to two invitations to interview to establish identity. These refusals are separately identifiable from 1 December 1991. Earlier refusals are included in the column "Refused asylum and exceptional leave after determination".

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers have been returned to safe third countries under the provisions of the Dublin convention; and if he will publish a table of the nationalities of those removed from the United Kingdom, their countries of origin and the countries to which they were removed.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Dublin convention will not come into force until it has been ratified by all EC member states.

Information on the total number of asylum applicants at ports removed on safe third country grounds in the period March to August 1992 is given in the table. The countries to which they were removed were other EC countries, Sweden, Austria, USA, Switzerland, Turkey, Guinea, Australia and Kenya. All decisions on third country removals are taken in the light of the circumstances of the individual case.

Asylum applicants at ports removed on safe third country grounds, 1 March 1992 to 31 August 1992, by nationality

	Number
Albania	1
Algeria	1
Angola	3
China	1
Colombia	3
Czechoslovakia	3
Ethiopia	4
Ghana	12
India	5
Iran	1
Iraq	2
Ivory Coast	3
Lebanon	4
Liberia	2
Nigeria	3
Pakistan	3
Romania	6
Sierra Leone	2
Somalia	13
South Africa	1
Sri Lanka	5
Sudan	1
Togo	1
Turkey	27
Uganda	2
USSR (former)	2
Yugoslavia (former)	29
Zaire	30
Other and nationality uncertain	5
Total	175

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for asylum are outstanding; and if he will publish the same figure for each month for the past 36 months.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The readily available information is given in the table. The figures are maxima which overstate because of earlier under-recording of decisions.

Number of asylum applications, excluding dependants, outstanding[1]

Date	*Total*
As at:	
31 December 1988	8,650
31 December 1989	12,240
31 December 1990	29,870
31 March 1991	40,120
30 June 1991	51,410
30 September 1991	61,260
31 December 1991	69,330
31 January 1992	69,420
29 February 1992	68,920
31 March 1992	67,950
30 April 1992	67,690
31 May 1992	69,480
30 June 1992	66,950
31 July 1992	65,910
31 August 1992	64,670
30 September 1992	64,330

[1] Estimated figures, rounded to the nearest 10.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will provide the latest statistics to update his answer to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 6 July, *Official Report* columns 41-42 on asylum application;

(2) if he will make a statement on the trends in grants of asylum, exceptional leave to remain and applications for asylum.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is given in the table.

Applications for asylum increased substantially between 1988 and 1991. The monthly rate halved in late 1991 following measures to deter multiple and other fraudulent applications. The number of applications increased somewhat in the third quarter of 1992.

The recent increase in the number of decisions mainly reflects additional staff resources in the asylum division.

Applications received for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, by location of application, and decisions[1] 1988 to 1992

Number of principal applicants

Year	*Applications received* Total applications	Applied at port[2]	Applied in country[3]	*Decisions[1]* Total decisions	Granted asylum	Granted exceptional leave	Total refused	Refused asylum and exceptional leave after determination	Refused on safe third country grounds	Refused under para. 101 of Immigration Rules[4]	Applications outstanding at end of quarter[5]
1988	3,998	858	3,140	2,702	628	1,578	496	496	N/a	N/a	8,650
1989[6]	11,640	6,200	5,440	6,955	2,210	3,860	890	890	N/a	N/a	12,240
1990[6][7]	22,000	9,005	13,000	4,015	900	2,400	710	710	N/a	N/a	29,870
1991[6][7]	44,840	9,030	35,815	5,965	505	2,230	3,240	2,185	270	785	69,330
1991[6][7]											
Quarter 1	11,790	3,490	8,300	1,435	155	910	375	350	20	N/a	40,120
Quarter 2	12,075	2,040	10,035	720	110	235	380	330	50	N/a	51,410
Quarter 3	10,600	1,970	8,630	845	105	265	480	415	60	N/a	61,260
Quarter 4	10,375	1,525	8,850	2,960	140	810	2,010	1,095	135	785	69,330
1992											
Quarter 1	5,185	1,335	3,845	6,330	165	1,500	4,665	565	150	3,945	67,950
Quarter 2	4,425	1,160	3,265	5,225	135	1,755	3,335	495	150	2,695	66,950
Quarter 3	6,560	2,255	4,305	8,975	300	4,810	3,865	915	115	2,835	64,330

[1] Decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made in the same period.

[2] Figures include certain in-country applications made in illegal entrant cases.

[3] In country figures include a small number of applications recorded as having been made overseas and referred to the Home Office for a decision. These cases may be under recorded.

[4] For failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period.

[5] Figures are maxima which overstate because of earlier under recording of decisions. Figures are approximate and rounded to the nearest 10.

[6] In addition, certain applications by nationals of Afghanistan and Liberia to the British High Commissioners in New Delhi and Lagos, respectively, were processed locally.

[7] Figures rounded to the nearest 5. 1990 application figures and 1991 decision figures may understate because of delays in recording.

N/a—Not available.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how long the average asylum application takes to determine;

(2) what is the latest figure for the average length of time taken to determine applications for asylum *(a)* as a whole, *(b)* for new applicants and *(c)* for applicants from the existing backlog.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information is of the estimated average length of time between the receipt of an asylum application and the decision, for cases which have been decided. For decisions in the period January to September 1992 as a whole, excluding those under paragraph 101 of the Immigration Rules for failure to provide evidence in support of the asylum claim, this average decision time was twenty and a half months. This figure reflects the recent increase in staffing which has enabled work to commence on the resolution of older and more complex cases.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the projected total number of asylum seekers expected for the whole of 1992 on the basis of current trends.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is not possible to provide a precise forecast in view of the uncertainties involved. In the first six months of 1992, asylum applications totalled 9,600. In the period January to September as a whole, 16,200 applications have been received.

Drug Trafficking

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to secure the £33·55 million out of the £35 million ordered by the courts to be confiscated from those convicted of drug trafficking offences which has still not been paid.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* Responsibility for the enforcement of confiscation orders made after convictions in the Crown court for drug trafficking offences rests with magistrates courts. I am pleased to say that it is now known that, of the £35 million ordered to be confiscated under the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986—DTOA—up to May 1992, £15 million had either been realised or was subject to receivership. The realisation of confiscation orders is often necessarily a lengthy and complex process, involving for example the realisation of tangible property. Moreover, orders cannot be enforced when they are subject of appeal. We will shortly be bringing forward legislative proposals intended to improve the confiscation procedures of the DTOA, and additional guidance to the courts is also planned.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Royal Parks Constabulary

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will set out in tabular form the annual salary scales for the Royal Parks constabulary

ranks of constable to chief officer with effect from 1 September; if he will show for each rank and scale point any other allowances payable; and what is the current actual establishment of the constabulary and its total annual cost.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* The revised salary scales for members of the Royal Parks Constabulary, effective from 1 September 1992 are as follows. These rates are conditional upon the passing of the statutory instrument amending Home Office pay rates, to which RPC pay rates are related, being laid and approved.

RPC (England)
Actual rates of pay

	£
Constable	10,412
	11,135
	13,110
	13,418
	13,860
	14,340
	14,793
	15,252
	15,701
	16,623
	17,377
Sergeant	16,623
	17,376
	17,989
	18,583
	19,068
Inspector	19,068
	19,664
	20,432
	21,039
	21,648
Chief Inspector	21,648
	22,255
	22,859
	23,470
	24,082
Superintendent	29,571
	30,325
	31,074
	32,108
Chief Superintendent	32,877
	33,348
	34,094
	34,909

Allowances

Crown Sergeant Allowance—£253 p.a. Currently paid to one officer only, a Sergeant.

Dog Handler Allowances—£858 p.a. (1 September 1991 rate). Currently paid to 13 Constables.

London Weighting Allowance—£1,344 p.a. (1 July 1991 rate). Paid to all ranks.

Housing Allowance (paid to those eligible)

Rank	*Half Rate* £	*Standard Rate* £
Chief Officer	2,805·19	5,610·38
All other ranks	2,418·26	4,836·51

The Housing Allowance = the 1 April 1991 rate. The next uprating is not due until 1993.

Boot and Shoe Allowance. Paid to all ranks.
The present 1 April 1991 rate is:
£65·30 on appointment.
£32·29 on 1 April annually thereafter.

Current Actual Establishment of Constabulary

As at 1 October 1992 the actual establishment of the RPC is:

1	Chief Officer
1	Deputy Chief Officer
7	Inspectors
19	Sergeants (including 1 Crown Sergeant)
137	Constables
165	Total

Total Annual Cost
£4,375,237

Television Licence Fees

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will review his decision not to allow concessionary television licence fees in warden assisted homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: This is a matter for which the Department of National Heritage now has responsibility. We have no plans to review the regulations governing the concessionary licence scheme.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security who will be eligible for cold weather payments this winter; what weather conditions will trigger payment; what payment will be made; how payment will be made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The principles of operation of the cold weather payments scheme remain unchanged from last year. The Cold Weather Payment (No. 2) Regulations, which come into force on 1 November, make minor improvements to the links between weather stations and local areas.

EDUCATION

Teacher Vacancies

12. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what figures he has for the overall vacancy rate for teachers in the two most recent available years.

Mr. Forth: Maintained schools in England had an unfilled vacancy rate of 1·5 per cent. in January 1991, and 0·5 per cent. in January 1992. Numbers of vacancies were 5,222 in 1991 and 1,898 in 1992, a reduction of 63 per cent.

Pre-school Education

13. **Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what measures he intends to introduce to assist local authorities to provide an adequate number of nursery places to meet the demands of all those parents who wish such a place for their children.

Mr. Forth: As I said in my reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), earlier today, it is for local authorities to determine the scale and form of provision for the under-fives. But the House would wish to be reminded that 175,000 more under-fives attended maintained schools in England in 1991 than in 1979; and that 90 per cent. of three- and four-year-olds now enjoy education or group child care or both.

School Inspections

14. **Ms. Janet Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what progress he has to report regarding implementing the new arrangements for school inspection.

20. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what discussions he has had with parent organisations regarding progress in implementing the new arrangements for school inspection.

Mr. Patten: OFSTED—the Office for Standards in Education—opened on 1 September 1992. Her Majesty's chief inspector, Professor Stewart Sutherland, and his staff are now preparing for the first round of second school inspections to start in September 1993.

I shall soon be consulting with interested bodies, including organisations which represent parents, on a draft circular and regulations which will give effect to the four-year inspection cycle and secure wide distribution of inspection reports.

27. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the response to his Department's national advertising campaign to attract registered school inspectors.

Mr. Forth: As a result of the campaign some 41,000 people asked for the leaflet "Are you interested in becoming a school inspector?" and so far some 25,000 have gone on to request further information and application forms. I understand that OFSTED, the office of Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools in England, has received almost 5,000 applications from prospective registered inspectors and more than 6,000 from prospective inspection team members.

First Degree Awards

16. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total number of first degrees awarded in the latest year for which figures are available; and what was the comparable figure for 1980.

Mr. Forman: In 1990, 137,000 first degrees were awarded in universities, polytechnics and colleges in Great Britain, compared with 102,000 in 1980.

This 34 per cent. increase illustrates the rapid expansion of higher education over the last decade. It highlights the remarkable achievements of our higher education institutions and the success of this Government's education policies.

Parents Charter

17. **Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what additional information will be made available to parents from the autumn term this year as a result of the measures contained in the parents charter.

Mr. Forth: For the first time, comparative tables of public examination results will be published this November for each local education authority area. They will cover all maintained schools and those independent schools which are participating this year on a voluntary basis, alongside local and national average figures.

Grant-maintained Schools

18. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many Cheshire schools have applied for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: Five schools in Cheshire have applied for grant-maintained status to date. Of these, two have been approved, and one is under consideration.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many ballots were pending for grant-maintained status in September 1989; and how many ballots are currently pending.

Mr. Forth: On September 29 1989, there were 18 schools operating, nine approved but not yet operating, and 21 in the process of applying for GM status. Seven ballots were pending.

On October 19 1992, 278 GM schools were operational, 30 were approved or "minded to approve" but not yet operating and 179 were in the process of applying for GM status. Sixty-seven ballots were pending.

Teacher Redundancies

19. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the level of teacher redundancies which have taken effect since June and the number expected in December.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected centrally.

School Funding, Essex and Kent

21. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will meet representatives of teachers from Essex and Kent in order to discuss the funding of their schools.

Mr. Forth: No. The funding of schools in particular areas is primarily a matter for the local education authority.

Local Education Authorities

22. **Mr. Jamieson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received regarding the future role of local education authorities.

Mr. Forth: Most of the 850 responses to the White Paper have commented in one way or another on the future role of local education authorities. We are considering those along with all other responses to the White Paper.

School Repairs

23. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about the cost of school repairs.

Mr. Forth: We are allocating over £700 million to support capital spending on school buildings in 1992-93, up nearly 15 per cent. on last year. Provision to support the recurrent costs of school repairs is also available within total standard spending, which in 1992-93 totals £18·7 billion.

It is for local authorities and schools to decide what priority and what funds to allocate to school repairs from the resources available to them.

Grammar Schools

24. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many grammar schools there are in England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: In September 1992 there were at least 110 grammar schools maintained by 24 of the 109 local education authorities in England, with a further 46 grammar schools in the grant-maintained sector.

Further Education Colleges

25. **Ms. Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how the preparations for the transfer of further education colleges to the Further Education Funding Council are progressing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: Preparations are proceeding according to plan. In particular, further education corporations were established on 30 September for the purpose of conducting further education and sixth-form colleges from 1 April 1993 when they transfer out of local authority control to the new further education sector.

Student Incomes

26. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about student incomes.

Mr. Forman: I announced recently that a new survey of student income and expenditure will be conducted in the academic year 1992-93. This will enable the facts about student income to be established.

Class Sizes

28. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of primary school children are in classes of more than 30 children.

Mr. Forth: In January 1992 about 25 per cent. of pupils in maintained primary schools in England, were in classes of more than 30 pupils taught by one teacher.

Student Unions

29. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the future of student unions and the National Union of Students.

Mr. Forman: My right hon. Friend has said that the Government will bring forward proposals to establish the voluntary principle as the basis for student union membership. I shall be having further discussions with representatives of the educational institutions and other interested parties about how this will be achieved.

Science Teaching

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action he is taking to promote the teaching of science in schools.

Mr. Forth: The introduction of the national curriculum for science means that, for the first time, all schools must offer a broad and balanced science curriculum for all pupils from age five to 16.

Adult Education

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what resources he estimates to be going into adult education in real and money terms *(a)* now and *(b)* five, 10 and 15 years ago; how many people were on adult education courses at the same periods; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: The table shows recurrent expenditure on adult education centres by authorities in England up to 1990-91, the latest year for which information is available, together with numbers of enrolments at these centres. The figures include students below the age of 19.

Adult education centres

	1975-76	*1980-81*	*1985-86*	*1990-91*
Cash expenditure (£ million)	32	61	102	140[1]
Real terms expenditure (£ million at 1990-91 prices)	117	112	137	140[1]
Enrolments (000s)	1,847	1,543	1,418	1,352

[1] provisional figure.

Expenditure by local education authorities on adults in further education colleges is not separately identifiable and enrolment data for 1975-76 were not collected on a basis consistent with later data, but there has been a clear and very welcome increase during the last decade in total further education enrolments of people aged 19 and over, taking together adult centres and other colleges providing further education. Between 1980-81 and 1990-91 these enrolments increased by 27 per cent. overall. Outside adult centres, the increase was 62 per cent.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 20 October.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 20 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Overseas Aid

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister if it remains the policy of Her Majesty's Government to increase the United Kingdom overseas aid budget.

The Prime Minister: The outcome of this year's public expenditure survey will be announced, as is usual, during the autumn statement of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Turkey

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Prime Minister if he will press the Turkish Government to exert influence on the representatives of the Turkish community in northern Cyprus, to negotiate positively in the forthcoming round of talks to be held under the auspices of the United Nations, and not to obstruct the search for a just, viable and lasting solution to the Cyprus problem; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: We share entirely the concern that all involved in the Cyprus problem should work for a fair settlement on the lines of the "set of ideas" published by the United Nations Secretary-General and endorsed in United Nations Security Council resolution 774.

European Parliament (Elections)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister what proposals he has to harmonise the British electoral system for European parliamentary elections with those of the other EC member states; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: We have no proposals at present to change the way in which members of the European Parliament are elected in Great Britain or in Northern Ireland. Any proposals which the European Parliament puts forward for a uniform electoral procedure will be considered on their merits.

European Community Legislation

Mr. Cash: To ask the Prime Minister what changes he proposes to make to the process and time scale under which Commission proposals for legislation will be presented to the House consequent on the declaration on the role of national parliaments in the European union.

The Prime Minister: The Government will continue to ensure that legislative proposals by the Commission are deposited in the House as soon as possible, in accordance with the existing scrutiny procedures.

GATT

Sir David Steel: To ask the Prime Minister if he will provide details of how the figure of $90 billion, referred to in his statement on the economic summit as the amount of additional income to be gained by developing and former communist countries through completion of the GATT talks was calculated; which countries are likely to benefit from this additional income; and which sectors of the developing countries are likely to benefit from the completion of the GATT talks.

The Prime Minister: The figure comes from a report for the OECD development centre by Ian Goldin and Dominique van der Mensbrugghe entitled "Trade Liberalisation: What's at Stake?" It is available in the House of Commons Library, and should provide the further information requested.

Cyprus

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions he has met the Greek Cypriot leader during the past 12 months; whether he has met the Turkish Cypriot leader in the same period; and what is his policy on meeting foreign political leaders who are not in government.

The Prime Minister: I have met President Vassiliou twice in the last 12 months. I have not met Mr. Denktash who claims to be the head of state which the United Kingdom does not recognise, though United Kingdom representatives have regular contact with him.

I and other members of the Government decide whether to meet foreign political leaders on the basis of a judgment in each case.

Common Currency

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister on what date he expects the United Kingdom to have a common currency with EC nations.

The Prime Minister: Under the protocol to the Maastricht treaty which we negotiated it will be for the Government and Parliament to decide whether the United Kingdom will join a single currency at all.

Neo-Nazi Activities

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister what decisions have been taken during his presidency of the EC regarding the neo-Nazi activities against migrants in the former East Germany.

The Prime Minister: The Government deplore and condemn racist attacks wherever they occur. So do the German Government. President von Weizsacker, Chancellor Kohl and other political leaders in Germany have condemned the neo-Nazi attacks and have pledged unrelenting efforts to identify and prosecute those responsible.

Kashmir

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions have taken place between the Governments of the United Kingdom and India to decide appropriate assistance from the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth and the United Nations to assist Kashmir overcome the flooding disaster.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 19 October 1992]*: The Government of India have not sought any emergency assistance from the United Kingdom for the flooding in Kashmir.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister what forecasts have been received by Her Majesty's Government of the numbers of refugees likely to die in Bosnia and other former Yugoslavian states in the coming winter; what estimates have been received of the numbers of people who will be displaced from their homes or detention camps this winter; and what arrangements have been made by Her Majesty's Government, in conjuction with the EC and the United Nations, for the international community to receive refugees over this winter.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 19 October 1992]*: According to the UN High Commission for Refugees hundreds of thousands are at risk. A total of 1·6 million are already displaced; up to 12,000 are in detention centres. The UNHCR believes that the best policy is for displaced people to stay as close to their homes as possible. We agree and have so far contributed over £55 million to humanitarian relief operations.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister what representations have been received by Her Majesty's Government for armed action to be taken against those attacking UN-sponsored humanitarian relief in Bosnia and other former Yugoslavian states and for armed retaliation against air attacks on Bosnia made by Serbian aircraft or Serbian-sponsored aircraft in Bosnia.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 19 October 1992]*: Of the several thousand letters received from members of the public concerning the former Yugoslavia, a significant number have advocated military action. The purpose of the 2,400 troops we are providing is the protection of humanitarian convoys in central Bosnia. The Bosnian Serbs have undertaken to remove their combat aircraft to Serbia. The UN is working urgently to ensure that this happens.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister what representations have been received by Her Majesty's Government for arms from those in Bosnia fighting aggression from Serbia or sponsored by Serbia; on what dates such requests were made; what types of arms were requested; what was the response of Her Majesty's Government; and whether any requests for arms are being considered by Her Majesty's Government.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 19 October 1992]*: United Nations Security Council resolution 713 of 25 September 1991 established an arms embargo on all the territory of former Yugoslavia, including Bosnia-Hercegovina. There is no question of any consideration being given to requests for arms.

Pakistan

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister what financial assistance has been given by Her Majesty's Government, to date, to relieve suffering caused by flooding in Pakistan; what other assistance has been given by Her Majesty's Government, to date, to Pakistan, to provide clean water, medical supplies, food, temporary shelter and clothing; and on what date the Government of Pakistan requested formally Her Majesty's Government to assist in relieving hardship caused by flooding.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 19 October 1992]*: Although the Government of Pakistan have made no formal request to the international donor community for relief assistance following the recent flooding, the Government have provided £475,088 for relief aid because of the magnitude of the disaster.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister what action he has taken through the EC, the Commonwealth and the United Nations to co-ordinate international assistance to relieve hardship caused by flooding in Pakistan.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 19 October 1992]*: The United Nations, in co-operation with the Government of Pakistan, has set up a committee of donors to co-ordinate relief efforts. The United Kingdom and its European Community partners, together with the European Commission, have participated in this committee through representatives in Islamabad.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions have taken place between representatives of Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Pakistan about help and assistance from the United Kingdom to provide short, medium and long-term aid to Pakistan to rebuild the country following the flooding disaster; and if he will give dates of when such meetings took place and the designation of officials participating.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 19 October 1992]*: Disastrous floods struck northern Pakistan on the night of 10 to 11 September. Senior officials of the British high aid commission in Islamabad, led by the economic and counsellor had discussed relief aid requirements with federal Government officials on 12 September. A first contribution for emergency relief was made the same day. There have since been weekly meetings between the British high commission and federal Government officials through the forum of the UN Disaster Relief Organisation Programme UN Development—chaired special co-ordinating committee for flood relief—on 14 and 24 September and 6 October.

On several occasions following the emergency, the British high commissioner has discussed relief requirements with the Prime Minister of Pakistan, notably during a call on the Prime Minister on 21 September, and other senior ministers.

On 17 September the economic aid counsellor in the British high commission—BHC—had discussions with the Chief Secretary, Government of Punjab to determine further relief needs. As a result, we responded with a supply of tents and blankets which arrived in Lahore on 22 September, on a flight met by the same BHC official and the provincial Minister of Revenue.

On 23 September the economic aid counsellor held discussions with senior officials in the Government of Punjab.

On 27 September the first secretary (aid) visited Lahore for further discussions with senior provincial Government officials on relief distribution and further needs. On 6 October the same official visited Jhelum to monitor the delivery and further distribution of relief goods supplied under British aid, where he met district officials.

In addition, the British deputy high commissioner in Karachi and his staff have held regular contacts with Government of Sindh about emergency needs in the province.

The authorities in Pakistan have stressed the need for self reliance in terms of longer-term rehabilitation, and have therefore made no official request for aid for this purpose. However, we will continue to keep in touch with the Government of Pakistan about longer-term requirements in the context of our bilateral aid programme.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Fishing Fleet

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many fishing boats are tied up at present at Portavogie, Kilkeel and Ardglass harbours; and if he will make a statement on the size of the Northern Ireland fishing fleet which is still actively involved in the fishing industry.

Mr. Hanley: It is understood that there are, in total, 20 fishing vessels of over 10 m in length which are at present tied up at Portavogie, Kilkeel and Ardglass harbours. As with other member states, the future size of the United Kingdom fishing fleet, which includes that of Northern

Ireland, is the subject of continuing examination and consultation with the Commission in multi-annual guidance programme targets.

Students' Unions

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what amount of public funds is allocated per annum to the students' unions in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: In the 1991-92 academic year payments —largely from public funds—by universities and colleges of education in Northern Ireland to their respective students unions amounted to £1,427,900. Information in relation to students unions in further education colleges is not readily available.

SCOTLAND

Consultants

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the occasions when his Department has employed Quayle Munro as consultants in the last three years, with details of the projects concerned.

Mr. Lang: Details of the projects undertaken by Quayle Munro on behalf of The Scottish Office in the last three years are as follows:—

Details of Project	*Contract Period*
Advisers to Secretary of State on privatisation of the Scottish Bus Group.	1988-1991
Advising on proposals for the direct labour organisation of Scottish Homes.	1990
Advising on the sale of Scottish public transport companies by local authorities.	1991 (ongoing)
Advising on the funding arrangements for the Skye Crossing, including the tender competition and tender clarifications with the Concessionaire.	1990-1992
Advising on the options for the future organisation of water and sewerage services in Scotland.	1992

Lockerbie Air Crash

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many officers of *(a)* the Scottish police and *(b)* other police forces are currently engaged on the investigation of the bombing of Pan Am 103; and which countries have been visited by British police officers in connection with the Lockerbie disaster.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Seven officers of the Dumfries and Galloway constabulary are currently directly engaged in the Lockerbie investigation. No other police force in the United Kingdom is presently involved. Inquiries have been conducted in 70 countries. It would not be helpful to identify each of the countries visited.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Aerospace

Mr. Bennett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with British Aerospace about the joint venture for regional aircraft with Taiwan.

Mr. Sainsbury: The joint venture is a commercial matter between British Aerospace and the Taiwanese Aerospace Corporation. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has, however, been kept informed of progress. He met John Cahill, chairman of British Aerospace and Earle Ho, chairman of the Taiwanese Aerospace Corporation, on 29 July, during the latter's visit to the United Kingdom.

Toys (Safety)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement as to the grounds on which the EC has banned birthday cards which have an age badge attached for children under three years old; and what action his Department is taking.

Mr. Leigh: My Department is not aware of any action by the EC or any member state to ban such items.

Recycling

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the reasons for the recent fall in the United Kingdom's recycling rate for paper.

Mr. Eggar: The recycling rate for paper can be measured in two ways: the proportion of waste paper used in the production of paper and board in the United Kingdom or the amount of waste paper recovered as a proportion of paper consumed in the United Kingdom.

The most recent figures available to my Department show that the proportion of waste paper used in production in the first half of 1992 was, at 59·7 per cent., identical to the rate one year earlier. This was in a period in which United Kingdom production of paper and board increased by 2·8 per cent. Recovery tonnages also increased over the period from 1,585,000 tonnes in the first half of 1991 to 1,616,000 tonnes in the first half of 1992. However, since United Kingdom consumption in the period increased at a faster rate than United Kingdom production, the recovery rate fell from 33·7 per cent. to 32·5 per cent.

My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has met representatives of the paper and board industry to discuss the pattern of trade and, in particular, the impact of changing environmental legislation in other member states of the European Community.

Postal Services

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement concerning the application of the principle of subsidiarity to the purposes, and proposals made in the communication of the European Commission (7390/92) concerning policies for postal services, indicating which proposal for improvements could not be achieved by national postal authorities or by co-operation within the international postal union.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 19 October 1992]*: The range, quality, reliability and pricing of postal services varies considerably throughout the European Community. The EC Commission has taken the view that postal services form an essential part of the social and business infrastructure of the EC, and that individuals and organisations are entitled to certain minimum standards. The Commission's proposals in its Green Paper on postal services are to achieve their objective essentially through a combination of harmonisation and market opening measures, and the elimination of harmful cross-subsidies. The principle of subsidiarity will be reflected in that member states will remain free to provide postal services to a higher standard than the minima decreed by the Commission, to adopt more liberal regimes, to organise their regulatory structures and generally to tailor their services to meet the specific needs of local circumstances.

Microelectronics

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will publish tables showing the total of payments under the investment support for fibre optics and opto-electronics programme by 31 March 1992, the total payments to projects in each region and any payments during 1991-92 in total and for each region;

(2) if he will publish tables showing the total of payments under the microelectronics industry support programme II by 31 March 1992, the total payments to projects in each region and any payments during 1991-1992 in total and for each region;

(3) if he will publish tables showing the total of payments under the microelectronics industry support programme I by 31 March 1992, the total payments to the projects in each region and any payments during 1991-92 in total and for each region.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* Details of financial assistance under these three programmes are contained in the "Industrial Development Act 1982 Annual Report". Copies of the most recent report for the year ended 31 March 1992 are available in the Library.

Electricity Generating Plants

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the installed capacities of electricity generating plants in the United Kingdom of the generating and regional companies using gas for steam and gas turbines respectively; and what capacity of the former was initially installed for burning coal.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* There are at present two combined cycle gas-fired stations in operation in England and Wales:

Organisation	*Location*	*Estimated capacity (MW)*
Lakeland Power	Roosecote, Cumbria	235
PowerGen plc	Killingholme, South Humberside	450 (1st unit)

One—Roosecote—is on the site of an earlier coal-fired station.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what instruction, advice or guidance he has given to the main electricity generating undertakings, and regional electricity companies respectively, concerning the short or long-term sources of their fuel supplies, since the privatisation of the electricity production and supply industry.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* I am not in a position to give instructions to private sector companies. I have made clear to all concerned the importance I attach to seeing contracts put in place as soon as possible which will provide stability to the coal industry over the next few years and bring benefits to electricity customers.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the number and total installed capacity of power stations converted or built to use gas as a fuel since the abolition of the Central Electricity Generating Board, stating in broad terms the number and capacity installed by each of the new national and regional electricity undertakings, and others respectively, and the range of gas price per gigajoule paid.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* Gas-fired power stations—above 50MW—in England and Wales, commissioned since 31 March 1990 were:

Organisation	*Location*	*Estimated capacity (MW)*
Lakeland Power	Roosecote, Cumbria	235
PowerGen plc	Killingholme, South Humberside	450 (1st unit)

Gas prices are a commercial matter for the companies concerned.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total capacity of those coal-fired power stations due to be closed by the main generating undertakings, consequent to their planned reductions in coal burn for 1993, giving the capital cost per megawatt, and fuel cost per gigajoule respectively, for the most efficient coal and gas-fired power stations now available for construction at current gas and United Kingdom produced coal prices respectively.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* These are commercial matters for the generating companies.

Agencies and Trading Funds

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the outturn income and receipts for 1990-91 and 1991-92, projected outturns for 1992-93, and plans for subsequent years for the agencies and trading funds responsible to his Department.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* Details that the hon. Gentleman has asked to be published can be found in table 16 on page 20 of the publication entitled "Trade and Industry—The Government's Expenditure Plans 1992-93 to 1994-95", Cm 1904, dated February 1992. A copy of this publication, which is updated annually, is in the House's Library.

SPUR Scheme

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the total of applications, offers and payments made under the SPUR scheme as at 1 October 1992, the same information for each region and each region's share of the total.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* Applications, offers and payments made under the Support for Products under Research—SPUR—scheme as at 1 October 1992 were as follows:

Region	Applications Number	Applications Per cent. of total	Offers Number	Offers Value £ million	Offers Per cent. of total by value	Payments Value £ million	Payments Per cent. of total
East	25	6·5	12	1·40	7·8	0·08	6·0
East Midlands	19	4·9	14	1·15	6·4	0·13	9·8
North East	10	2·6	7	0·60	3·3	0·04	3·0
North West	90	23·4	46	3·32	18·5	0·17	12·8
South East	60	15·6	31	3·38	18·8	0·21	15·8
South West	41	10·6	14	1·26	7·0	0·11	8·3
West Midlands	32	8·3	24	1·40	7·8	0·10	7·5
Yorks/Humberside	52	13·5	27	1·74	9·7	0·20	15·0
Wales	25	6·5	14	1·15	6·4	0·04	3·0
Scotland	31	8·1	23	2·54	14·2	0·25	18·8
Total	385	—	212	17·94	—	1·33	—

Enterprise Initiative

Mr. Cousins: To ask the president of the Board of Trade if he will publish tables showing the total of payments under the enterprise initiative programme by 31 March 1992, the total payments to projects in each region, and payments during 1991-92 in total and for each region, together with the projected outturn total spend for 1992-93.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* Total payments on enterprise initiative consultancy projects from the launch of the scheme in 1988 up to the end of March 1992 amounted to £142·3 million. In the 1991-92 financial year payments reached a total of £52·1 million, and the current forecast for 1992-93 is £57·1 million. Regional breakdowns of project payments for the period to 31 March 1992, and for 1991-92, are as follows. An accurate regional breakdown for 1992-93 will not be available until the end of the current financial year.

Table 1

Project payments 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1992

DTI region	£ million
North East	7·8
North West	22·8
Yorkshire and Humberside	16·3
West Midlands	17·8
East Midlands	9·4
South West	10·1
East	8·1
South East	28·6
Scotland	12·7
Wales	8·7
TOTAL	142·3

Table 2

Project payments 1 April 1991 to 31 March 1992

DTI region	£ million
North East	3·1
North West	6·9
Yorkshire and Humberside	6·0
West Midlands	6·9
East Midlands	3·7
South West	3·8
East	3·2
South East	11·2
Scotland	4·2
Wales	3·1
TOTAL	52·1

Coal Mining

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will summarise the use made by any Government of a member state of the European Community of any provision they make for national support for the coal mining industry, stating the approximate price and percentage assistance per tonne, and per gigajoule respectively.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* The amount of subsidy for current caol production in 1990 for relevant European Community member states was as follows:

	£ per tonne
Belgium	55
France	10
Germany	39
Spain	19

Source: European Commission.

The United Kingdom does not provide subsidies for current production. Agreed Community policy is to restructure the coal industries towards economic viability and to eliminate such subsidies.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the articles in any treaty of the European Communities and any regulation or directive applied in this respect which permit any national supports for the deep coal mining industry, or public support for any form of electricity generation.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* Article 4 of the treaty of Paris, which established the European Coal and Steel Community treaty, declared that aid to member states' coal industries was incompatible with the common market in coal. Nevertheless, a series of decisions of the Council have recognised that in order to adapt the level of production it was necessary to allow such aid, and laid down the conditions which should be satisfied, which included the authorisation of the Commission. The current decision—2064/86/ECSC—stipulates that for aid to be authorised by the Commission, it must help to achieve one or more of the following objectives:

Improvement of competitivity of the coal industry, which contributes to assure a better security of supply.

Creating new capacities provided that they are economically viable.

Solving the social and regional problems related to developments in the coal industry.

EMPLOYMENT

Young People at Work

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if she intends to preside in her capacity as president in office of the Social Affairs Council over a discussion on the proposed Council directive on the protection of young people at work;

(2) if she will make a statement about Government policy towards the proposed EC Council directive on the protection of young people at work;

(3) what is her view on the European Commission's proposals in the draft directive on the protection of young people at work as it concerns *(a)* night work, *(b)* rest time, *(c)* rest period and *(d)* paid leave.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Discussion of this directive is still at a very early stage. The European Parliament has not yet delivered its opinion and the Commission's proposals may be revised before they are considered by the Council. The agenda for the Social Affairs Council in December has not yet been finalised.

The Government question on the ground of subsidiarity the need for EC legislation on young people's employment. In the United Kingdom the health and safety and educational interests of children below the minimum school leaving age are protected by existing legislation. Young employees above the minimum school leaving age are in general covered by the same legislation as adults in the same occupations. Specific health and safety protection for young employees in the United Kingdom is based on factors distinguishing them from adults. The Government also question whether the Commission's current proposal on night work, rest time, rest periods and paid leave are justified on these grounds.

Social Fund Grants

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the procedure by which colleges of further and higher education should in future apply for European social fund grants once these cease to come through local education authorities; and if she will make it her policy that existing ESF funded courses will continue to be so funded.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Local authorities have offered to continue to handle applications for European social fund grants for courses at colleges of further education for the whole of 1993. Arrangements for applications thereafter will depend upon the results of the forthcoming Community-level review of the EC structural funds, which are due to take effect from January 1994 onwards. The Government will consult closely with all concerned as to arrangements to apply then.

Labour Statistics

Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is her estimate of the number of young people seeking a youth training place in Birmingham for the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the current number of job vacancies in the travel-to-work areas which include the coal mines which British Coal has announced will close; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Max Madden dated 20 October

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the number of current job vacancies within the travel to work areas for the coal mines which British Coal has announced will close. This is something which falls within the responsibilities she has delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

I attach a table showing the number of vacancies unfilled at Jobcentres on 2nd October 1992, the last statistical count date, for each of the relevant travel to work areas. All of the travel to work areas are included as requested although following the statement by the President of the Board of Trade on 19 October only 8 of these areas have a colliery now designated for closure after the statutory consultation period has been completed.

It is not possible to provide information on the total number of job vacancies available in the labour market but it is estimated that about one third of all vacancies are notified to Jobcentres.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will be published in the *Official Report*. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Colliery	*Travel to Work Area*	*Number of unfilled vacancies at local Jobcentres on 2 October 1992*
Easington Vane Tempest	Durham	313
Wearmouth	Sunderland	603
Westoe	South Tyneside	146
Parkside	Wigan and St. Helens	742
Prince of Wales Sharlston Frickley	Wakefield and Dewsbury	705
Rossington Bentley Hatfield/Thorne Markham Main Houghton Main Grimethorpe	Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Mexborough	879
Maltby Kiveton	Rotherham and Mexborough Sheffield	1,190
Silverhill Bevercotes Bilsthorpe Clipstone Rufford	Worksop, Alfreton and Ashfield, Retford, Mansfield	551
Cotgrave Calverton	Nottingham	465
Bolsover Markham Shirebrook	Chesterfield	352
Trentham Silverdale	Stoke	571

Colliery	*Travel to Work Area*	*Number of unfilled vacancies at local Jobcentres on 2 October 1992*
Betws Drift	Llanelli	351
Point of Ayr	Shotton, Flint and Rhyl	574
Taff Merthyr	Merthyr and Rhymney	452

WALES

Road Safety

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the local road safety schemes supported by his Department in Wales; and how much money has been allocated to each scheme in the current year.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The table lists the Department's road safety engineering schemes programmed for the current year.

	£
Clwyd	
A494—Tafarn y Gelyn Visibility improvement	25,000
A494/A55—Ewloe interchange Cycleway and safety fence	25,000
A55—Brookside junction, Northop Hall Closure of central reservation gaps	13,500
A55—Llanddulas, Glan Conway Closure of emergency crossing points	70,000
A55—Pont Dafydd Closure of central reservation gaps	25,000
A55—Traveller's Inn Closure of central reservation gaps	6,000
Dyfed	
A44—Llanbadarn Fawr Splitter island	15,000
A40—Arnolds Hill Traffic calming	90,000
A40—Letterston Cross Improvement to crossroads	20,000
A4076—St. Peter's Road, Johnston Demolition and footway widening	5,000
A487—Hill Terrace, Fishguard Safety fence	70,000
A40—Bethany Row, Haverfordwest Traffic calming	40,000
A40—Abbey Mead Traffic calming	3,500
A44—Lovesgrove junction, Aberystwyth Junction improvement	283,000
Gwynedd	
A5—Dalar crossroads, Anglesey Bus bay	30,000
A5—Pont y Pair hotel, Betws y Coed Footway	5,000
A5—Padog bends Signing	7,000
A470—Church street, Glan Conway Junction improvement	10,000
A470—Tollgate cottage, Pen Loyn, Tan Lan Widening	20,000
A470—Dolgellau bypass Signing	10,000
A487—Little Market, Porthmadog Pelican crossing	35,000
Powys	
A470/A44—Llangurig roundabout Signing	1,000
A470—Minhafron, Llandinam Footway widening	5,000
A489—Newtown Footway widening	3,000
A487—Glaspwll, Machynlleth Signing	1,000
A487—Cwmbach Signing	9,000
A470—Llanwrthal junction, Near Doldowlod Junction improvement	13,500
A479—Tretower Kerbs and footway	5,000
A470/A40—Brecon roundabout Reconstruction of central island and signing	5,000
A40—Pont y Bryn Hurt Road realignment	605,000
A470—Tan House Bridge, Rhayader Widening and visibility improvement	255,000
A470—Carno road, Caersws Footway, widening and visibility improvement	209,000
West Glamorgan	
M4—Kenfig Wind indicator	30,000
A48—Briton ferry Safety fence	5,000

Dentists

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will announce measures to alleviate the shortage of manpower in dentistry in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Department has recently reminded family health services authorities in Wales that they can apply for permission to employ salaried dentists in areas where there is a serious shortage of general dental practitioners. One FHSA has already been given permission to employ salaried dentists and one other application is under consideration.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the total number of sites of special scientific interest in Wales and the number of these that have been *(a)* partially and *(b)* wholly damaged.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There are 845 sites of special scientific interest in Wales. Since 1985, when formal monitoring began, 137 SSSIs have at some time been damaged and one SSSI has been lost.

Coal Industry

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he proposes in response to recent developments affecting the coal industry in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I recognise that the closures of Betws and Taff Merthyr will have a severe impact on the local economies affected and I am determined that the maximum possible help will be made available to the individuals and communities involved.

The Government have already announced a comprehensive range of services for those affected by the closures, covering in particular their counselling and retraining needs and the assistance they will need to find secure new employment. The training and enterprise councils have a key role to play here.

I have already met the chairmen of the West Wales and Mid Glamorgan TECs and asked them to let me have within two weeks action plans covering all unemployed people in the closure areas and any redundant miners who live outside them. I expect the action plans to address not only the labour market issues but also, in conjunction with the Welsh Development Agency, proposals for business development and the creation of new jobs.

Although the Government have announced a moratorium on the proposed closure of Point of Ayr, I have met the chairman of the North East Wales TEC and asked his TEC to prepare a contingency plan for that area.

To assist implementation of these plans, I have arranged for up to £4·8 million for employment and training measures to be made available over the next 18 months.

I am also concerned to tackle the regeneration of the areas affected and secure their economic, social and environmental development. In particular:

I am making a special allocation of £2·5 million in 1992-93 under the urban programme and I am inviting the local authorities to let me have urgent proposals on how these funds can most effectively be used;

European funding has an important contribution to make. I hope shortly to announce agreement to 80 projects including European Regional development fund grants of over £15 million in the areas affected. In addition, a further £2·8 million is available under the ERDF and, in the light of recent decisions, I shall be exploring with local authorities and other partners how these funds can best be deployed.

In Wales we have the Welsh Development Agency which, with its record budget of £167 million, is already heavily engaged in these areas.

I have discussed with the chairman of the agency its plans taking account of current developments. Overall decisions on the future budget of the WDA have still to be taken as part of the public expenditure round, but I can announce now that the WDA will be spending £33 million over the next 18 months on a range of measures which will assist economic development in the areas concerned. This will include about £16 million on land reclamation and urban property development, and nearly £5 million on business support services and £10 million on urban renewal joint venture schemes.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Questions

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the numbers of written answers given to each of the top 30 hon. Members in rank order of number of questions tabled *(a)* during the 1991-92 session and *(b)* in the 1992-93 session up to 16 July.

Mr. Newton: The Members receiving the most answers to written questions in session 1991-92, as recorded on the House of Commons Library's POLIS database, were as follows:

		Number
1.	The hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn)	441
2.	The hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen)	272
3.	The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan)	268
4.	The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley)	241
5.	The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Austin Mitchell)	239
6.=	The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson)	233
6.=	The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher)	233
8.	The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. D. Clark)	211
9.	The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley)	194
10.	The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. S. Hughes)	192
11.	The hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill)	190
12.	The hon. Member for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins)	183
13.	The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen)	180
14.	The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz)	168
15.	The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes)	159
16.	The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael)	158
17.	The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion)	151
18.	The hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe)	149
19.	The former hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn)	137
20.	The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. R. Davies)	135
21.	The former hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist)	134
22.	The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady)	130
23.	The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden)	126
24.	The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. B. Jones)	122
25.	The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox)	120
26.=	The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. T. Banks)	114
26.=	The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett)	114
28.=	The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer)	110
28.=	The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman)	110
30.	The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle)	108

The Members receiving the most answers to written questions in Session 1992-93, up to and including 16 July 1992, as recorded on the House of Commons Library's POLIS database, were as follows:

		Number
1.	The hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. L. Smith)	271
2.	The hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn)	228
3.	The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis)	217
4.	The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. S. Hughes)	177
5.	The hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe)	171

		Number
6.	The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. B. Jones)	168
7.	The hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond)	167
8.	The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen)	160
9.	The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster)	156
10=.	The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. B. Field)	149
10=.	The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Austin Mitchell)	149
12=.	The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson)	146
12=.	The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan)	146
14.	The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)	139
15.	The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. W. Griffiths)	134
16.	The hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay)	125
17.	The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile)	122
18.	The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. D. Clark)	111
19.	The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner)	109
20.	The hon. Member for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins)	108
21.	The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton)	102
22.	The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. T. Banks)	100
23.	The hon. Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat)	99
24.	The hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn)	98
25.	The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael)	91
26.	The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. D. Shaw)	81
27.	The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood)	79
28.	The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek)	78
29=.	The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. R. Davies)	75
29=.	The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley)	75

Statutory Instruments

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many debates took place *(a)* on the Floor of the House and *(b)* in a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments in each Session since 1983-84 in pursuance of motions to annul a statutory instrument.

Mr. Newton: The information is as follows:

A Debates on the floor of the House

Year	Number
1983-84	[1]23
1984-85	12
1985-86	10
1986-87	[2]6
1987-88	18
1988-89	[3]17
1989-90	[4]14
1990-91	[5]8
1991-92	[6]2
1992-93 [to Summer Adjournment '92]	0

[1] (5 with motions to approve statutory instruments)

[2] (1 with motion to approve statutory instrument)

[3] (2 with motions to approve statutory instruments)

[4] (4 with motions to approve statutory instruments)

[5] (1 with motions to approve statutory instruments)

[6] (1 with motions to approve statutory instruments)

Note:—On occasion, motions to annul a statutory instrument were debated along with motions to approve other statutory instruments on related topics. Questions are not always put on motions included in debate.

B Debates in Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments

	Number
1983-84	20
1984-85	26
1985-86	9
1986-87	12
1987-88	12
1988-89	12
1989-90	11
1990-91	9
1991-92	8
1992-93	[1]1

[1] To Summer Adjournment 1992.

Note: One debate, either on the Floor or in Standing Committee, may deal with more than one motion to annul an Instrument. (See Supplementary Information.)

Supplementary Information

A Number of Statutory Instruments subject to Negative Resolution debated on the Floor of the House

	Number
1983-84	41
1984-85	20
1985-86	17
1986-87	15
1987-88	28
1988-89	54
1989-90	24
1990-91	13
1991-92	4
1992-93	[1]0

[1] To Summer Adjournment 1992.

B Number of Statutory Instruments subject to Negative Resolution debated in Standing Committee

	Number
1983-84	21
1984-85	29
1985-86	9
1986-87	19
1987-88	27
1988-89	18
1989-90	16
1990-91	18
1991-92	8
1992-93	[1]1

[1] To Summer Adjournment 1992.

Agencies (Letters to Members)

Mr. Page: To ask the Lord President of the Council how the Government intend to respond to the decision of the Administration Committee that letters sent to hon. Members by agency chief executives in response to parliamentary questions should be printed among the written answers in the daily *Official Report*.

Mr. Newton: The Government welcome the Administration Committee's decision, which was set out by the Committee's Chairman in a previous written answer, *Official Report* 16 July 1992, column *941*. The decision meets the Government's aim that replies from agency chief executives should be more readily accessible. while recognising the direct operational responsibilities of chief executives.

Officials from the Office of Public Service and Science have been discussing the practical implications with the *Official Report* and with Departments and agencies. Guidance has been issued to allow the new arrangements to come into effect as from the beginning of the new term. The Government will keep the working of the new arrangements under review.

The arrangements apply to questions tabled on operational matters for which responsibility has been delegated by Ministers to agency chief executives. It remains open to hon. Members to write to chief executives direct on such matters and I would encourage them to do so wherever they judge it appropriate.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 21 October 1992

NORTHERN IRELAND

Water Services

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what were the standard costs of mains water and sewerage installation in the constituency of South Down from 1 April 1980 to 31 March 1992;

(2) what are the current standard costs of mains water and sewerage installation in respect of domestic properties in the constituency of South Down.

Mr. Atkins: The tables show the Department of the Environment's tariffs for connections to public water mains and sewers from 1980 to 1992. The tariffs are the same for all areas of Northern Ireland and cover the cost of time taken and fittings supplied by the Department for the connection between the two pipes.

Since 1988, where the connecting pipe to a water main is over 25 mm in diameter or, in the case of a sewer over 150 mm in diameter, the charge levied is the actual cost to the Department in carrying out the connection.

	Connection to Water Main			*Connection to Sewer*	
Year	*15mm diameter pipe*	*22mm diameter pipe*	*28mm diameter pipe*	*100mm diameter pipe*	*150mm diameter pipe*
1980	38	42·00	49	21·00	28
1981	42	46·00	50	24·00	32
1982	42	46·00	50	26·00	35
1983	42	46·00	50	26·00	35
1984	38	42·00	45	29·00	38
1985	42	46·00	50	36·00	48
1986	50	55·00	60	38·00	50
1987	52	58·00	63	42·00	55
		Pipe not exceeding 25mm diameter		*Pipe not exceeding 150mm diameter*	
1988		70·00		55·00	
1989		77·50		66·50	
1990		83·50		67·50	
1991		95·00		85·00	
1992		105·00		90·00	

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the numbers of patients waiting for out-patient treatment on 31 March for each individual health authority *(a)* in total and *(b)* by main speciality for periods (i) under 12 months, (ii) 12 to 24 months and (iii) over 24 months.

Mr. Hanley: Information on waiting times for first out-patients appointments is not held centrally.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the numbers of patients waiting for in-patient treatment on 31 March for each individual health authority *(a)* in total and *(b)* by main specialty for periods (i) under 12 months, (ii) 12 to 24 months and (iii) over 24 months.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is given in the tables.

(a) Total of patients waiting for in-patient treatment in each Health and Social Services Board area at 31 March 1992

Board	*Number*
Eastern	18,922
Northern	2,113
Southern	1,627
Western	3,905

(b) Patients waiting for in-patient treatment in main specialties by months waiting at 31 March 1992

Main specialty	*0-11 months*	*12-23 months*	*24+ months*
Eastern Board			
General Surgery	2,001	317	601
Urology	672	267	376
Trauma & Orthopaedic	2,354	555	22
ENT	1,720	102	21
Opthalmology	2,721	694	224
Oral Surgery	285	75	7
Plastic Surgery	874	249	572
Gynaecology	1,434	17	3
Other	1,723	443	593
Northern Board			
General Surgery	681	18	4
ENT	657	296	8
Gynaecology	442	5	—
Other	2	—	—
Southern Board			
General Surgery	606	13	—
ENT	675	4	—
Gynaecology	312	2	—
Other	15	—	—
Western Board			
General Surgery	451	83	236
Trauma & Orthopaedic	359	158	159
ENT	986	4	—
Opthalmology	654	122	25
Oral Surgery	252	—	—
Gynaecology	412	—	—
Other	4	—	—

Housing

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the number of Housing Executive properties *(a)* demolished and *(b)* replaced in each of the Province's local authority catchment areas for each year since and including 1979.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I have been advised by the chief executive that the information which is readily available is as follows:

Housing executive properties demolished

District Council Area	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Antrim	36	—	6	323	13
Ards	110	14	—	50	45
Armagh	1	2	24	10	3
Ballymena	—	—	5	13	29
Ballymoney	4	—	4	—	—
Banbridge	14	36	21	41	2
Belfast	1,372	1,321	911	734	645
Carrickfergus	5	34	1	—	6
Castlereagh	—	—	—	1	2
Coleraine	16	6	3	2	8
Cookstown	2	3	—	—	17
Craigavon	314	117	139	145	16
Derry	93	38	123	52	14
Down	4	10	10	32	1
Dungannon	6	5	13	2	10
Fermanagh	54	13	—	—	—
Larne	14	1	—	4	—
Limavady	—	—	—	1	—
Lisburn	1	7	2	2	—
Magherafelt	—	—	—	—	—
Moyle	4	1	1	—	1
Newry and Mourne	45	60	61	31	8
Newtownabbey	27	3	43	16	95
North Down	1	—	—	—	—
Omagh	4	6	—	—	—
Strabane	—	1	19	7	13

Note (1) The total number of Housing Executive properties demolished from 1982-83 to 1986-87 was 12,239; information on demolitions by Council area did not become available until 1987 when the executive's database was computerised.

(2) Information prior to 1982-83 is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Housing Executive Properties Replaced

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Antrim	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ards	81	19	44	38	40	28	—	32	11	—	61	31	61
Armagh	30	9	6	30	20	22	8	19	29	5	12	31	—
Ballymena	49	63	20	41	30	4	18	13	—	—	—	—	—
Ballymoney	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	4	—	4	—	—
Banbridge	6	4	17	13	3	12	—	31	17	17	32	18	30
Belfast	280	704	926	1,740	1,455	1,276	1,385	936	952	754	726	591	370
Carrickfergus	5	—	—	—	—	24	9	—	—	—	18	26	—
Castlereagh	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12	14	—	—
Coleraine	—	10	14	—	34	26	—	22	8	6	—	5	2
Cookstown	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7	—	—	—
Craigavon	79	—	22	69	21	16	39	2	40	—	24	14	32
Derry	90	31	47	70	95	44	37	18	61	95	24	27	—
Down	17	47	4	41	30	32	8	31	—	16	—	14	8
Dungannon	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12
Fermanagh	—	—	—	29	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Larne	28	15	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	15	—	—	—
Limavady	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lisburn	52	—	—	92	44	50	—	—	—	—	—	—	5
Magherafelt	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8	13	—	—	—	9
Moyle	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	9	1
Newry and Mourne	36	6	—	74	49	7	51	5	17	67	78	30	8
Newtownabbey	—	12	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	10	—	—	—
North Down	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	16	—	—	—	—	—
Omagh	—	—	—	—	6	—	—	14	—	—	4	6	—
Strabane	19	27	19	7	12	31	31	5	17	14	4	6	2

Note (1) This does not cover the Housing Executive's total new build programme but relates mainly to the replacement of dwellings in redevelopment areas and of unfit dwellings in housing action areas. It also includes replacement dwellings for the demolition of obsolete purpose-built stock such as Orlit dwellings, aluminium bungalows and rural cottages.

Anaesthetists

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by regional health board the current establishment requirement for anaesthetists; and what is the number in post.

Mr. Hanley: No establishment requirement figure is set by the Department. The table gives the number of consultant anaesthetists, expressed in the form of "whole-time equivalent", for each health and social services board as at 30 June 1992, the latest date for which figures are available.

Health and Social Services Board	*Consultant Anaesthetists*
Eastern	59·68
Northern	11·00
Southern	13·00
Western	13·00

Newtownbreda Bomb

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many homes were damaged as a result of the terrorist bomb explosion at Newtownbreda on Wednesday 23 September; which public services were present in Belvoir estate on Thursday 24 September to assist those who had suffered damages; what arrangements have been made to either rehouse house owners or repair the homes of house owners; and if he will arrange for immediate interim compensation payments to those who have experienced loss as a result of this bomb.

Mr. Atkins: The number of homes damaged at Newtownbreda is estimated to be 1,002 of which approximately 10 per cent. were seriously damaged, 40 per cent. were moderately damaged and 50 per cent. suffered minor damage.

Officials from the following public services were present on 24 September:

1. The Compensation Agency
2. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive
3. The Social Security Agency
4. The Eastern Health and Social Services Board
5. The South-Eastern Education and Library Board
6. The Royal Ulster Constabulary
7. Castlereagh Borough Council
8. Northern Ireland Fire Authority
9. The Department of the Environment.

In addition, 500 meals were provided by Purdysburn and Belvoir Park hospitals on 24 September.

Twenty-four houseowners were rendered homeless as a result of the explosion; three of these have been found temporary accommodation in the Belvoir/Cregagh area, and 11 have been allocated mobile homes sited in the area until such times as the repairs to their own homes are completed. The remaining houseowners have made their own arrangements. Eighteen families in Housing Executive properties were similarly affected and have either made their own arrangements or been found alternative accommodation by the executive.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive carried out first-aid repairs to approximately 300 owner-occupied houses and to 574 of its own houses. The executive is currently carrying out permanent repairs to its own houses and estimates that all its houses will have been repaired by Christmas. In addition, the executive has been authorised to carry out permanent repairs to private houses, under the special arrangements announced by the Secretary of State, if requested by the owners.

Following the explosion, the Compensation Agency had an incident team of eight people together with a team of 18 loss adjusters working on site by midday on 24 September. The agency has manned an information point in Belvoir activity centre until 15 October and loss adjusters remain on site to assist the public in furthering their claims. As at 14 October 890 notifications to claim compensation have been received and the agency has advanced £30,714 as interim payments. Everything possible continues to be done to ensure that interim payments are made speedily to those in need.

Eye Operations

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons have been on the waiting list for eye operations at the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast in each of the past five years.

Mr. Hanley: The numbers of persons waiting for in-patient treatment in ophthalmology at the Royal Victoria hospital in each of the last five years were as follows:

Position at 31 March	*Numbers waiting*
1988	1,610
1989	2,572
1990	3,083
1991	3,752
1992	3,639

Exact numbers waiting for eye operations are not available.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Civil Servants' Shareholdings

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what guidance, other than the civil service pay and conditions of service code and the establishment officers' guide, his Department provides relating to civil servants' shareholdings; if he will list the number of occasions within the past five years on which civil servants have reported shareholdings to establishment officers in his Department; what regulations apply to the staff of the next steps agencies within his Department; what mechanisms are in place to prevent potential conflicts of interest; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's Department's guidance is contained in the departmental personnel management manual which is based on the code and guide. There have been no reports of shareholdings to establishment officers in the last five years.

The code and guide regulations apply to the next steps agencies as to the rest of the Department.

The personnel management manual and next steps agency regulations require all staff to consult personnel if a shareholding might raise a question of possible conflict.

TRANSPORT

Railway Investment

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table showing state investment in national railway networks in each of the 12 Community countries in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not readily available.

Traffic Accidents

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each of the past five years the numbers of people *(a)* killed and *(b)* sustaining serious injury, where excessive vehicle speed has been a contributory factor; and if he will provide a breakdown of those figures according to the number of incidents involving motor cycles and each other convenient type of vehicle.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: This information is not collected by the Department, but we estimate that about one third of all serious accidents are caused by excessive speed.

Environmental Protection

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the initiatives relating to environmental protection taken by his Department since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development; and what further proposals he plans for 1992-93.

Mr. MacGregor: Speed limiters for new heavy goods vehicles were introduced on 1 August. Certain existing vehicles over 16 tonnes will be required to have speed limiters from 1 August 1993. These measures will improve fuel consumption and reduce emissions.

On 1 September a metered smoke test was introduced into the annual roadworthiness test for heavy goods vehicles. A similar test will be introduced for diesel engined cars and light vans from 1 January 1993.

From the end of this year most new cars will require catalytic converters to meet tighter EC emissions standards. The United Kingdom Government continue to press for even tighter emissions and noise standards for vehicles and to discuss with other member states and the Commission measures to improve the fuel efficiency of new cars.

We are working on a number of other initiatives for 1992-93, including the publication of an updated manual of environmental appraisal. The White Paper "This Common Inheritance—The Second Year Report" gives further information about our work to reduce the impact of transport on the environment.

Bus Deregulation

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to consult on the consequences of bus deregulation.

Mr. Freeman: I am reviewing the operation of bus deregulation to see whether some minor modifications to the system might be appropriate. A consultation paper will be issued in due course.

Leicester Roads

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the origin/destination surveys were carried out on the A47, A6 and A46 on vehicles approaching Leicester; what were the results; and if further surveys will be carried out at a later date.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The most recent origin and destination surveys on the A47, A6 and A46 were carried out in 1988. The surveys showed that through journeys on each of these routes were relatively low. Further surveys will be carried out.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners (Citizens Charter)

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the citizen's charter applies to the rights of prisoners and, in particular, their dietary requirements.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Yes. The principles of the citizen's charter fully extend to all those held in custody. A code of standards will be published by the end of 1993 and will include a range of standards relating to dietary requirements.

Muslim Prisoners

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) in what circumstances any prisoner who is a Muslim is entitled to have halal meat at any meal; what alternatives are available; and if he will make a statement;

(2) for what reasons Muslim prisoners at Armley prison cannot obtain halal meat at weekday meals; what plans exist to change this situation; and whether the current instruction is consistent with the prison dietary scale.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Prison service standing orders provide that prisoners are entitled to a diet which accords with the requirements of their religion as agreed between a relevant religious body and prison service headquarters. The directory and guide on religious practices in the prison service sets out the permitted observances and facilities for Muslim prisoners, as agreed with the Islamic Cultural Centre. This provides that prison establishments should seek to provide halal meat on a number of days each week. Where halal meat is not available and other meat is not acceptable, a vegetarian diet should be provided. The arrangements at Her Majesty's prison, Leeds accord with these requirements. Halal meat is provided at the weekends; otherwise a vegetarian diet is available in accordance with the dietary scales.

British National Party

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to his answer of 13 July, *Official Report*, column *497*, if he will make available in the Library copies of those documents seized by the Metropolitan police from the headquarters of the British National party.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The documents which were seized by the Metropolitan police are with the police at Bexleyheath awaiting collection by the British National party.

The documents consist of samples of a large number of different British National party publications which are available from the British National party bookshop. The Home Office has no copies of the documents to make available to the Library.

Carl Bridgewater

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to complete his consideration of the Carl Bridgewater convictions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: This complex case is being considered with every care and expedition and I hope to be in a position to reach a decision soon.

Racially Inflammatory Publications

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to seek to amend the Public Order Act 1986 to increase its effectiveness in dealing with racially inflammatory publications.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government deplore any actions and publications which are likely or intended to stir up racial hatred. We believe that part III of the Public Order Act 1986 has played an important part in deterring them, but it is for the police and prosecuting authorities to decide whether proceedings should be taken in any particular case. We shall continue to keep the legislation and its operation under review, but we have no present plans for amending it.

Fire Brigades (Fleet Maintenance)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement outlining the procedures to be followed in the event of a company which had gained a tender for the fleet management of fire brigade vehicles subsequently getting into financial difficulties and having its assets seized while still maintaining the tender.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Compulsory competitive tendering for maintaining fire brigade vehicles remains under review, but there are no plans to require tendering for fleet management.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received concerning the implementation of compulsory competitive tendering in the fire service; and how many of these representations have called for the upkeep of fire engines to be made exempt from compulsory tendering arrangements.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: With the exception of Hertfordshire fire authority, all fire authorities and other fire service representative bodies in England and Wales have expressed opposition to compulsory competitive tendering for the maintenance of their vehicle fleets.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will outline the direct fleet maintenance costs for fire brigade vehicles in each fire brigade authority in Wales; and if he will outline the comparable direct costs for each fire brigade authority area which has put tenders out to external companies in England.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information about costs of brigade vehicle fleet maintenance is not available centrally.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the fire brigades in Wales which are currently able to identify unit costs throughout their fleet management organisations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Of the eight brigades in Wales, four are currently able to identify their brigade vehicle fleet unit costs, one will have identifiable costs by April 1993 and three are within their local authority costing schemes.

Disabled People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many members of staff employed by his Department currently specialise on electoral issues; of those staff members how many are responsible for accessibility to the electoral process for disabled people; and what plans he has to increase staff numbers in this area.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are currently four members of staff who spend all or most of their time on electoral matters. All include voting rights for disabled people among their responsibilities. There are no plans to increase staffing levels.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to undertake regular consultation with representative groups and organisations concerning the accessibility of the electoral process for disabled people.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We already consult some groups representing disabled people on matters in which they have an interest. We would welcome an approach from any others who wish to bring their particular concerns to our attention, or to offer their special expertise.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to conduct sample surveys on the accessibility of polling stations before, during and after each round of local, general and European elections.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. Sample surveys would not be an effective use of our resources in this area, which are better directed to providing financial support. It is our long-term aim to have all polling stations capable of easy access by disabled electors, and we issue regular reminders to district and London borough councils of their obligation to designate as polling places, so far as is reasonable and practicable, only places which are accessible to the disabled.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to review the implementation of schedule 4 to the amended Representation of the People Act 1985, concerning the accessibility of polling stations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We keep all electoral law and practice under regular review. We are currently undertaking a comprehensive review in the light of experience at the general election in April.

Remand Prisoners

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress his Department has made in implementing the recommendations of the Woolf report on remand prisoners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Progress has been as follows:

- *(a)* The assisted prison visits scheme was extended from 1 April 1991 to apply to the families of unconvicted prisoners from the date of the prisoner's reception into custody.
- *(b)* Guidance on visits by relatives and friends of unconvicted prisoners on the lines recommended in the Woolf report was issued to governors in May 1991.
- *(c)* A statement of principle on unconvicted prisoners has been adopted, as announced on 15 July in the reply I gave to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) at column *783*.
- *(d)* Bail information schemes are now in operation at 18 local prisons and remand centres and are under consideration at a similar number. The aim is to have schemes at all such establishments by 1995.
- *(e)* The particular needs of unconvicted prisoners are covered
    - (i) in a model regime for local prisons and remand centres, which is about to be issued as a framework for planning enhanced regimes, and
    - (ii) in guidance to be issued shortly on the management of reception and induction arrangements.

Action is in hand on other aspects of the Woolf report relating to unconvicted prisoners, as indicated in the White Paper "Custody, Care and Justice".

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information his Department holds about the number of remand prisoners in the United Kingdom currently being held in the same cells as convicted prisoners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the number of remand prisoners sharing cells with convicted prisoners is not collected centrally. The prison service seeks to keep unconvicted and convicted prisoners separate but the two classes of prisoner are held in the same wings, and occasionally even share cells, where the alternative would be to increase the overcrowding of part of the prisons or lead to prisoners being held in police cells. In particular, prisoners being segregated for their own protection may be mixed in this way because of limited accommodation.

Murder Statistics

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average period served in custody by those convicted for murder in the latest convenient period for which figures are available and in respect of whom there is no recommendation for a minimum period of detention.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: According to the records held centrally, which are approximate, the average time served under sentence in prison service establishments by murderers first released on licence in 1991 was 11·8 years. This figure excludes one prisoner who was the subject of a formal minimum recommendation under section 1(2) of the Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act 1965.

Prisoners

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by *(a)* sex and *(b)* year for the last four years, the percentage of prisoners sentenced to prison who have had no previous convictions.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not available for 1991. Information for 1987 to 1990 is given in the table. This is based on figures published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales"—tables 3.11, 4.9 and 5.9 of the 1990 issue, Cm 1800.

Receptions into Prison Service establishments under an immediate custodial sentence by sex and previous convictions, 1987-90

Sex and year of reception	*Total number of receptions*	*Number with previous convictions*				*Percentage with 0 previous convictions as a percentage of total with previous convictions recorded*
		Not recorded	*Recorded*			
			Total	*0*	*1 or more*	
Males						
1987	64,551	16,370	48,181	2,923	45,258	6
1988	62,206	18,369	43,837	3,948	39,889	9
1989	56,795	21,637	35,158	3,363	31,795	10
1990	48,736	21,723	27,013	3,579	23,434	13
Females						
1987	3,084	1,236	1,848	313	1,535	17
1988	2,813	1,058	1,755	377	1,378	21
1989	2,650	1,347	1,303	288	1,015	22
1990	2,115	1,090	1,025	162	863	16

House Fires

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps the Government is taking to reduce to risks of death or injury through fire in the home, in particular among elderly people.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Home Office provides multi-media publicity on fire safety in the home which is targeted at various age groups. Part of that material is specifically for the elderly age group and provides general guidance on fire prevention and fire safety in the home.

The Home Office targeted its 1990-91 and 1991-92 national television advertising campaigns on smoke alarms primarily at elderly people and their carers. The elderly are the group most at risk from fire and among the least likely to purchase alarms. Fire brigades make the maximum use of the available material in their own localities.

There is legislation in place in respect of residential care homes for elderly people which, among other things, makes provision for fire precautions. Such legislation is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Escaped Prisoners

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by *(a)* category, *(b)* sex and *(c)* length of time at large, the number of escaped prisoners that are currently on the run; and what are the corresponding figures for 12 months ago.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information relates to prisoners who escaped between 20 June 1988 and 31 August 1992. During this period 1,461 prisoners escaped from prison or prison custody. By 31 August 1992, 1,348 had been recaptured or returned to custody and three were known to be dead, leaving only 110 either at large or unaccounted for. The average time that the 1,348 who were recaptured spent at large was 29·5 days. Of the 110 still at large, 101 are male and nine female; two were remand prisoners provisionally regarded as category A; 10 category B; 53 category C; two category D; and 43 were not categorised, being either remand prisoners, convicted young offenders or women who were not category A or civil prisoners. Corresponding figures for 12 months ago are not available.

Religious Discrimination

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to prevent religious discrimination in employment due to certain unavailability for work due to religious observation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Commission for Racial Equality's second review of the Race Relations Act 1976, presented to the Government on 9 September, recommended that legislation against religious discrimination be given further consideration. We will be looking carefully at the recommendations contained in that review, but the Government have no plans at present to introduce such legislation.

The Government believe that it is for employers to agree with employees arrangements for meeting religious needs. For example, employers might consider whether they can vary or adapt working patterns or facilities to help meet such needs. The Government encourage this voluntary approach, for example, through the guidance pack published recently by the Employment Department and entitled "Equal Opportunities—Ten Point Plan for Employers".

Police Cells

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how much his Department paid each police force for holding people in police cells in the first six months of the current financial year;

(2) how many individual prisoners were held in police cells in each police authority area in England and Wales in each of the first six months of the current financial year who would normally be held in prison accommodation;

(3) how many prisoner-nights in police cells were covered in each police force area in England and Wales on each of the first six months of the current financial year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is given in the tables. Information on individual prisoners is not collected centrally.

Total prisoner nights by police force, April to September 1992

Police Force	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*
Avon and Somerset	1,187	1,208	1,214	1,288	1,127	746
Bedfordshire	651	695	658	549	199	113
Cambridgeshire	537	605	575	612	331	39
Cheshire	1,414	1,213	1.200	1,237	1,220	1,075
Cleveland	886	708	140	112	17	0
Cumbria	799	750	612	666	498	349
Derbyshire	732	414	347	723	407	454
Devon and Cornwall	607	790	596	321	414	117
Dorset	95	0	0	2	0	0
Durham	867	710	405	268	266	170
Dyfed and Powys	274	573	544	482	246	69
Essex	546	451	998	888	39	85
Gloucestershire	0	129	251	232	245	260
Greater Manchester	7,581	7,212	7,213	7,596	7,101	7,572
Gwent	583	585	561	561	301	155
Hampshire	698	431	407	431	283	394
Hertfordshire	607	587	648	453	0	0
Humberside	994	875	810	802	673	648
Kent	54	11	87	0	1	158
Lancashire	3,111	3,223	2,205	2,182	1,988	1,707
Leicestershire	854	713	609	901	794	152
Lincolnshire	420	313	254	218	136	0
City of London	6	0	0	8	136	0
Merseyside	2,827	2,476	2,304	2,656	2,183	2,382
Metropolitan	5,579	4,421	2,034	3,771	1,667	1,499
Norfolk	532	280	0	0	136	0
North Wales	406	406	364	158	393	270
North Yorkshire	737	639	567	579	632	380
Northamptonshire	727	871	751	751	342	0
Northambria	2,780	2,215	1,688	1,945	2,224	1,585
Nottinghamshire	992	891	704	609	475	65
South Wales	1,590	1,887	1,596	1,711	983	684
South Yorkshire	1,779	1,571	1,171	908	953	325
Staffordshire	563	443	241	375	467	341
Suffolk	488	671	702	427	100	0
Surrey	416	308	365	334	499	340
Sussex	53	37	136	541	808	640
Thames Valley	1,162	712	751	507	314	0
Warwickshire	315	320	265	199	136	0
West Mercia	1,843	1,704	1,291	1,243	1,142	1,041
West Midlands	1,431	1,533	1,266	1,057	996	510
West Yorkshire	3,778	4,026	2,344	2,056	739	712
Wiltshire	507	583	185	253	359	304

Payments made to police forces since 1 April 1992

Police Force	*£ paid since 1 April 1992*	*Paid up until*
Avon and Somerset	1,897,490·34	31 August 1992
Bedfordshire	515,263·68	31 August 1992
Cambridgeshire	675,856·99	31 July 1992
Cheshire	1,356,102·75	30 June 1992
Cleveland	no payment	—
Cumbria	453,438·42	13 June 1992
Derbyshire	550,510·58	31 July 1992

Police Force	*£ paid since 1 April 1992*	*Paid up until*
Devon and Cornwall	226,067·94	31 May 1992
Dorset	no payment	—
Durham	539,676·71	31 July 1992
Dyfed and Powys	540,341·61	15 June 1992
Essex	540,955·46	31 July 1992
Gloucestershire	114,808·79	30 June 1992
Greater Manchester	6,927,811·00	26 July 1992
Gwent	642,142·94	30 June 1992
Hampshire	no payment	—
Hertfordshire	1,025,701·81	29 July 1992
Humberside	824,690·81	8 August 1992
Kent	no payment	—
Lancashire	2,038,819·56	30 June 1992
Leicestershire	1,135,458·70	30 June 1992
Lincolnshire	no payment	—
City of London	no payment	—
Merseyside	741,494·56	31 May 1992
Metropolitan	3,205,757·89	21 June 1992
Norfolk	369,758·52	26 May 1992
North Wales	236,042·28	30 June 1992
North Yorkshire	no payment	—
Northamptonshire	525,799·33	30 June 1992
Northumbria	1,311,585·70	24 May 1992
Nottinghamshire	519,602·00	30 June 1992
South Wales	1,429,598·37	31 July 1992
South Yorkshire	494,178·30	30 April 1992
Staffordshire	no payment	—
Suffolk	130,004·00	17 May 1992
Surrey	294,330·48	31 July 1992
Sussex	239,420·97	31 August 1992
Thames Valley	601,228·47	21 June 1992
Warwickshire	311,166·77	30 June 1992
West Mercia	609,643·62	6 June 1992
West Midlands	507,823·11	17 May 1992
West Yorkshire	3,205,530·50	28 August 1992
Wiltshire	no payment	—

Police Forces

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the authorised establishment figure for each police force in England and Wales for 1992-93; what was the actual strength on 1 April; and what was the actual strength on the last day for which figures are available.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is set out in the table.

Force	*Authorised establishment 1992-93*	*Strength 31 March 1992*[1]	*Strength 31 July 1992*
Avon and Somerset	3,087	3,081	3,061
Bedfordshire	1,178	1,093	1,107
Cambridgeshire	1,241	1,250	1,245
Cheshire	1,920	1,874	1,865
Cleveland	1,502	1,477	1,498
Cumbria	1,187	1,179	1,190
Derbyshire	1,850	1,706	1,768
Devon and Cornwall	2,928	2,898	2,901
Dorset	1,302	1,289	1,299
Durham	1,389	1,389	1,380
Dyfed Powys	969	947	963
Essex	2,950	2,898	2,920
Gloucestershire	1,184	1,174	1,174
Greater Manchester	7,077	7,061	7,064
Gwent	1,010	1,009	1,000
Hampshire	3,269	3,211	3,245
Hertfordshire	1,684	1,695	1,681
Humberside	2,034	2,026	2,029
Kent	[2]3,136	3,074	3,080
Lancashire	3,229	3,198	3,198
Leicestershire	1,853	1,845	1,833
Lincolnshire	1,206	1,196	1,194
Merseyside	4,706	4,621	4,681
Norfolk	1,446	1,414	1,423
Northamtonshire	1,190	1,158	1,182
Northumbria	3,613	3,464	3,500
North Wales	1,369	1,347	1,354
North Yorkshire	1,418	1,398	1,398
Nottinghamshire	2,344	2,331	2,337
South Wales	3,168	3,168	3,158
South Yorkshire	3,031	3,008	3,011
Staffordshire	2,215	2,176	2,195
Suffolk	1,233	1,218	1,213
Surrey	1,673	1,706	1,700
Sussex	3,014	2,984	3,005
Thames Valley	3,812	3,772	3,839
Warwickshire	1,020	990	990
West Mercia	2,053	2,034	2,045
West Midlands	6,977	6,941	6,930
West Yorkshire	5,295	5,087	5,078
Wiltshire	1,181	1,221	1,230
City of London	798	808	798
Metropolitan	28,279	28,381	28,113
TOTAL	127,020	125,797	125,875

[1] Figures for 1 April are not available, 31 March has therefore been provided.
[2] Includes 40 posts with effect from 1 January 1993.

Prisoners (Clothes)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether prisoners will be allowed to wear their own clothes.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The White Paper "Custody, Care and Justice, the Way Ahead for the Prison Service in England and Wales" announced that the Government aim progressively to allow convicted male prisoners to wear their own clothes if they wish; female prisoners and unconvicted male prisoners are already allowed to wear their own clothes. Prisoners at HMP Belmarsh have been allowed to wear their own clothes since the prison opened last year, and similar arrangements will apply at High Down and Woodhill prisons when they open this year. Formal trials are being set up in HMP Wellingborough and in Huntercombe and Finnamore Wood young offender institutions to assess the implications of a more general move towards prisoners wearing their own clothes.

The White Paper also announced that the Prison Service would consider the scope for permitting prisoners to wear specified items of their own clothing, in particular, underwear, socks and shoes, in advance of extending the arrangements to prisoners' outerwear. Prisoners in category C and D establishments, including open young offender institutions, will, where adequate laundering or exchange arrangements can be made locally, be allowed to wear their own socks and underwear. Prisoners in these establishments will also be allowed to have one pair of their own shoes in addition to a prison issued pair.

The scope for further relaxations will be considered in the light of the trials.

Convictions (Safety)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further information he has received concerning the safety of the conviction of Sam Kulasingham and Prem Sivalingham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 19 October 1992]*: No information about the safety of these convictions has been received since I answered a question from the hon. Member on 8 June, at column *4*. We will give further consideration to this matter as soon as we receive the report from the Essex police to which I then referred.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received into the safety of the conviction of Robert Maynard; if he proposes to refer the case to the Court of Appeal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 19 October 1992]*: Representations about the case have been received from solicitors acting for Mr. Maynard—and Mr. Dudley who was convicted with him—and from a number of individuals. As I explained in my reply to a question from the hon. Member on 19 October, at column *59*, these representations and the material supplied in support of them are still being examined.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Iraq

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken by Her Majesty's Government to help secure the release of the 800 individuals removed from Kuwait to Iraq in 1990 and still believed to be held by the Iraqi authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are maintaining pressure on Iraq to fulfil all its obligations under United Nations Security Council resolutions, including the return of Kuwaiti and other nationals still missing in Iraq.

We fully support Kuwait's efforts through the International Committee of the Red Cross to establish the whereabouts of its missing citizens, of whom some 800 are believed to be in Iraq.

We raise this question at each Security Council review of sanctions and will continue to do so until Iraq meets its obligations.

Lorry Blockade, France

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he intends to take to seek compensation from the French Government for British businesses and tourists who suffered financial loss during the recent French lorry drivers' dispute.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have been asked to reply.

We made it clear to the French Government in July that British hauliers would be lodging claims for compensation with the French Government and that we supported these claims. Other countries acted similarly. Regrettably, the French Government have said that they do not intend to pay compensation, though they have not yet responded to all the claims submitted.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the estimated cost to the United Kingdom of implementing title XII on trans-European networks proposed under the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply. The Maastricht treaty does not specify any particular level of expenditure for trans-European networks. The European Community's spending plans for the next few years are presently being considered on the basis of the Commission's proposal in document COM(92)2000; however, decisions have yet to be taken.

DEFENCE

RAF Wattisham

Mr. Lord: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the future of RAF Wattisham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department has been looking at possible defence uses for RAF Wattisham after the withdrawal of the Phantom force by mid-1993. I have now decided that two regiments of the Army Air Corps should be based at Wattisham. There are currently two Army Air Corps regiments based in the United Kingdom, at Netheravon and Dishforth. Under "Options for Change", this will increase to four regiments on the redeployment of two of the three regiments currently based in Germany. RAF Wattisham has been identified as the most cost-effective option for an operational base for the two regiments returning from Germany and their support units. The units co-locating at RAF Wattisham will be 3 and 4 Regiments AAC, 71 Aircraft Workshops and 2 Aircraft Support Unit. In addition, two RAF search and rescue Sea King helicopters will move to Wattisham in 1994. It is too early to say what the detailed implications will be for the staff at RAF Wattisham. Full consultation will take place with the trades unions concerned in accordance with agreed procedures. There will also be some other rationalisation moves within United Kingdom: one squadron from 7 Regiment at Netheravon will join 9 Regiment at Dishforth and will be replaced by one of the three new TA flights being formed in 1993. The other two TA flights will be based at RAF Shawbury and RAF Turnhouse.

RAF Search and Rescue

Mr. Lord: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what conclusions he has reached on the future basing structure of the RAF search and rescue force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have given careful consideration to the future deployment of the RAF SAR force in the light of the reduction in military flying flowing from the conclusions of "Britain's Defence for the Nineties" and the civil helicopter coverage criteria agreed by the helicopter coverage group in 1986. These proposals have been discussed with colleagues at the Department of Transport who have agreed my proposed way forward.

The size of the RAF SAR helicopter force, which is funded from the defence budget, is based on the wartime requirement. Taking all the relevant factors into account I have confirmed that the RAF now requires an all Sea King SAR fleet of a minimum of 25 aircraft to meet the war requirement in the United Kingdom. The intention to order an additional six Sea Kings was announced by the then Minister of State for Defence Procurement in the House on 19 February, *Official Report*, column 332.

The RAF Sea King force makes an important contribution to the civil SAR services for which the Department of Transport and others are responsible. SAR helicopters are also provided by both the Royal Navy and Her Majesty's coastguard, through a contractor. All these elements combine to provide the Great Britain civil SAR helicopter service.

In order to maximise the flexibility of response to SAR incidents in Great Britain, the practice of basing two aircraft at each flight to provide back-up will be continued. This approach allows flights to respond to concurrent incidents, and in the case of major rescues, to maintain area SAR cover while several SAR helicopters are deployed to assist. It also represents the most cost-effective means of providing area SAR cover. In accordance with the criteria agreed by the helicopter coverage group, during the day one helicopter will continue to be at 15 minutes notice and a second at 60 minutes notice at each station. At night one helicopter will continue to be at 45 minutes notice. As at present, the very great majority of our territorial waters can be covered within this time scale.

The new basing structure is based primarily, as now, on both the areas of high-intensity military flying and the established civil SAR criteria. The RAF assets will be deployed so far as possible to maximise the military contribution to the civil SAR response which is the responsibility of the Department of Transport. This will involve some new arrangements; a new SAR flight will be established at RAF Wattisham, while RAF Chivenor and Valley will benefit by upgrading of their flights with Sea Kings. RAF Leconfield, Lossiemouth and Boulmer will retain their Sea King flights. The flights at RAF Brawdy, Coltishall, Manston and Leuchars will be withdrawn or transferred. This deployment will ensure that the RAF continues to make virtually the same contribution to meeting the criteria laid down by the helicopter coverage group as at present. The flights at RAF Brawdy and Manston will not be withdrawn until April 1994 and mid-1994 respectively, shortly before the RNLI's planned deployment of new, more capable, fast all-weather boats to south-west Wales and Kent later that year.

Complete details of the changes and an explanation of the reasoning behind them are set out in an open government document entitled "The Future Provision of RAF SAR Helicopters", copies of which I have placed in the Library of the House.

The move to an all Sea King SAR helicopter force represents a significant improvement by making this highly capable aircraft more widely available throughout Britain for civil and military missions. Without compromising its military effectiveness, the RAF has sought to deploy these assets in a way which maximises their effectiveness for civil and military SAR operations. The future force will therefore continue to make a very substantial contribution to civil SAR in and around Great Britain.

My Department is also considering the future arrangements for the co-ordination of the military response to SAR incidents by means of the rescue co-ordination centres. Once I have reached my conclusions on this issue I shall inform the House.

The Ministry of Defence and the Department of Transport believe that with the military and the Department of Transport helicopters, the RNLI and HM coastguard a good SAR service will continue to be provided to meet the requirements of the civil community.

Dismounted Public Duties

Mr. Lord: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the review of dismounted public duties was completed; and with what results.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: After consultation with the royal household, the Metropolitan police and other Departments, a number of measures have been identified which will reduce requirements for the employment of Foot Guards manpower on public duties while maintaining essential security and appropriate ceremonial. Her Majesty the Queen has graciously agreed to these measures and they will be implemented between now and 1994. A document providing the full details is being placed in the Library of the House.

Airborne Warning and Communication System

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the defence contracts placed by United States purchasing authorities as part of the offset for the AWACS early warning contract placed with Boeing; what is the value of each contract and the total value; and to what extent this achieves the target for offsetting contracts agreed between the United States and the United Kingdom Governments.

Mr. Aitken: As I announced in the House on 20 May, *Hansard*, volume 208, column *190*, Boeing has now met its obligation under its industrial participation agreement with my Department. The agreement required Boeing and its subcontractors to offer competitive bidding opportunities to British defence companies, and United States purchasing authorities were not parties to it. Details of individual contracts remain commercially confidential.

ENVIRONMENT

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homes have been treated and what amount has been spent under the home energy efficiency scheme in each network installer area in Scotland since 1 January 1991.

Mr. Maclean: The figures are as follows:

Network installer area	*Homes treated*	*Amount spent in £*
1 Borders/Lothian	2,259	240,635
2 West Lothian/Edinburgh	3,413	385,948
3 Dumfries/Strathclyde	714	97,330
4 Strathclyde	1,533	279,655
5 Strathclyde West	4,157	533,451
6 Strathclyde East	8,265	772,086
7 Strathclyde/Glasgow North	4,392	472,284
8 Strathclyde/Glasgow East	4,787	539,975
9 Strathclyde/Glasgow South	1,224	136,331
10 Strathclyde Central	1,939	205,350
11 Fife	4,260	468,691
12 Tayside	3,641	379,517
13 Grampian	3,447	378,435
14 Grampian Highlands	1,429	157,025
15 Shetland Islands	—	—
16 Orkney Islands	145	31,085
17 Western Islands	—	—
Total	45,605	5,077,798

The original area 14 was divided into four on 14 December 1991. No suitable bid for registration as a network installer for the Western Isles has since been received. A network installer was registered for Shetland islands in April this year.

Housing (Pregnant Women)

Ms. Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many pregnant women were successfully prosecuted in 1991 for fraudulent attempts to gain priority status on housing waiting lists in the London borough of Camden.

Mr. Baldry: Such information is not held centrally.

SSSIs

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total number of sites of special scientific interest in England and the number of these that have been *(a)* partially or *(b)* wholly damaged.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 20 October 1992]*: At 31 March 1992, a total of 3,621 SSSIs had been notified in England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The latest available information on damage to SSSIs is contained in the 17th and final report of the former Nature Conservancy Council, a copy of which is in the Library. Information in respect of the year ending 31 March 1992 is currently being gathered by English Nature and will be published in its first anniversary report to be presented to Parliament later in the year.

EMPLOYMENT

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what financial provisions, and how much, she has made within her Department in order to look at the potential for deregulation of each of the regulatory measures for which she has responsibility.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Employment Department has two central departmental deregulation units—DDUs—one for the Health and Safety Executive and one which deals with the rest of the Department. Staff costs for the DDUs, including economic support is estimated at £57,245.

In addition, all staff in the Department are fully aware of the need to ensure that regulations should not impose unnecessary and costly burdens on businesses, causing damage to competitiveness and job prospects. Ensuring that proposals for new regulations are assessed thoroughly for the costs they will impose on businesses and reviewing existing regulations are an everyday part of the activities of policy sections.

HEALTH

Cycling

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research her Department is carrying out or sponsoring into the health benefits of cycling.

Dr. Mawhinney: The health benefits of safe physical activity are well established. The Allied Dunbar national fitness survey, published in June, includes comprehensive research data on the whole area of safe physical activity. The survey notes that cycling is a good aerobic exercise.

The "Health of the Nation" White Paper commits the Government, in consultation with others, to develop physical activity strategies in the light of the survey results. Work on this is already taking place.

PRIME MINISTER

Yugoslavia

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister what is the total, to date, of the financial assistance given by Her Majesty's Government to fund the cost of maintaining refugees from the former states of Yugoslavia; what is the total, to date, of financial assistance given by Her Majesty's Government to fund humanitarian relief in the former states of Yugoslavia; and what proposals Her Majesty's Government have for increasing the United Kingdom contribution.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 19 October 1992]*: I announced yesterday an additional bilateral British contribution of £15 million in the light of reports from the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. This brings Britain's total commitment of humanitarian aid for victims of the conflict in former Yugoslavia to over £70 million; of this, £29·5 million is bilateral aid and £41 million our share of European Community actions.

NATIONAL FINANCE

European Currency Unit

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest ecu/sterling exchange rate.

Mr. Nelson: The market ecu : sterling exchange rate at the London close on 20 October was 1·2497 ecu per pound.

Bank of England Governor

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what dates he met the Governor of the Bank of England during the period 12 to 18 September; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: Throughout the period from 12 to 18 September I was in regular contact with the Governor of the Bank of England.

Currency Intervention

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which spending programmes he estimates will be affected by the expenditure involved in currency intervention in the period 14 to 18 September.

Mr. Nelson: None. The use of foreign currency reserves for intervention purposes involves an exchange of assets and is, therefore, not public expenditure.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the reasons for the Government's practice of not revealing the amount of intervention, gains and losses arising from currency support to the United Kingdom Exchequer.

Mr. Nelson: It has been the long-standing convention of successive Governments not to reveal the extent of intervention. It would not be in the national interest to do so, because the information is market sensitive.

European Central Bank

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what privileges and immunities Her Majesty's Government have assessed to be necessary for the performance of the tasks of the European central bank in the territories of the member states under article 40 of the protocol to the Maastricht treaty on European central banks.

Mr. Nelson: The relevant privileges and immunities are set out in the protocol on the privileges and immunities of the European Communities annexed to the treaty establishing a single Council and a single Commission of the European Communities—sometimes known as the merger treaty. This is published in the *Official Journal* of the European Communities, No. 152, 13 July 1967, and reproduced in the full edition of "Treaties establishing the European Communities" published by the office for official publications of the European Communities. In addition, the protocol amending the protocol on the privileges and immunities of the European Communities annexed to the treaty on European union would exempt the European central bank from liability to tax on increases in its capital and from liability to turnover tax.

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what sanctions exist to ensure the compliance of national central banks with the instructions of the European central bank under article 14.3 of the protocol to the Maastricht treaty on European central banks.

Mr. Nelson: If the European central bank were to consider that a national central bank has failed to fulfil an obligation under the statute, it may bring the matter before the European Court of Justice under the procedure in article 35.6.

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to article 15 of the protocol to the Maastricht treaty on European central banks, what *(a)* efforts have been made to ensure the harmonisation of national central banks' accounting practices and *(b)* what estimates have been made of the cost of article 15.4.

Mr. Nelson: Article 26.4 of the protocol on the statute of the European system of central banks and of the European central bank—ECB—provides for the governing council of the ECB to establish the necessary rules for standardising the accounting and reporting of national central bank operations.

It is not possible to estimate the cost to the ECB of issuing reports under article 15.4.

Mr. Peter Clowes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 9 June, *Official Report*, column *82*, what is the current position of repayment made in respect of the court order for interim payment of damages of £6 million made on 13 April against Mr. and Mrs. Clowes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: On 21 September 1992 the Court of Appeal dismissed Mr. Clowes's appeal against the judgment of the court given on 18 March 1992. It also dismissed Mr. Clowes's appeal against the order of the court, made on 13 April 1992, for an interim payment of damages of £6 million.

Currency Speculation

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will undertake an analysis of the impact of clearing banks not speculating against the pound but merely dealing for customers with genuine international trading requirements.

Mr. Nelson: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking against British banks which speculated against the pound in the period 14 to 17 September; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: It would not be appropriate to take any such steps. It is for banks and other financial institutions to make decisions about the deployment of funds within their control, subject to the framework of law within which they operate, including prudential regulations.

Economists

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many economists are employed in the Treasury; and what is their total remuneration.

Mr. Nelson: There are currently 87 staff working as economists in the Treasury. Their total annual remuneration is about £2,500,000 based on current pay rates.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the *(a)* total amount invested in the business expansion scheme, *(b)* amount invested in private rented housing, *(c)* total cost of tax relief and *(d)* amount of tax relief in respect of investment in private rented housing for each year from 1987-88 to 1990-91; and for each year of the existence of the business expansion scheme what were the percentage and amounts of BES money invested in residential and assured tenancy schemes and associated revenue forgone by the Exchequer.

Mr. Dorrell: The business expansion scheme was extended to include investment in private rented housing in 1988-89. The latest estimates are as follows.

	Amounts invested			*Cost of income tax relief*	
	Total	*of which investment in private rented housing*		*Total*	*of which in respect of investment in private rented housing*
	£ million	*amount (£ million)*	*per cent.*	*(£ million)*	*(£ million)*
1983-84	105	—	—	50	—
1984-85	148	—	—	75	—
1985-86	157	—	—	85	—
1986-87	169	—	—	95	—
1987-88	201	—	—	120	—
1988-89	421	368	87	150	130
1989-90[1]	216	162	75	75	55
1990-91[1]	323	283	88	120	105
1991-92[1]	450	420	93	160	150

[1] Provisional estimates.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many new lettings from investments under the business expansion scheme in 1989-90 there were in *(a)* south-east England and *(b)* the United Kingdom; and what percentage these figures represent of (i) all privately rented property and (ii) all rented property.

Mr. Dorrell: Provisional estimates for new lettings from investments under the business expansion scheme in 1989-90 are as follows:

	New lettings		
		As a percentage of:	
	Total number	*All privately rented property*	*All rented property*
		Per cent.	*Per cent.*
South-east England	1,100	0·20	0·05
United Kingdom	3,100	0·18	0·04

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for each year of the existence of the business expansion scheme, what was *(a)* the regional distribution of BES funds and the associated cost to the Exchequer, *(b)* the distribution of BES investments by two-digit standard industrial classification and *(c)* the average size of investments.

Mr. Dorrell: Information on the companies receiving investments through the business expansion scheme is published in chapter 7 of "Inland Revenue Statistics 1991". Further information that is readily available is as follows:

Companies receiving BES Investments

Industry	*1989-90* *Number of companies*	*1989-90* *Amount of investment £ million*	*1990-91* *Number of companies*	*1990-91* *Amount of investment £ million*
Agriculture, horticulture, forestry and fishing	23	2	7	1
Minerals, chemicals and manufacture of metals	21	2	26	1
Mechanical engineering	11	2	9	—
Electrical and electronic engineering	25	2	14	2

Industry	*1989-90* *Number of companies*	*1989-90* *Amount of investment £ million*	*1990-91* *Number of companies*	*1990-91* *Amount of investment £ million*
Manufacture of transport equipment	14	2	22	3
Instrument engineering	9	1	11	1
Food and drink industry	7	—	10	1
Textile, clothing, footwear industry	6	—	4	—
Manufacture of paper and paper products	32	2	26	2
Other manufacturing iustries	30	2	28	2
Construction	7	—	14	1
Wholesale distribution	46	3	48	3
Retail distibution	37	3	29	3
Distribution and repair of motor vehicles	13	1	7	1
Hotels and catering	51	8	34	5
Transport and storage services	24	10	18	2
Business, professional and technical services	70	6	66	8
Medical, educational and social services	33	4	32	4
Recreational, hairdressing and personal services	32	2	34	2
Private rented housing	483	162	446	283
Total	974	216	885	323

The average size of investment per company is as follows:

	£ Thousand
1983-84	147
1984-85	183
1985-86	224
1986-87	221
1987-88	245
1988-89	167
1989-90[1]	222
1990-91[1]	365

[1] Provisional.

Coal Mining

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates he has made of the loss in all tax revenues because of the recent announcement of job losses in the coal mining industry and the knock-on effects in other industries.

Mr. Dorrell: The effect of job losses on tax revenues depends on a large number of factors and cannot reliably be estimated.

Tobacco

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the total receipts from taxes on tobacco products in the last financial year for which figures are available; and what estimate he can make of the level of such receipts in the current year.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* Revenue from excise duties on tobacco products in 1991-92 was £6,288 million. The estimate provided in this year's Financial Statement and Budget Report for these receipts in 1992-93 is £6·6 billion. A more up-to-date estimate will be available after the autumn statement has been published.

Interest Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how many points United Kingdom interest rates have been reduced *(a)* since leaving the exchange rate mechanism and *(b)* between joining the ERM and August 1992.

Mr. Nelson *[pursuant to his reply, 19 October 1992, c. 188]:* On the level of United Kingdom bank base rates, bank base rates were reduced by a further 1 per cent. to 8 per cent. on 16 October.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Southern Africa

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Community, to press the international community to fund the entire $854 million requested in the United Nations and Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference appeal.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have already committed more than £51 million of bilateral aid in response to the drought in southern Africa. From the outset we have played a leading role in urging EC and other donors to contribute generously and we will continue to do so.

Food Security

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Community to press for the structural adjustment programme to include methods of achieving food security.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We hope that the EC Development Council on 18 November, which will be chaired by my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development, will agree on a statement of development co-operation policy for the 1990s. This will set out how the

EC's development policy, including assistance for structural adjustment programmes, can best contribute to sustainable development and the relief of poverty, and thus to improving security of access to food for people in developing countries.

Pakistan (Floods)

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action his Department is taking to help alleviate the suffering caused by the recent floods in Pakistan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Britain was the first donor country to provide assistance and, having committed over £475,000, is second only to Japan in the size of its bilateral response to the current flooding. On 12 September we made an initial contribution of $200,000 before any needs assessment had been carried out. When actual needs became clearer, we arranged a charter flight to Lahore delivering tents, blankets, antibiotics and oral rehydration salts—£227,320. Since then we have arranged to deliver further locally available relief supplies in Sindh province through Pakistan non-governmental organisations—£80,000—and made grants available to the following UK non-governmental organisations:

	£
CAFOD	
500 tents for Sindh Province	23,768
Adventist Development and Relief Agency	
Medicines for Sindh and Punjab	40,000

We continue to monitor the situation and we are actively considering what further assistance we can provide.

Malawi

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations have been made to the Malawi Government about political and religious rights in that country.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We made representations with our EC partners reflecting these concerns in December 1991, March and April 1992. These issues were also addressed in bilateral discussions with Malawian Ministers in May and June this year. Further representations are currently being made to the Malawi Government urging them to respond positively to the call from the religious community and other bodies for democratic reform and to lift the ban on the Catholic bishops' pastoral letter.

World Bank Loans

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if human rights issues are taken into account by Her Majesty's Government when considering World bank loans.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom judges all World bank loans on their economic and technical merits, in line with the provisions of the bank's articles of agreement.

Global Environment Facility

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the United Kingdom contribution to the global environment facility will continue to be additional to the overseas aid budget in 1993-94.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom contribution to the global environment facility has been separate from and additional to aid to developing countries and will continue to be so. The amount of resources which we shall provide in 1993-94 has not yet been decided. This will depend on the outcome of talks with the World bank and other donors.

Somalia

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much aid the Overseas Development Administration has given this year to Somalia; and what plans there are to increase it.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since January the Government have pledged £26 million in humanitarian aid for Somalia. This includes our share of EC aid and a new pledge of £7·5 million which my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development announced on 15 September. The major constraint to the relief effort in Somalia is the volatile security situation, particularly in the centre and south of the country, which are the regions most affected by famine.

Yugoslavia

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what part British aid has played in the provision of relief to the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: To date Her Majesty's Government have committed over £70 million in humanitarian aid for the former Yugoslavia, including the £15 million the Prime Minister announced yesterday. Of this, £29·5 million is bilateral aid and £41 million aid attributable through the European Community.

The £29·5 million bilateral aid is being channelled through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other United Nation Agencies; Red Cross; British charities, including CARE and Feed the Children; and Overseas Development Administration direct actions.

Direct actions taken so far by the ODA include the provision of 21 British trucks, based in Split as part of UNHCR road delivery operation, running two or three convoys a week to Sarajevo—during the suspension of the airlift, these trucks were Sarajevo's lifeline—five British logisticians seconded to the United Nations; a British road engineer who undertook an assessment for UNHCR of the state of convoy routes in winter; delivery of £1,130,000 of medical supplies to the World Health Organisation in Zagreb following assessment by British medical team which were then distributed throughout Bosnia, including Sarajevo and Gorazde; support to UNHCR and WHO with anaesthetics, computer equipment and specialist advice; funding of two pharmacists and one computer expert working with WHO and one logistics expert assisting WHO with new consignment of medical supplies; a shelter team to identify where the ODA could best help with the "winterisation" of collective centres in central

Bosnia—funding for the activities identified will be provided from the £7·5 million which my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development announced on 24 September to allow rapid implementation of the teams recommendations—and mining and power teams for UNHCR to provide assessment of current position and detailed plans for the emergency provision and distribution of fuel for heating during winter months.

In addition, the ODA is in the process of providing a further 22 trucks plus all support staff and vehicles, the first convoy of which is due to leave the United Kingdom on 26 October; all equipment and staff to run one relief warehouse; a further £1 million of medical supplies for WHO, the initial consignment of which will travel with the first truck convoy; 10 Land-Rovers for UNHCR; and 10 extra staff—logisticians/radio operators—for UNHCR.

Somalia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what quantity and value of food aid has been promised to Somalia by the United Kingdom and EC in the current year; and what quantity and value of food aid has been actually delivered.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 20 October 1992]:* Relevant figures for United Kingdom and EC food aid to Somalia are set out in the table.

Somalia: Food aid: 1992

Donor	*Commitments (Tonnes)*	*Value (£ million)*	*Deliveries (Tonnes)*	*Value (£ million)*
United Kingdom	34,100	5·8	19,100	2·7
EC	206,386	36·7	105,000	18·7

Madagascar

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Disaster and Natural Resources Institute has received the recommendations of the Food and Agricultural Organisation's locust consultant in relation to Madagascar; and what action he is taking.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 20 October 1992]:* The Natural Resources Institute has received the recommendations of the Food and Agricultural Organisation's locust consultant and has now passed these on to ODA's disaster unit for consideration. We have recently agreed to support a field trial of insect growth regulators—IGR—in collaboration with the FAO. The trial is expected to produce specific recommendations on the use of IGRs in controlling locust populations which can then be implemented within months. We are currently addressing the specific short-term recommendations of the FAO consultant and will make decisions on further United Kingdom support very shortly.

SCOTLAND

Governance

17. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further stock he has taken about the future governance of Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

29. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to be able to announce the results of the Government's taking stock exercise with respect to the governance of Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) earlier today.

22. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on holding a multi-option referendum on the future government of Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Since the general election I have received 54 representations calling for a multi-option referendum on the future government of Scotland.

26. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the effect of the implementation of article 3b of the treaty of European union on the governance of Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The proposed new article 3b of the EC treaty refers specifically and exclusively to the relations between the Community and individual member states. It is up to individual member states to order their own constitutional affairs at the national and sub-national level.

Cashmere and Woollen Garments

18. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the value of cashmere and woollen garments sold annually out of Scotland; and what percentage is exported from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I can best answer my hon. Friend's question by referring to the estimate of the Textile Statistics Bureau that, in 1991, exports of woollen and fine animal hair garments from the United Kingdom were in the region of £472 million. Separate figures are not available for Scotland.

Romanian Orphanages

19. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the work done in Romanian orphanages by Scottish charities; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Detailed information on the work done in Romanian orphanages by Scottish charities is not held centrally. A number of Scottish-based organisations have provided and continue to provide valuable aid of various kinds to Romania.

Sub-standard Housing

20. **Mr. Donnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many houses there are in Scotland which are classed as being below tolerable standard.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Local authorities estimated that just over 81,100 houses in Scotland fall into this category.

School Management

21. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he received to the consultation paper "School Management: The Way Ahead".

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office education department has received about 1,200 responses to the consultation paper. We will announce our conclusions shortly.

Local Government Finance

23. **Ms. Rachel Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss local government finance.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster).

Local Government

32. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet with representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss local government services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster).

Assured Tenancies

24. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many assured tenancies exist within Scottish Homes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are no assured tenancies within Scottish Homes housing stock; in common with other public sector landlords, Scottish Homes' tenants hold secured tenancies.

Scottish Council (Development and Industry)

25. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet representatives of the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) to discuss the Scottish economy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend expects to meet representatives of the Scottish Council at Gleneagles on 30 October when he will be addressing the Council's international forum.

Grampian Healthcare

27. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on national health service trust status for Grampian Healthcare.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Grampian Healthcare is one of 14 units in Scotland which have applied for national health service trust status in April 1993. The applications are at various stages of public consultation and my right hon. Friend will be announcing his decisions in due course, following careful consideration of comments received.

Youth Training

28. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he intends to take to assist young people in Glasgow which are unable to obtain a place on a youth training scheme.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The delivery of youth training in Glasgow is the responsibility of Scottish Enterprise and the Glasgow development agency, which have assured me that sufficient places are being made available to cater for those young people in Glasgow who wish to enter the programme. A financial safety net is in place, via the income support severe hardship provision, for those who need financial help while waiting for a start on a youth training place.

Roads, Ayrshire

30. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of the roads programme in Ayrshire.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Many improvements are planned to both trunk and local roads in Ayrshire. So far as the trunk road programme is concerned, the upgrading of the A77 between Glasgow and Ayr to motorway or near motorway standard is one of the Government's top priorities. The programme of improvement of local roads within Ayrshire is a matter for Strathclyde regional council, as the local roads authority, to determine. Work is under way on the local authority's section of the Ayr road route between the existing M77 and the Glasgow city boundary. Work on the trunk road section immediately to the south is planned to allow the two sections to open at the same time. The first of the two schemes to upgrade the remainder of the route has been announced for a start in the next three years.

The Government are also pursuing a programme of smaller schemes on other routes within Ayrshire to ensure that they can continue to provide safe and reliable links to the A77 and other strategic trunk roads.

Fishing Policy

31. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet representatives of the west coast fishing industry to discuss fishing policy.

Sir Hector Monro: I regularly meet leaders of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation which speaks for many west coast fishermen. It is my intention to continue to meet fishermen's leaders from all parts of Scotland to hear their concerns.

GP Fund Holders

33. **Mr. Kynoch:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many general practitioner practices in Scotland have applied to become fund holders; and how many already are fund holders.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Currently there are 10 operational fund-holding practices in Scotland. In addition, 12 practices are involved in a small practice pilot scheme but are not full fund holders.

Latest returns from health boards indicate that 67 practices have applied, and are likely to be approved by boards to become fund-holding practices in 1993, although not all of these will commence fund holding on 1 April. A number of other practices are likely to follow up their expressions of interest and apply to become full fund holders during 1993. It is therefore expected that up to 90 practices will be fund holders by the end of the 1993-94 financial year.

Skye Bridge

34. **Mr. Charles Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on progress with regard to the Skye bridge construction project.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since construction began at the beginning of July, the contractor has made good progress. It is planned that the caissons for the bridge, which have been constructed at the Kishorn dry dock, will be floated out and sunk at the main pier positions within the Kyle in two to three weeks' time. The precise timing is subject to the prevailing weather and tidal conditions. This will be a very significant step towards the eventual completion of the project programmed for the summer of 1995.

EC Presidency

35. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for promoting Scotland during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Community.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The holding of the European Council in Edinburgh in December offers a tremendous opportunity for promoting Scotland on a world stage. The Scottish Office is working with a number of other organisations to ensure that the most is made of that opportunity. A co-ordinated media strategy is in place, which includes a programme of visits to Scotland by foreign journalists. Scotland is also playing a major role in the programme of presidency special events, of which over 25 have or will take place in Scotland.

Poverty

36. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans the Government have to eradicate poverty in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government's economic policies are designed to sustain long-term growth which will have benefits for all members of society and the defeat of inflation is essential if this is to be achieved. Monetary and fiscal policies will continue to be dedicated to this objective.

A number of Government programmes are designed to address the complex problems of poverty, including the four Scottish Office-led urban partnership initiatives and the urban programme. This has a budget of £81 million in 1992-93—up from £76 million in 1991-92—and provides 75 per cent. central Government support to projects, in all urban areas of exceptional need, which aim to address problems of poverty and disadvantage.

Investment

37. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to meet the Scottish local authorities to discuss European-funded investment.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Secretary of State meets the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on a regular basis to discuss local government finance in Scotland. At the last three such meetings, the latest of which was held on 5 October, the subject of European-funded investment was discussed. The next meeting has yet to be arranged but it is likely to take place early in the new year.

Cambuslang

38. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for a special industrial and economic agency for Cambuslang.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has no such plans. Responsibility for the industrial and economic development of Cambuslang, as for other parts of its area, rests with the local enterprise company, Glasgow development agency. The enterprise company is free to determine the priorities and resources available to it and which, in the current financial year, amount to more than £58 million.

Council House Management

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he has received to his consultative document on the future of council house management.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The closing date for responses to our consultation paper "Competing for Quality in Housing in Scotland" was 18 September. Around 100 responses have so far been received, and these are currently under consideration.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the numbers of patients waiting for in-patient treatment on 31 March for each individual health authority *(a)* in total and *(b)* by main speciality for periods (i) under 12 months, (ii) 12 to 24 months and (iii) over 24 months.

Mr. Allan Stewart: This information is set out in the NHS "Patient Treatment and Waiting Time Bulletin" for 31 March 1992, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the numbers of patients waiting for out-patient treatment on 31 March for each individual health authority *(a)* in total and *(b)* by main speciality for periods (i) under 12 months, (ii) 12 to 24 months and (iii) over 24 months.

Mr. Allan Stewart: This information is not centrally available.

Water Disconnections

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he plans to continue the policy of not allowing domestic disconnections from the water supply in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: We have no plans to change the present policy that domestic water supplies provided by water authorities are not subject to disconnection except for operational reasons. My right hon. Friend will shortly be publishing a consultation paper on the future structure of water and sewerage services.

Water and Sewerage Services

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what will be the timetable for consultation on alternative forms of organisation for water and sewerage services in Scotland; what steps he intends to take to ensure maximum possible participation by the general public; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend will shortly publish a consultation paper on the future organisation of water and sewerage services in Scotland. The paper will be made available to all interested parties, including the media and the general public.

Railway Viaduct, Kirkcudbright

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what grounds the Big Water of Fleet railway viaduct near Gatehouse of Fleet, Kirkcudbright was removed from the register of listed structures; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Big Water of Fleet viaduct was removed from the statutory list of buildings of special historic or architectural interest in 1990-91 in the course of the national re-survey. It was assessed as not meeting the standard required to justify its retention on the list because of the extensive use of brick in strengthening the viaduct.

Although it is no longer a listed structure, the viaduct has been recognised by Dumfries and Galloway regional council in the regional structure plan as an important industrial archaeological site. The council also recognises the contribution made by the impressive span of the structure to the high visual and amenity quality of the locality.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Church Fees

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, if he will estimate what would be the additional revenue for the Church Commissioners if the current fees charged for marriage, funerals and baptisms were doubled.

Mr. Alison: Fees for marriages and funerals—they are not charged for baptisms—are paid to the officiating minister and the parochial church council, not to the commissioners.

Total fee income for the year to 31 March 1991 was about £13 million. An increase of 15 per cent. in most fees was implemented from 1 January 1992. It is difficult to know whether a doubling of the fees would result in a pro-rata increase—that is, to about £30 million—because there could be a slackening of demand.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he received the second progress report of his advisory committee on business and the environment; what response he has made; and if he will list those recommendations in the first ACBE report on which his Department has taken action to date.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on Monday 19 October, *Official Report*, column *227*.

Wind Power

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his Department's assessment of the proportion of United Kingdom energy requirements that could be supplied by wind power; and what he is doing to ensure that maximum use is made of this renewable energy source.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 20 October 1992]:* I refer the hon. Lady to the reply I gave her on 19 October, *Official Report*, column *236*.

Regional Preferential Assistance

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the amount of regional preferential assistance paid to each standard region of England, Scotland and Wales in each year from 1978-79 in *(a)* cash and *(b)* constant prices and with an annual index.

Mr. Sainsbury: Information on regional preferential assistance in each standard region of England, Scotland and Wales from 1978-79 at cash and 1991-92 prices with an annual index is set out in the tables. The expenditure is gross of recoveries. Regional information on a net basis is not readily available.

Government expenditure on regional financial assistance to industry at current prices[1] *£ million* *Table 1*

Region	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Northern	158·8	151·2	150·8	178·3	159·7	130·2	125·5	96·6	137·3	109·3	134·1	117·0	85·0	63·8
Yorkshire and Humberside	37·4	34·1	52·4	62·1	53·5	36·3	44·3	36·4	41·9	38·8	50·2	32·4	29·4	18·2
East Midlands	3·4	4·4	4·7	8·7	13·8	17·5	11·4	8·8	10·7	9·4	8·8	9·5	5·5	2·6
South West	9·6	11·1	12·5	14·9	16·6	12·1	14·6	12·3	23·0	14·8	14·7	10·7	9·0	8·3
West Midlands [2] [3]	0·2	0·1	0·1	—	—	—	—	7·1	10·6	19·3	26·2	19·9	18·0	8·7
North West	[3]114·1	[3]96·1	[3]136·5	[3]174·9	[3]124·8	[3]104·2	106·4	87·5	129·6	79·0	82·3	74·3	57·5	49·5
England	323·5	297·0	357·0	438·9	368·4	300·3	302·2	248·7	353·1	270·6	316·3	263·8	204·4	151·1
Wales	132·1	112·9	175·3	197·5	182·1	120·0	147·5	138·4	150·7	132·4	148·2	131·7	133·7	153·9
Scotland	156·1	135·2	194·5	232·5	369·4	228·6	187·1	197·0	242·4	153·2	151·2	144·6	159·1	135·4
Great Britain	611·7	545·1	726·8	868·9	919·9	648·9	636·8	584·1	746·2	536·2	615·7	540·1	497·2	440·4

Government expenditure on regional financial assistance to industry at 1991-92 prices[1] [4] — *£ million* — *Table 2*

Region	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Northern	430·4	350·8	296·3	319·0	266·6	208·0	190·7	139·2	191·5	144·6	165·6	135·4	90·0	63·8
Yorkshire and Humberside	101·4	79·1	102·9	111·1	89·3	58·0	67·3	52·4	58·4	51·3	62·0	37·5	31·4	18·2
East Midlands	9·2	10·2	9·2	15·6	23·0	28·0	17·3	12·7	14·9	12·4	10·9	11·0	5·9	2·6
South West	26·0	25·8	24·6	26·7	27·7	19·3	22·2	17·7	32·1	19·6	18·1	12·4	9·6	8·3
West Midlands [2] [3]	0·5	0·2	—	—	—	—	—	10·2	14·8	25·5	32·3	23·0	19·3	8·7
North West	[5]309·2	[5]223·0	[5]268·2	[5]312·9	[5]208·3	[5]166·5	161·7	126·1	180·8	104·5	101·6	86·0	61·5	49·5
England	876·7	689·1	701·2	785·3	614·9	479·8	459·2	358·3	492·5	357·9	390·5	305·3	218·6	151·1
Wales	358·0	261·9	344·4	353·3	304·0	191·7	224·2	199·4	210·2	175·1	183·0	152·4	143·0	153·9
Scotland	423·0	313·7	382·1	415·9	616·7	365·2	284·3	283·9	338·1	202·6	186·7	167·4	170·2	135·4
Great Britain	1,657·7	1,264·7	1,427·7	1,554·5	1,535·6	1,036·7	967·7	841·6	1,040·8	735·6	760·2	625·1	531·8	440·4

Notes to tables 1, 2 and 3:

[1] All figures are gross and include payments to nationalised industries.

[2] Includes some minor expenditure in West Midlands in respect of Oswestry TTWA which ceased to be an assisted area in 1982-83.

[3] Certain TTWAs in the West Midlands were designated as assisted areas on 29 November 1984.

[4] Expenditure on a 1991-92 price basis for each year is calculated by applying the appropriate deflator to expenditure at current prices.

[5] Includes expenditure in Cumbria, otherwise shown within the totals for Northern region.

The items included in the expenditure are regional development grants, regional selective assistance and regional enterprise grants; expenditure on Land and factories by the English Industrial Estates Corporation, the Scottish and Welsh Development Agencies, the Development Board for Rural Wales, and the Highlands and Islands Development Board.

Table 3

Index	*1991-92 prices*
1978-79	36·9
1979-80	43·1
1980-81	50·9
1981-82	55·9
1982-83	59·9
1983-84	62·6
1984-85	65·8
1985-86	69·4
1986-87	71·7
1987-88	75·6
1988-89	81·0
1989-90	86·4
1990-91	93·5
1991-92	100·0

Energy Requirements

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what approximate proportions of national energy requirements, excluding transport, have been supplied by *(a)* coal, *(b)* domestically produced petroleum, *(c)* imported petroleum, *(d)* domestic natural gas and *(e)* renewable sources, for each of the past five years; what proportions he expects those sources to supply in the next five years, consequent on the published plans of the bodies concerned; and if he will give the net costs for past years using the actual exchange rates, and, for future years, a range of possible exchange costs likely to be incurred.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* Data on final energy consumption in the United Kingdom are published in table 8 of the annual "Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics". The shares of final energy consumption, excluding consumption by the transport sector, met by coal, petroleum, natural gas and renewable sources during the period 1987 to 1991 are set out in the table.

	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Coal[1]	10·3	9·5	8·6	7·8	7·9
Petroleum	15·3	17·3	15·7	15·2	15·4
Natural gas	46·3	45·0	45·7	47·1	48·1
Renewable sources	0·8	0·8	0·8	0·9	0·8
Percentage share other fuels[2]	27·3	27·4	29·2	29·0	27·8

[1] Excluding other solid fuels.

[2] Includes solid fuels other than coal, coke oven gas and electricity produced from non-renewable sources.

In 1991, approximately 10·1 million tonnes, or 13·6 per cent. of the consumption of petroleum products in the United Kingdom, including that by the transport sector, was met by imported petroleum products. During the same period, exports of petroleum products amounted to approximately 19·4 million tonnes. These figures and data for earlier years are published in tables 33 and A8 of the annual "Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics".

In 1991, approximately 89 per cent. of natural gas consumption was domestically produced. This figure and data for earlier years can be derived from table A10 of the annual "Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics".

The estimated expenditure on energy by final consumers is published in table 9 of the annual "Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics". Figures consistent with the previous table—that is, excluding the transport sector—are set out in the following table.

£ million

	Coal[1]	*Petroleum*	*Natural gas*	*Renewable sources*	*Other fuels*[2]
1987	1,060	1,880	6,870	440	12,410
1988	975	1,625	6,635	460	13,125
1989	855	1,730	6,670	490	14,310
1990	840	1,985	7,210	525	14,745
1991	900	1,960	8,280	570	16,295

[1] Excluding other solid fuels.

[2] Includes solid fuels other than coal, coke oven gas and electricity produced from non-renewable sources.

My Department does not produce forecasts of future energy requirements. However, an indication of the likely range of energy requirements in some possible future energy scenarios can be obtained from Energy Paper No.

59, which was recently published by this Department. A copy of this paper has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

Imported Coal

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the main fluctuations in the price—cif—in pounds per tonne, or energy equivalent and an indexed figure, of coal of power station quality available for import into the United Kingdom over the past eight years, the current price and his estimate of trends in future prices in a situation of European or world economic recovery.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* The annual average prices for imports of steam coal over the last eight years were:

	£ per tonne (cif)
1984	56·6
1985	47·5
1986	37·2
1987	35·0
1988	36·5
1989	39·0
1990	37·6
1991	33·9
[1]1992	31·2

[1] January to August.

Source: Central Statistical Office.

During this period, monthly average prices have fluctuated between £27·6 per tonne in July 1992 and £69·8 in February 1985, while the price in August 1992, the most recent available was £28·4 per tonne, cif.

My Department does not make forecasts of future fuel prices. However, an indication of the likely range of coal prices in some possible future energy scenarios can be obtained from Energy Paper No. 59, which was recently published by this Department. A copy of this paper has been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has of the proportion of coal imports into the United Kingdom for 1991 and the first six months of 1992, respectively, that were carried to the United Kingdom in ships other than those owned or registered in the United Kingdom, stating the approximate non-sterling costs incurred thereby, and his estimate of the range of such transport costs likely to be incurred in 1994 and thereafter.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* Imports of coal, coke and briquettes to the United Kingdom both in 1991 and in the first six months of 1992 carried by ships registered outside the United Kingdom amounted to 64 per cent. of the total of these imports. From the information available we are not able to provide a reliable estimate of the non-sterling costs involved.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the tonnes of coal imported into the United Kingdom in the first six months of 1992, and his estimate of the quantities likely in 1993, stating broadly the proportion or quantities from each of the main supplying areas or states.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* The breakdown of coal imported into the United Kingdom in the first six months of 1992 by country of origin is as follows:

Country of origin	*Quantity (thousand tonnes)*	*Percentage*
United States of America	4,367	39
Australia	2,418	21
Colombia	2,038	18
Former USSR	472	4
Canada	407	4
Poland	469	4
South Africa	403	4
Others	709	6
TOTAL	11,284	

Source: Customs and Excise.

The Government do not produce estimates of future coal imports.

Coal Prices

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the current price per gigajoule of deep-mined coal sold by British Coal to the main electricity generating undertakings, and the price at 1992 prices expected to be charged following implementation of its plans for pit closures.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* The prices paid by the electricity industry to individual coal suppliers are confidential to the companies concerned. The average price of all coal purchased by the major United Kingdom electricity generating companies is however published in table 26 of "Energy Trends", the Department's monthly statistical bulletin. In the second quarter of 1992 the average price was £1·81 per gigajoule.

Equivalent prices for the second quarter of next year will not be known until the necessary returns have been made, but the prices are likely to be substantially lower.

Electricity Generating Plants

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is, in pence per unit, and as a percentage of the domestic price, the approximate cost of *(a)* capital cost of generation, *(b)* fuel and its safe disposal, *(c)* transmission and distribution and *(d)* other costs, respectively, of each of the main fuel categories of power available for installation.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* The average price of electricity used in domestic premises this year is expected to be approximately 8p/kwh. Of this, around half is attributable to generation costs and around one third to transmission and distribution, with the remainder accounted for by supply costs and the fossil fuel levy.

Trade in Energy

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what overall assessment he has made since assuming office of the trends in the balance of payments of the United Kingdom trade in energy—including the channel link—other than in oil; and where such assessments are published, what distinction he draws between his responsibilities for attaining a balance or surplus of trade in this commodity, as compared to any other.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 October 1992]*: The balance of payments deficit for United Kingdom trade in energy, other than in oil, in 1991 was £1,260 million, broadly the same as in the last five years. Data are published by the Central Statistical Office in the 1992 Pink Book, "UK Balance of Payments".

The Department does not aim to maintain a trading surplus in any particular commodity or fuel but rather to ensure that overall the United Kingdom remains competitive with the other trading nations of the world.

Inmos

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his oral answer of 11 May, *Official Report*, column 361, if he will make a statement on plans to intervene to ensure that the production of semi-conductors by Inmos Ltd. continues at Newport, Gwent.

Mr. David Hunt: I have been asked to reply.

Following extensive discussion, the European Commission ruled out United Kingdom Government assistance at the exceptionally high level sought by this company to develop its operation at Newport. We have made it clear that the Government remain ready to explore further with the company whether there is any alternative basis on which assistance might be provided.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disability Allowances

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will place in the Library statistics relating to the performance of disability living allowance and disability working allowance.

Mr. Scott: I am pleased to announce that from this month such statistical information will be placed in the Library each month. We will aim to make the information available within seven working days of the end of the previous month.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimates he has made of the estimated cost to his budget of the recent announcement of job losses in the coal mining industry and their knock-on effects in other industries.

Mr. Burt: The characteristics of individual claims will vary widely and entitlement to benefit will be affected by redundancy and/or compensation payments. However, the effect on expenditure of a variation of 100,000 in the numbers of unemployed people is given in figure 25, page 18, of the second departmental report of the Department of Social Security, Cm 1914, published in February 1992, a copy of which is in the Library.

Social Fund

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the number and percentage of total applications which were refused for *(a)* community care grants, *(b)* budgeting loans and *(c)* crisis loans for each of the years of the social fund's operation; and if he will provide a breakdown by (i) region and (ii) local DSS office.

Mr. Scott: *[pursuant to his reply, 17 June 1992, c. 596]*. Some of the information requested was inadvertently omitted. The missing tables have now been placed in the Library.

WALES

Special Schools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of children in special schools in Wales do not have a statement of needs.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information provided by schools indicates that, at September 1991, 4 per cent. of children in special schools did not have a statement of special educational needs. However, many of these were in assessment centres and in the process of having their needs assessed prior to a possible statement.

University Hospital of Wales

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning a proposed grade-separated cross-over road access from Eastern avenue to the University hospital of Wales, the Heath, Cardiff.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has received 15 representations, including one from the Allensbank Permanent Allotment Association. Those making representations have expressed concern about environmental matters, the possible loss of allotment land, and traffic.

Infrastructure Projects

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much is currently allocated by his Department to *(a)* road and *(b)* rail infrastructure projects in Clwyd; and if he will publish an estimated figure for expenditure by his Department in Clwyd in 1993-94 and 1994-95 indicating in each case the principal projects allocated moneys.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In 1992-93, some £16·7 million has been directly allocated to road projects in Clwyd. This includes expenditure on the recently opened Mold bypass and the county council's transport grant settlement. Additional expenditure is incurred by Clwyd county council using credit approvals and revenue support grant provided by the Welsh Office. The Department does not directly provide funds for British Rail infrastructure projects. Expenditure decisions for 1993-94 and 1994-95 will be announced following the annual public expenditure surveys.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 22 October 1992

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will state the hourly rates for all types of legal aid over each of the last 20 years and also give the figures in real terms.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The available figures are as follows. Prescribed hourly rates for solicitors undertaking criminal legal aid work in the magistrates courts and the Crown court were introduced in October 1982. The paying authority has the power to allow fees higher than the prescribed hourly rates where these rates would not reflect the exceptional competence and dispatch with which the work was done, or the exceptional circumstances of the case.

In 1988 standard fees replaced hourly rates for the majority of Crown court criminal work. Prescribed hourly rates were introduced for legal advice and assistance in police stations in 1986 and for matrimonial work in 1988. Non-matrimonial civil work is not covered by prescribed rates.

The duty solicitor scheme providing legal advice and assistance in magistrates' courts is based on an average of the prescribed hourly rates for advocacy and preparation—before April 1992 travelling and waiting—for criminal legal aid work in the magistrates' courts. Since 1989 separate hourly rates have been prescribed for care proceedings, for mental health review tribunal work and for non-care proceedings under the Children Act.

The prescribed hourly rates from 1982-92 for criminal work, for matrimonial work and for legal advice and assistance in police stations are set out in the tables. The tables give basic rates only and do not include London weighting. Each table is followed by a table giving the figures in real terms.

The figures have been uprated to 1992-93 prices using the GDP deflator.

Criminal legal aid hourly rates (£) 1982-1992

Type of work	Year										
	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
(a) magistrates' court proceedings											
Preparation	24·00	25·00	26·00	27·00	28·50	32·50	34·50	36·50	39·25	42·00	43·25
Advocacy	29·00	30·00	32·00	33·00	35·00	40·50	43·00	46·00	49·50	53·00	54·50
Attendance at court where counsel assigned	15·00	16·50	17·00	18·00	19·00	21·50	23·00	24·50	26·25	28·50	29·50
Travelling and waiting	16·00	16·50	17·00	17·00	18·00	19·00	19·50	20·50	22·00	23·50	24·25
(b) Crown Court and Court of Appeal proceedings											
Preparation:											
Senior solicitor	29·00	30·00	30·00	31·00	33·00	38·00	40·00	42·50	46·00	50·00	51·50
Solicitor/legal executive/fee-earner of equivalent experience	23·00	24·00	26·00	27·00	28·50	32·50	34·50	36·50	39·50	42·25	43·50
Articled clerk/fee-earner of equivalent experience	14·00	15·00	17·00	18·00	19·00	21·50	22·50	24·00	26·00	28·00	28·75
Advocacy:											
Senior solicitor	31·00	32·00	32·00	33·00	35·00	40·50	50·00	53·00	57·00	61·00	62·50
Solicitor	27·00	28·00	32·00	33·00	35·00	40·50	43·00	46·00	49·30	53·00	54·50
Attendance at court where counsel assigned:											
Senior solicitor	26·00	26·00	26·00	27·00	28·00	31·00	33·00	35·00	37·50	40·00	41·25
Solicitor/legal executive/fee-earner of equivalent experience	20·00	20·00	20·00	21·00	22·00	24·50	26·00	27·50	29·50	32·00	33·00
Articled clerk/fee-earner of equivalent experience	12·00	12·00	12·00	13·00	14·00	15·50	16·00	17·00	18·25	19·50	20·00
Travelling and waiting:											
Senior solicitor	18·00	18·00	17·00	17·00	18·00	19·00	19·50	20·50	22·00	23·50	24·25
Solicitor/legal executive/fee-earner of equivalent experience	13·00	13·00	17·00	17·00	18·00	19·00	19·50	20·50	22·00	23·50	24·25
Articled clerk/fee-earner of equivalent experience	8·00	8·00	8·00	9·00	9·00	9·50	9·75	10·25	11·00	11·75	12·00

Criminal legal aid hourly rates (£) 1982-1992 expressed at 1992-1993 prices

Type of Work	Year										
	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
(a) magistrates' court proceedings											
Preparation	41·87	41·68	41·29	40·63	41·52	44·91	44·46	44·13	43·88	43·78	43·25
Advocacy	50·60	50·02	50·81	49·66	50·99	55·97	55·42	55·62	55·34	55·25	54·50
Attendance at court where counsel assigned	26·17	27·51	27·00	27·09	27·68	29·71	29·64	29·62	29·35	29·71	29·50
Travelling and waiting	27·91	27·51	27·00	25·58	26·23	26·26	25·13	24·79	24·60	24·50	24·25

Type of Work						Year					
	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
(b) Crown Court and Court of Appeal proceedings											
Preparation:											
Senior solicitor	50·60	50·02	47·64	46·65	48·08	52·51	51·55	51·39	51·43	52·12	51·50
Solicitor/legal executive/fee-earner of equivalent experience	40·13	40·02	41·29	40·63	41·52	44·91	44·46	44·13	44·16	44·05	43·50
Articled clerk/fee-earner of equivalent experience	24·43	25·01	27·00	27·09	27·68	29·71	29·00	29·02	29·07	29·19	28·75
Advocacy:											
Senior solicitor	54·08	53·36	50·81	49·66	50·99	55·97	64·44	64·08	63·73	63·59	62·50
Solicitor	47·11	46·69	50·81	49·66	50·99	55·97	55·42	55·62	55·34	55·25	54·50
Attendance at court where counsel assigned:											
Senior solicitor	45·36	43·35	41·29	40·63	40·80	42·84	42·53	42·32	41·93	41·70	41·25
Solicitor/legal executive/fee-earner of equivalent experience	34·89	33·35	31·76	31·60	32·05	33·86	33·51	33·25	32·98	33·36	33·00
Articled clerk/fee-earner of equivalent experience	20·94	20·01	19·06	19·56	20·40	21·42	20·62	20·55	20·40	20·33	20·00
Travelling and waiting:											
Senior solicitor	31·40	30·01	27·00	25·58	26·23	26·26	25·13	24·79	24·60	24·50	24·25
Solicitor/legal executive/fee-earner of equivalent experience	22·68	21·68	27·00	25·58	26·23	26·26	25·13	24·79	24·60	24·50	24·25
Articled clerk/fee-earner of equivalent experience	13·96	13·34	12·70	13·54	13·11	13·13	12·57	12·39	12·30	12·25	12·00

Civil legal aid in matrimonial proceedings hourly rates (£)
in High Court and County Court
1988-1992

Type of work	1988		1989		1990		1991		1992	
	High Court	County Court	High Court	County Court	High Court	County Court	High Court	County Court	High Court	County Court
Preparation[1]	34·00	30·00	36·00	32·00	39·00	34·50	41·75	37·00	43·00	38·20
Travelling and waiting	25·00	23·00	26·50	24·50	28·50	26·25	30·50	28·00	31·50	28·75
Attending counsel in conference/attendances with counsel at any trial, hearing or appointment	30·00	26·50	31·00	27·00	33·00	29·00	35·50	31·00	36·50	32·00
Attendances without counsel at any trial, hearing or appointment	42·00	38·00	46·00	43·00	50·00	47·00	53·50	50·50	55·00	52·00

[1] Paid for preparation other than writing routine letters, receiving routine letters and routine telephone calls. A rate of plus 50 per cent. is paid for general care and conduct of the proceedings.

Civil legal aid in matrimonial proceedings hourly rates (£) 1988-92 in High Court and County Court expressed at 1992-93 prices

Type of Work					Year					
	1988		1989		1990		1991		1992	
	High Court	County Court	High Court	County Court	High Court	County Court	High Court	County Court	High Court	County Court
Preparation	43·82	38·66	43·53	38·69	43·61	38·57	43·52	38·57	43·00	38·20
Travelling and waiting	32·22	29·64	32·04	29·62	31·87	29·35	31·80	29·19	31·50	28·75
Attending counsel in conference/attendances with counsel at any trial, hearing or appointment	38·66	34·15	37·48	32·65	36·90	32·42	37·01	32·32	36·50	32·00
Attendances without counsel at any trial, hearing or appointment	54·13	48·97	55·62	51·99	55·90	52·55	55·77	52·65	55·00	52·00

Advice and assistance at police stations hourly rates (£) 1986-1992

Type of work				Year				
	1986[1]	1986[2]	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Availability during duty period (standby payment) (maximum)	2·50 (60·00)	2·60 (62·40)	2·85 (68·40)	2·90 (69·60)	2·95 (70·80)	3·15 (75·60)	3·40 (81·60)	3·50 (84·00)
Advice and assistance:								
duty solicitor unsocial hours	36·00	38·00	43·00	45·00	48·50	52·25	56·00	57·50
duty solicitor all other hours/own solicitor	27·00	28·50	32·50	34·50	36·50	39·25	42·00	43·50
Travelling and waiting:								
duty solicitor unsocial hours	36·00	38·00	43·00	45·00	48·50	52·25	56·00	57·50

Type of work	*Year* *1986*[1]	*1986*[2]	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
duty solicitor all other hours	27·00	28·50	32·50	34·50	36·50	39·25	42·00	43·50
own solicitor	17·00	18·00	19·00	19·50	20·50	22·00	23·50	24·25

[1] (January to April)

[2] (from April)

Advice and assistance at police stations hourly rates (£) 1986-92 expressed at 1992-93 prices

Type of work	*Year* [1]*1986*	[2]*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Availability during duty period (standby payment)	3·76	3·79	3·94	3·74	3·57	3·52	3·54	3·5
Advice and assistance:								
duty solicitor unsocial hours	54·18	55·37	59·42	57·99	58·64	58·42	58·38	57·5
duty solicitor all other hours/own solicitor	40·63	41·52	44·91	44·46	44·13	43·88	43·78	43·5
Travelling and waiting:								
duty solicitor unsocial hours	54·18	55·37	59·42	57·99	58·42	58·42	58·38	57·5
duty solicitor all other hours	40·63	41·52	44·91	44·46	44·13	43·88	43·78	43·5
own solicitor	25·58	26·23	26·26	25·13	24·79	24·6	24·5	24·25

[1] January to April.

[2] From April.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what investigations he has made into the numbers and proportions of solicitors' firms that accept legal aid work; and if he will state the findings of such investigations.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No statistics are available on the number of firms of solicitors undertaking legal aid work at any one time. The Legal Aid Board does, however, publish a figure showing the number of offices receiving payment. For the last five years these were as follows:

Year	*Number*
1987-88	11,617
1988-89	11,558
1989-90	11,455
1990-91	11,125
1991-92	11,060

The Legal Aid Board also publishes statistics which show that although the number of offices receiving payment has fallen, the number of legal aid payments made to solicitors has risen.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what provision he intends to make in the legal aid fee structures for listening to tape recordings of police interviews with suspects.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Listening to tape recordings of police interviews forms part of the preparation of a criminal case, and is remunerated as such under the present arrangements. Under the proposed system of standard fees for solicitors' criminal legal aid work in the magistrates' courts, it is intended that payment for listening to tape recordings should be included in the standard fee, since it forms part of the normal preparation of a case.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what account he has taken of representations made to him by the Law Society concerning the question of fixed fees for legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Fixed fees have not been proposed. The consultation period on the proposed standard fee system for solicitors' criminal legal aid work in the magistrates courts is planned to continue until the end of October.

Discussions with the Law Society on standard fees began in July 1991. As a result, the Lord Chancellor has made several changes to his proposals. These include a fee structure based on the amount of work done, rather than hearing time as originally suggested, and allowing waiting time to be claimed separately.

Immigration

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the current backlog of appeals for *(a)* the immigration tribunal and *(b)* the immigration appeal tribunal in each of the appeal centres.

Mr. John M. Taylor: As of this month 23,000 cases were outstanding before immigration adjudicators and 322 before the immigration appeals tribunal. In order to break down the first figure regionally it is necessary to consider cases listed, cases awaiting instructions from one of the parties and the balance which, alone, is in the control of the administration/judiciary and to employ some apportionment. This approach produces the following figures:

	Numbers
Thanet House	13,730
Birmingham	2,230
Leeds	1,010
Harmonsworth	3,510
Manchester	1,860
Glasgow	660

Legal Advice

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what the rates have been for green form legal advice for each of the last 10 years; and if he will give the figures in real terms.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Before 1989, solicitors' bills for legal advice and assistance were assessed by the Law Society. The hourly guideline rates from 1982 to 1988 were:

Year	*Rate*	*Rate expressed at 1992-93 prices*
1982	24·00	41·89
1983	25·00	41·70
1984	26·00	41·31
1985	27·00	40·65
[1]1986	28·50	41·54
[2]1986	30·50	44·46
1987	32·50	44·93
1988	34·50	44·48

[1] April

[2] October

Since 1989 the rate paid to solicitors for legal advice and assistance is the same as that for work in criminal proceedings in the magistrates court. The prescribed hourly rates since 1989 have been:

Year	*Rate*	*Rate expressed at 1992-93 prices*
1989	36·50	44·15
1990	39.25	43.89
1991	42.00	43.98
1992	43.25	

Figures have been uprated to 1992-93 prices using the

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what action he has taken and intends to take to increase the proportion of blacks and Asians in the judiciary.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's policy is to appoint to judicial office those best qualified, regardless of sex, ethnic origin, political affiliation or religion. Without prejudice to this overriding principle, the Lord Chancellor has stressed publicly, and will continue to do so, that he would like more black and Asian practitioners who are suitably qualified to be appointed to the judiciary. A major factor has been the lack of such candidates in the legal profession in the relevant age groups. There are now more ethnic minority practitioners within the legal profession who the Lord Chancellor hopes will come forward for consideration. To encourage this, he has made the booklet on the judicial appointments system widely available to ethnic minority practitioners and representative groups. Particular consideration is given to reviewing ethnic minority candidates in the field for particular appointments and ethnic recording arrangements were introduced for applications for judicial appointment made after 1 October 1991. The Lord Chancellor and his officials also have periodical meetings with groups representing the interests of black and Asian practitioners where matters relating to the judicial appointments system are discussed.

Law Centres

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what amount of central Government funding has been given to law centres for each of the last 20 years; and if he will give the figures in real terms.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information is as follows:

Year	*Grant £'000*	*At 1992-93 prices*
1974-75	50	254
1975-76	100	405
1976-77	150	535
1977-78	225	706
1978-79	273	773
1979-80	381	923
1980-81	445	911
1981-82	535	1,000
1982-83	583	1,017
1983-84	618	1,030
1984-85	649	1,031
1985-86	675	1,016
1986-87	695	1,013
1987-88	712	984
1988-89	730	941
1989-90	768	929
1990-91	822	919
1991-92	841	877

This Department made no grants to law centres before 1974-75. The figures from then to date are set out in the table. At various times during the past 20 years some law centres have received central Government funding from sources other than the Lord Chancellor's Department. These figures do not include income from the Legal Aid Fund.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hong Kong

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement in respect of the governor of Hong Kong's emergency meeting held on 25 September, in connection with threats to the colony's marine police officers by Chinese security officials in the colony's waters.

Mr. Goodlad: On 25 September, a Hong Kong fishing vessel was boarded by Chinese security officers within Hong Kong territorial waters. This was a serious incident and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs raised it with the Chinese Foreign Minister on the same day. On 29 September, Chinese officials made clear to the Hong Kong Government that the action of the Chinese officers concerned had been incorrect, and offered apologies for the incident. This response underlines the shared interest of Hong Kong and China in effective cooperation to combat smuggling.

UN Assembly Speech

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out in the *Official Report* the main points he made in his speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations in September; and what was the response he received from his counterparts.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The main purpose of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs' speech, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House, was to offer a response, on behalf of the European Community and its member states, to the Secretary-General's report "An Agenda for Peace". In the subsequent debate in the general assembly there was widespread agreement that the report was welcome, and that it provided a quarry of ideas to be followed up on a case-by-case basis and in the relevant UN bodies.

Test Ban Talks

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to discuss with his French counterpart the resumption of multilateral nuclear test ban treaty talks.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have regular discussions with the French Government on a range of nuclear defence issues, including nuclear testing. We have always accepted a comprehensive test ban as a long-term goal, but we continue to believe that nuclear testing is the best means of ensuring the safety and credibility of our nuclear deterrent.

Immigration

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current backlog in each of the queues at the following posts *(a)* Bombay, *(b)* New Delhi, *(c)* Islamabad, *(d)* Karachi, *(e)* Dhak, *(f)* Nairobi and *(g)* Dar-es-Salaam; and what is the average length of time in each queue from application to interview.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As at 31 August the number of people waiting for interviews for entry clearance were:

	Q1	*Q2*	*Q3*	*Q4*	*Total*
Bombay	0	163	424	205	792
New Delhi	0	297	295	134	726
Islamabad	3	166	52	465	686
Karachi	5	108	34	8	155
Dhaka	350	1,679	212	277	2,518

There are no queues in Nairobi or Dar-el-Salaam.

The estimated waiting times, in months, are:

	Q1	*Q2*	*Q3*	*Q4*
Bombay	—	4	9	10
New Delhi	—	3	7	10
Islamabad	3	3	6	10
Karachi	2	2	3	7
Dhaka	3	6	7	9

Yugoslavia

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Walsall, North of 19 October *Official Report*, columns *34-35*, on war crimes in former Yugoslavia, if Her Majesty's Government will consider submitting information to the United Nations on the actions of Slobodan Milosevic and Radovan Karadzic in connection with crimes against humanity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave to him on 19 October, at columns *34-35*.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Clenbuterol

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether he will introduce legislation to ban the possession of the drug Clenbuterol for sporting purposes.

Mr. Brooke: The Government have no plans at present to do so.

Sports Sponsorship

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage by what date the pound-for-pound business sports sponsorship incentive scheme announced on 19 December 1991 will be established; how much funding will be allocated to the scheme; over what time scale it will operate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Government remain firmly committed to Sportsmatch. I shall soon make an announcement on its launch date and funding. It will be to the benefit of the scheme and all those involved in it if Sportsmatch can be launched with a secure future. No time scale has been set for the operation of the scheme. This will depend very largely on its success.

EDUCATION

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give the approximate costs arising in his Department from the direct administration of grant-maintained schools for the year 1992, or 1991-92, and the estimated costs he expects to arise either in 1993, or the financial year 1993-94, stating the actual or expected number of schools in respect of each period.

Mr. Forth: The running costs of staff employed on the direct administration of GM schools and associated policy were £706,000 in 1991-92. Estimated outturn for 1992-93 is £1,450,000. Budgets for 1993-94 have not yet been set. In March 1992 there were 143 GM schools operating. There are currently 278 GM schools operating, with 30 more approved or minded to approve.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what arrangements he has made for allocating costs of the national fund for in-service training of teachers in grant-maintained schools for the year 1992-93; and what is the approximate expenditure for this purpose which he expects to allocate in the year 1993-94, expressed as an aggregate sum, and as the amount per teacher eligible for such training.

Mr. Forth: In 1992-93 each grant-maintained school is eligible for a special purpose grant (development) allocated at the rate of £42·50 per pupil. Schools are expected to spend at least half of this grant on staff training and development. Grant-maintained schools may also meet such costs out of their annual maintenance grant. Decisions have not yet been taken about special purpose grant (development) allocations for 1993-94.

University Research

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of gross domestic product is devoted to research in universities; and what information he had for the comparative figures in other EC countries.

Mr. Forman: Data in the 1992 annual review of Government-funded research and development indicate that in 1990 0·3 per cent. of United Kingdom GDP was spent on research and development in higher education, compared with 0·4 per cent. in Germany, 0·3 per cent. in France and 0·25 per cent. in Italy.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of research in British universities is funded by charities; and what information he has on the comparable figures in other European countries.

Mr. Forman: United Kingdom charities provided 22·3 per cent. of the income from research grants and contracts of United Kingdom universities in 1990-91. Comparable information for other countries is not available.

Universities (Clerical Staff)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he plans to take to ensure comparability in the rates of pay and conditions of work of the clerical staff of universities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: The pay of clerical staff employed by the universities is entirely a matter for their employers. The Government have no intention of becoming involved in the negotiating arrangements.

Defence Research

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of Government-funded research in British universities is devoted to defence issues.

Mr. Forman: Data in the 1992 annual review of Government-funded research and development show that in 1990-91 research and development spending by the Ministry of Defence accounted for 6·5 per cent. of all specific Government funding for research and development in higher education institutions.

University Staff Pay

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what role the trade unions will have in the operation of new pay structures for university staff at university and college levels.

Mr. Forman: The Government expect employers in higher education to settle their own future negotiating arrangements including any arrangements for trade union involvement.

Non-maintained Special Schools

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from St. Vincents school for blind and partially sighted children in Liverpool in respect of the consultative paper on special educational needs; what his response has been; and if he will make a statement on the future of such non-maintained special schools.

Mr. Forth: I have replied to several Members about the future of non-maintained special schools under our proposed legislation. Schools such as St. Vincent's should continue to offer high-quality special education. Their future is not threatened by our legislative proposals.

Child Care and Nursery Education

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the relative positions of each member state of the European Community in respect of the provision of child care and nursery education.

Mr. Forth: It is not possible to offer comprehensive comparisons across the European Community but statistical comparisons of educational and group day care provision in a majority of EC states are available for 1987. Figures for participation in public and private sector provision in that year are as follows:

Percentages[1]

	Education		*Day Care*	
	3-4	*3-5*	*3-4*	*3-5*
Belgium	96	97	[5]—	[5]—
France	98	99	[5]—	[5]—
Germany	56	66	[5]—	[5]—
Ireland	30	[3]54	n/a	14
Italy (Estimated)	78	81	[5]—	[5]—
Luxembourg (Estimated)	49	65	[6]n/a	[6]n/a
Netherlands	51	67	25	[4]17
Spain	53	70	[5]—	[5]—
United Kingdom	45	64	[2]41	[2]27

[1] Percentages of population, aged at 1 January.

[2] Estimated (avoiding double counting with education).

[3] For 1985.

[4] For 1983.

[5] —nil or negligible.

[6] n/a not available.

Only the United Kingdom and the Netherlands have compulsory full-time education from the age of five; in the other countries quoted this begins at six.

TRANSPORT

Buses, London

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what surveys or investigations he has made concerning the location, capacity, and management of bus stands in central London after the proposed deregulation and privatisation of its bus services.

Mr. Norris: This is a matter for which the London Bus Executive will be responsible. The Government do not anticipate that deregulation will cause any significant changes in the provision and usage of bus stands. However, this is a point which can be considered further by the Department's consultative forum, whose first meeting I announced on 13 May, as part of its remit to advise on the practical aspects of implementing deregulation in London.

Cannon Street Collision

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to implement the recommendations in the report on the collision of 8

January 1991 at Cannon Street station that legislation should be introduced making it an offence for railway employees with safety responsibilities to be impaired by the consumption of alcohol or drugs.

Mr. Freeman: The Transport and Works Act, which received Royal Assent on 16 March 1992, contains new comprehensive provisions to deal with drink and drugs offences on the railways. The offences, penalties and police testing powers are similar to those under the Road Traffic Act. The new provisions will come into force on 7 December 1992.

Rail Services

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will request the British Railways Board to report on the practicality of introducing a rail service between Clapham and Willesden junctions on the west London line, calling at appropriate intermediate stations, subsequent on the completion of its electrification.

Mr. Freeman: This is being examined by a working group of officials representing British Railways, London Transport, the Department of Transport, four London boroughs, and the local business community. I expect its report shortly.

Akatsuki Maru

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has received from his Japanese counterpart in regard to safety and security arrangements made for the voyage of the Akatsuki Maru carrier-ship between Japan, La Hague in France and Sellafield transporting plutonium.

Mr. Norris: None.

British Rail Freight

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what fee was agreed by Mercer Management Consulting to advise his Department and British Rail on the sale of British Rail's freight operations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: This information is commercially confidential.

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to take external advice on the privatisation of British Rail's freight operations.

Mr. Freeman: The Department of Transport and the British Railways Board have jointly commissioned Mercer Management Consulting to provide detailed advice on structural options for the transfer to the private sector of British Rail's domestic and international freight services, including the rail express systems parcel business. Work on the study commenced on 28 September.

Safety Schemes

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the expected average rate of return from the £31 million transport supplementary grant earmarked for local safety schemes in the financial year 1991-92.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Returns provided by local authorities indicate that the sum earmarked for local safety schemes in the transport supplementary grant settlement for 1991-92 produced an average first year rate of return of 76 per cent., and over the first three years a rate of return of 213 per cent.

ENVIRONMENT

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of staff changes in each of the National Rivers Authority regions as a result of the proposed environment agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The number and distribution of staff within the environment agency will be matters for its management.

Recycling

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to ensure that the United Kingdom meets its recycling target of 25 per cent. of household waste by 2000.

Mr. Maclean: We are undertaking a wide range of measures to ensure that we reach our recycling target. In particular, we are setting a legislative and economic framework designed to make recycling the preferred choice when it is the best environmental option.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 introduces the most favourable legal framework for recycling ever provided in this country. To help authorities in England to implement their recycling strategies, we have introduced a programme of supplementary credit approvals. In order to assist industry to overcome technical and market barriers to recycling, the Government provides funding for research and development through the ETIS scheme, operated jointly by my Department and the Department of Trade and Industry, and the DEMOS and EUROENVIRON schemes, administered by the Department of Trade and Industry. We have introduced an economic incentive in the form of recycling credits; my noble Friend Lord Strathclyde announced on 30 September that the value of credits will double from 1 April 1994.

Ozone-destroying Chemicals

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the continued production of ozone-destroying chemicals.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has received many representations on this issue.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the quantity of *(a)* chlorofluorocarbons, *(b)* halons and *(c)* methyl chloroform produced in (i) 1990-91, (ii) 1991-92 and (iii) proposed for 1992-93.

Mr. Maclean: An estimated 681 kilotonnes of CFCs were produced world-wide in 1991. Figures are not yet available for 1992, but are expected to show a sharp decline. Figures are not available for world-wide production of halons or methyl chloroform.

Montreal Protocol

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultation he has undertaken with industry prior to the Montreal protocol renegotiation in Copenhagen from 17 to 25 November.

Mr. Maclean: Officials from this Department and the Department of Trade and Industry meet representatives from the relevant industry sectors on a regular basis to discuss issues related to the Montreal protocol.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultation he has undertaken with environmental groups prior to the Montreal protocol renegotiation in Copenhagen from 17 to 25 November.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State receives many communications from such groups. He met representatives of Greenpeace on 21 September when the Montreal protocol, together with various other environmental issues, was discussed.

Hydrochlorofluorocarbons

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for an increase in the production of the use of hydrochlorofluorocarbons as transitional substances.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom Government support the tightest possible limits on the use of HCFCs consistent with achieving the fastest possible elimination of the consumption of CFCs. The details of these controls will be worked out with other Montreal protocol parties in Copenhagen.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement relating to the effect on the environment of continued production of HCFCs and other chemicals.

Mr. Maclean: In the forthcoming revision of the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer we will promote provisions to ensure the HCFCs are used only in those applications where they are the only practicable alternative to use of the much more damaging CFCs. The use of HCFCs instead of CFCs in these applications will be beneficial for the ozone layer.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what communications he has had with the Federal German Environment Ministry as regards to the acceptability to Germany of implementing the radiological equivalence plan for the return of radioactive wastes arising from reprocessing as announced to Parliament on 2 May 1986, *Official Report*, column *500*.

Mr. Maclean: The question of the substitution of radioactive wastes remains under consideration. The views of the German government on any proposals made by British Nuclear Fuels plc will be a matter to be taken up as appropriate with the German Government by BNFL's customers.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment pursuant to his reply of 14 July, *Official Report*, columns *643-4*, if he has now received from the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee its views on the implementation of the radiological equivalence proposals for the return of radioactive wastes after reprocessing.

Mr. Maclean: Yes, and I am considering the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee's report.

Probation Hostels

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether planning permission is required for a mainly probation hostel to switch to a mainly bail hostel.

Mr. Baldry: The conversion of a building used mainly as a probation hostel to one used mainly as a bail hostel would probably not require planning permission, unless the building were enlarged or the exterior substantially altered.

Rents

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assumption he proposes to apply in respect of the maximum increase in guidelines rents to take effect from April 1993, under the housing revenue account subsidy determinations.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will consult local authorities and other interested organisations in November on the proposed HRA subsidy determinations for 1993-94, including the proposed maximum increase in rent guidelines. His final decisions will be announced in December.

Housing Funds

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the place, manner or mode in which he has placed restrictions on the expenditure of local authorities on new municipal housing from funds accrued by them from sales of residential premises, together with the statutory basis of such restriction, and the approximate total sums of such funds now available for such building; and if he will make a statement on the policy of Her Majesty's Government concerning the future use of these funds.

Mr. Robin Squire: Under part IV of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, local authorities may use 25 per cent. of their capital receipts from the sale of council houses, and 50 per cent. of most other receipts, to finance new capital expenditure on any service. They are required to set aside the balance as provision to meet credit liabilities. The total of the amounts set aside under the present capital finance system, including receipts from council house sales, was about £5·5 billion at 31 March 1991. If authorities were allowed to spend a larger proportion of their capital receipts, their net indebtedness would rise and the total of spending by the public sector and the public sector borrowing requirement would be increased. The present system has also enabled a greater proportion of capital receipts to be recycled in the form of new credit approvals to those authorities where needs are greatest. We therefore have no plans to change these arrangements.

Municipal Mutual Insurance

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions and meetings he has had concerning Municipal Mutual Insurance and local government insurance.

Mr. Robin Squire: None.

City Challenge

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money has so far been awarded under the city challenge programme.

Mr. Robin Squire: Subject to satisfactory performance by pacemakers and the approval of authorities' action plans for round 2, city challenge expenditure on pacemakers and round 2 winners will be £82·5 million and £150 million per annum respectively for five years. No decisions on future rounds of city challenge have yet been taken.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the next round of the city challenge awards is to be announced.

Mr. Robin Squire: Twenty local authorities, with their partners, bid successfully in the second round of city challenge and are currently preparing five year action plans for ministerial approval with a view to implementation from April 1993. They have been asked to submit their completed plans by 31 December 1992 and it is intended that approval decisions will be announced in February 1993. A decision about subsequent rounds of city challenge will be made in due course.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much extra Government grant he has determined he will need to provide to compensate for the fact that average house prices are lower than the Government estimated for the council tax valuation.

Mr. Robin Squire: The provision for Government grant each year depends on a large number of factors. These include the Government's view of the appropriate total of revenue spending by local authorities, the estimated amount of non-domestic rates, the implications for local taxes and what the country can afford. Average house prices are not a material consideration, either under the present system or under the forthcoming council tax.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies he has carried out into the costs or savings of compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department has commissioned two studies by the Institute of Local Government Studies at the university of Birmingham to evaluate the effects of the competitive tendering provisions in the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 and the Local Government Act 1988 on local authorities' direct service organisations. The studies include consideration of the costs and savings.

A report summarising the initial findings of the evaluation of the 1988 Act was published in February 1991. Copies are available in the House Library. I anticipate that final reports for both studies will be published in the new year.

Letchworth Garden City Corporation

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for the long-term future of Letchworth garden city corporation.

Mr. Baldry: The Corporation was established as a statutory body under the Letchworth Garden City Corporation Act 1962 to manage the garden city estate. The Department recently invited the corporation to consider how best to undertake its functions within the private sector, while retaining the fundamental aims and objectives of the garden city movement.

The corporation has indicated that it intends to place a Bill before Parliament this November to transfer the assets, liabilities and activities of the corporation to a new charitable organisation to be called the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation. The corporation is currently undertaking a consultation exercise on its proposals.

The Department supports the corporation's proposed way forward.

Poll Tax

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide the total and a breakdown of the costs so far of the implementation of the poll tax.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) on 15 July 1992, *Official Report*, column *1132*.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total expenditure so far by his Department on publicising the poll tax and related information.

Mr. Robin Squire: Since enactment, my Department has produced, distributed, and maintained a series of leaflets on the community charge system. At various times advertising was taken to draw the attention of the public to these leaflets and to the availability of community charge benefit and transitional relief and how to claim them. The costs to date are £5,710,500.

Tarmac Construction

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all funds paid to Tarmac Construction in connection with its takeover of the Property Services Agency; and if he will give a statement of how these sums were arrived at.

Mr. Redwood: No funds have been paid to Tarmac Construction as yet. The amounts to be paid over in connection with Tarmac's purchase of PSA Projects were determined by open competition and will depend on the numbers of staff choosing to transfer on sale with the business, the completion audit and thereafter on the numbers of any redundancies should there be insufficient work in the future to sustain employment levels as planned.

Opencast Coal

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what proposals he has to amend the passage in mineral planning guidance 3 of 1988 on opencast which says that it is in the national interest to maximise coal production;

(2) if he will withdraw mineral planning guidance 3 on opencast and let local councils decide whether they want opencast in their area.

Mr. Baldry: I announced on 15 July that the guidelines will be revised. My Department expects to bring forward a draft for public consultation next year. I hope that the hon. Member will appreciate that I cannot pre-empt what the revised guidelines will say.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what consideration he will give to the level of overall coal production in taking the decision on whether an opencast site should be allowed at Baddesley Ensor in Warwickshire;

(2) when he expects to announce his decision on the application for an opencast site at Baddesley Ensor in Warwickshire.

Mr. Baldry: I shall take account of all considerations which are material to the planning decision. The decision will be announced as soon as possible.

Sludge Incinerators

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what planning applications for sludge incinerators are currently being considered by planning authorities in England and Wales; and if he will name those which he has called in for public inquiry.

Mr. Baldry: There is no mechanism whereby the Secretary of State for the Environment or the Secretary of State for Wales are automatically informed of all planning applications for sewerage sludge incinerators, as planning applications are primarily a matter for the local planning authorities. However the Town and Country Planning (Development Plans and Consultation) Directions 1992 require local planning authorities to notify the Secretaries of State of development proposals which would significantly prejudice implementation of a development plan. We are therefore aware of only two applications currently before local planning authorities. These are Thames Water's incinerator proposals at Crossness in the London borough of Bexley and at Beckton in the London borough of Newham. Neither of these applications has been called in. There may be other applications of which we are unaware.

In addition to these current applications, Northumbrian Water and International Technology Europe Ltd. have appealed to the Secretary of State in respect of their incinerator proposals at East Howden in North Tyneside and at Portrach in Stockton-on-Tees; a public inquiry has been held and the Secretary of State is considering the inspector's report.

Local Government

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies he has conducted or intends to conduct into the relative costs of two-tier and single-tier structures for local government.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Local Government Commission will assess the costs and benefits of changes to local government structure in the shire counties as it carries out its reviews area by area. In 1984 we estimated that some £100 million long-term savings per annum resulting from staff reductions should follow abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils. We later estimated that some 6,300 posts had been saved immediately on abolition.

WALES

Manufacturing Trainees

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* apprenticeships and *(b)* trainee posts in manufacturing industry were available in Wales in each year from 1979 onwards.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Estimates from the Employment Department's short-term employment surveys are given in the table. Welsh data from this source are available only from 1981 up to 1990 after which this inquiry was discontinued. The labour force survey sample in Wales does not allow for reliable estimates of manufacturing apprentice numbers for Wales, but the 1992 results showed that an estimated 206,000 people of working age across all industries in Wales had received a job-related training in the four weeks prior to the survey compared with a figure of 95,000 in 1984, when this information was first recorded.

Manufacturing industries

Year	*Number of apprentices (thousands)*	*Number of other trainees (thousands)*
1981	6·0	1·9
1982	4·7	1·8
1983	3·6	1·2
1984	3·1	1·4
1985	2·8	0·9
1986	2·3	1·1
1987	2·3	1·4
1988	2·4	1·3
1989	2·2	1·3
1990	2·2	1·7

Source: Short Term Employment Surveys, Employment Department.

Jobs

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of all jobs that have transferred from companies in Wales to companies operating in other EC countries in the last four years including dates, company names and totals of jobs lost to Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not available.

DWR Cymru

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many prosecutions of DWR Cymru have been made since September 1991; and what pollution incidents were involved.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information regarding prosecutions brought by the National Rivers Authority against pollution incidents occurring in its Welsh region during

1991 is contained in the authority's report "Water Pollution Incidents in 1991" published in September 1992, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. This is the second report, which is updated annually.

Paediatric Occupational Therapy

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will grant special funds to Clwyd health authority for the establishment of a paediatric occupational therapy service in Clwyd.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Clwyd health authority is required to formulate a local strategy for health jointly with the family health services authority and to use the resources which it has at its disposal for the health care needs of its resident population in accordance with its own locally determined priorities. If it wishes to see a new service offered by service providers in Clwyd, it should explore with those providers and local GP fund holders the viability of developing such a service.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many paediatric occupational therapy services there are in each of the health authorities of Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The requested information is not held centrally.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives he is taking concerning the assessment and treatment of myalgic encephalomyelitis.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office, in common with other Government health Departments, accepts myalgic encephalomyelitis—ME—as a debilitating and distressing condition.

The protocol for investment in health gain, pain, discomfort and palliative care, launched by the Department earlier this month, recognises ME as a cause of pain and discomfort, and acknowledges the need for research on the nature and pattern of this illness, and on possible treatments.

The protocol was developed by the Welsh Health Planning Forum mainly to assist health authorities in developing their local strategies for health. ME will, therefore, be considered by all health authorities as they devise individual strategies.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the incidence of myalgic encephalomyelitis in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on the incidence of myalgic encephalomyelitis in Wales is not held centrally.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of public expenditure in those areas which have assisted area status for each of the years since 1980.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is not available in the form requested. To produce the data in this format would involve disproportionate time and cost.

Orthoptics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many orthoptic patients were treated outside the Clwyd health authority area because of lack of staff or facilities in the past 12 months; and what is his estimate of the figures for the next 12 months.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The requested information is not held centrally.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives he intends to take to improve waiting time for treatment in orthoptic departments in *(a)* Clwyd health authority and *(b)* Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Funding is not made available specifically for improving orthoptic waiting lists as the setting of priorities is a matter for health authorities. However, central funding has been provided which will assist authorities in the reduction of overall waiting times.

A total of £1 million has already been allocated to Welsh health authorities under this year's waiting times initiative: Clwyd received £140,300. Funding is not aimed at specific specialities, but at those people who have been waiting more than two years for non-urgent treatment; 18 months for hip or knee replacement or cataract operations and one month for urgent treatment.

Central funding of £2·1 million has been made available to Welsh health authorities under the treatment centre initiative: provision for Clwyd health authority has been made for 110 cataract operations at the ophthalmic treatment centre in Bangor at a cost of £91,630.

The authority has also received £164,806, from £1·6 million set aside to assist health authorities in developing their day surgery facilities; £12,500 of this allocation is being used to improve the provision of ophthalmic day case facilities.

Housing, Buckley

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet representatives of Alyn and Deeside district council to discuss the provision of specific additional funding for the refurbishment of the houses of Terring crescent, Buckley; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: We have no plans to do so. It must be for the district council to decide what priority to give the refurbishment of these homes within the resources avaialble to it.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in each county in each month since June.

Mr. Gummer: The information as requested for Great Britain is as follows—some of these confirmed cases will have a date of clinical onset and date of report before 30 May 1992.

County/region	*June (30 May-26 June)*	*July (27 June-31 July)*	*August (1 August-28 August)*	*September (29 August-25 September*	*October (26 September-16 October)*
England:					
Avon	68	78	42	62	18
Bedfordshire	7	5	3	5	10
Berkshire	17	23	16	20	4
Buckinghamshire	23	36	19	21	9
Cambrideshire	7	9	7	7	4
Cheshire	109	215	98	127	118
Cleveland	3	4	0	6	3
Cornwall	285	189	184	126	170
Cumbria	129	89	97	73	75
Derbyshire	70	97	62	74	29
Devon	410	280	236	162	262
Dorset	252	167	129	137	69
Durham	26	13	8	18	8
Essex	14	22	6	9	10
Gloucestershire	69	65	63	67	26
Hampshire	76	86	56	39	38
Hereford and Worcester	65	55	28	72	32
Hertfordshire	12	17	6	5	15
Humberside	22	7	3	10	6
Isle of Wight	18	14	9	8	18
Kent	43	40	32	18	12
Lancashire	137	115	126	61	87
Leicestershire	56	51	59	65	14
Lincolnshire	20	25	16	17	10
London	3	4	1	1	1
Manchester	3	7	4	1	10
Merseyside	7	4	2	3	0
Norfolk	108	88	59	44	22
Northamptonshire	17	14	28	16	10
Northumberland	31	21	8	24	16
Nottinghamshire	16	32	19	14	1
Oxfordshire	49	52	33	27	22
Shropshire	119	87	63	81	51
Somerset	313	253	186	186	80
Staffordshire	134	85	42	119	74
Suffolk	37	44	35	26	23
Surrey	24	28	21	18	10
Sussex East	47	39	18	35	6
Sussex West	56	53	44	48	21
Tyne and Wear	2	0	0	2	1
Warwickshire	42	35	12	17	14
West Midlands	4	6	1	2	2
Wiltshire	156	179	95	109	91
Yorkshire North	166	134	84	164	80
Yorkshire South	15	13	5	11	9
Yorkshire West	24	13	3	25	8
Wales:					
Clwyd	56	42	33	46	36
Dyfed	218	147	146	152	88
Glamorgan North	2	1	6	4	0
Glamorgan South	6	9	11	10	6
Glamorgan West	5	2	4	5	1
Gwent	20	17	17	14	18
Gwynedd	13	14	14	12	11
Powys	52	62	23	34	28
Scotland:					
Borders	4	5	9	12	5
Central	1	4	1	4	3
Dumfries	45	57	36	47	23
Fife	7	0	4	2	1
Grampian	23	25	22	24	22
Highland	4	1	4	8	4
Lothian	3	1	1	2	2
Orkney	0	1	1	2	2
Shetland	0	0	0	0	0
Strathclyde	28	47	25	38	34
Tayside	8	3	6	15	12
Western Isles	0	0	0	0	0

Bananas

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to consult with his European Community colleagues on the question of future EC banana quotas; what the effects are likely to be for the United Kingdom's trade with Belize; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Agriculture Council will discuss the Commission's proposals for a common organisation of the market in bananas at its next meeting on 26 and 27 October. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has discussed with the Prime Minister of Belize the proposed distinction to be drawn between traditional and non-traditional exports. We shall ensure that discussions in the Community take account of his concerns.

PRIME MINISTER

Single Market

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Prime Minister what measures are outstanding to complete the single market.

The Prime Minister: Of the 282 measures in the Commission's White Paper, "Completing the Internal Market", only 25 have not yet reached at least a common position or political agreement.

Of these, six fall into the agriculture area; five deal with intellectual property; five are related to VAT; four are on company law; two on financial services; two on tax; and one on rights of residence.

India

Mr. Khabra: To ask the Prime Minister if he will place in the Library the latest text of the extradition treaty with India.

The Prime Minister: The extradition treaty between the United Kingdom and India was signed on 23 September 1992 and copies placed in the Libraries of both Houses on that date.

Western Shoshone Indian Land

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what correspondence Her Majesty's Government have received from Chief Raymond Yowell of the Western Shoshone National Council, Nevada, concerning the continued use by the United Kingdom of the Department of Energy nuclear weapons test site on Western Shoshone Indian land.

The Prime Minister: The only correspondence I have received was in October 1991. The British ambassador in Washington replied on my behalf. A copy of Sir Robin Renwick's letter was placed in the Library of the House.

United Nations Day

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what plans Her Majesty's Government have to mark United Nations Day on 24 October.

The Prime Minister: The flag of the United Nations will be flown in Parliament square on 24 October.

Our commitment to the United Nations, as a founder of the organisation and a permanent member of the Security Council, remains as firm as ever. The end of the cold war and successes in, for example, Namibia and Kuwait have given the United Nations new authority. We welcome that and will continue to work for a stronger, more effective United Nations which can meet the challenges of the 1990s.

EC Commissioners

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister when he will be making a statement on the appointment of the United Kingdom's EC Commissioners.

The Prime Minister: As announced on 20 October, I have nominated Sir Leon Brittan and Mr. Bruce Millan to serve in the Commission of the European Communities taking office in January 1993.

Ministry of Justice

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to abolish the Lord Chancellor's Department to make way for a Ministry of Justice.

The Prime Minister: None.

Government Consultants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish guidelines concerning the appointment of consultants by his Government.

The Prime Minister: A guidance booklet on seeking help from management consultants was published by HM Treasury in May 1990. This booklet, copies of which are available in the Libraries of both Houses, also identifies central sources of advice and guidance for other types of consultancy, for example, information and technology and purchasing.

Subsidiarity

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish the 22-page document including a draft inter-institute agreement relating to the principle of subsidiarity forwarded to him by the President of the Commission of the European Communities.

The Prime Minister: The President of the Commission made a substantial presentation on subsidiarity at the Birmingham European Council, but he has not yet formally submitted a Commission paper. When the Commission submits a paper to the Council it will, of course, be published and deposited in the normal way.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 22 October.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 22 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

EMPLOYMENT

Disabled People

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current percentage of disabled people in employment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Figures covering all disabled people are not readily available; however, we do have information for disabled people of working age.

Research commissioned by the Department and published in 1990 found that 78 per cent. of people in Great Britain who were occupationally handicapped, economically active and of working age, were in work.

The labour force survey for the spring quarter of 1992 found that 80 per cent. of people in Great Britain who had a health problem or disability which limited the kind of work they could do, were economically active and were of working age, were in work.

Direct comparison between these findings is difficult, because they do not always use the same definitions, in particular the definition of disablility.

Youth Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the expenditure on youth training in the London East training and enterprise council area in 1991; and what it is in the current year.

Mr. McLoughlin: Expenditure on youth training in the London East TEC area in the period 1 April 1991 to 31 March 1992 was £10,051,191. Figures from 1 April 1992 are not yet available. The budget for expenditure for YT in the LETEC area for the current financial year is £13,056,731.

DEFENCE

Festival Sites

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the disused sites owned by his Department which might be available for free festivals following the request to his Department for suitable sites to be identified; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no plans to make available MOD sites for free festivals.

SCOTLAND

Water and Sewerage

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the replacement costs of the assets of each Scottish water authority; if he will estimate for each authority what percentage of the population are supplied with *(a)* mains water and *(b)* sewerage by that authority; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Details of the assets of each Scottish water authority are not held centrally. The percentages of population receiving public mains water and public sewerage are given in the table.

Authority	*Proportion of population receiving mains water Per cent.*	*Proportion of population receiving sewerage Per cent.*
Regional Councils		
Borders	86·4	81·5
Central	98·7	96·7
Dumfries and Galloway	89·8	85·0
Fife	98·9	98·0
Grampian	93·0	87·5
Highland	97·5	80·4
Lothian	100·0	98·0
Strathclyde	99·8	98·4
Tayside	97·1	92·9
Islands Councils		
Orkney	98·0	47·3
Shetland	99·0	65·0
Western Isles	98·0	75.0
Scotland (weighted average)	98·1	94·8

Source: The UK Water Industry—Water Services and Costs 1990/91, published by the Centre for the Study of Regulated Industries.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial provisions, and how much, he has made within his Department in order to look at the potential for deregulation of each of the regulatory measures for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Allan Stewart: All Departments within the Scottish Office have an ongoing responsibility to identify potential areas for deregulation and any Department proposing new legislation or regulations which are likely to impose a burden on business must carry out an assessment of the cost to business of compliance. No separate financial provision has been made within the operating costs of the Scottish Office departments for those purposes.

Bellwin Formula

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which local authorities claimed assistance under the Bellwin formula, following the storm damage of December 1991 and new year's day 1992; and how much was *(a)* claimed by and *(b)* paid to each authority under the scheme.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I announced the triggering of the Bellwin scheme on 10 January. On that occasion, the triggering applied to the Shetland, Orkney, and Western Isles islands council areas, and Highland and Central regions. Only Shetland islands council has submitted a claim for financial assistance this totals £83,000. Payment will be made once the council has provided some outstanding information to establish the eligibility of the expenditure incurred.

Water Industry

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the representations received regarding the future arrangements for the organisation of the water industry in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: Some 1,400 representations have been received to date.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the meetings or discussions held between his Department and *(a)* English water companies and *(b)* French water companies in the last two months.

Sir Hector Monro: One meeting has been held with an English water company, at its request, to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the consultants' report on the future of the water industry in Scotland will be published.

Sir Hector Monro: A consultation document setting out a range of options for the future structure of the water and sewerage service in Scotland will be published shortly. The consultants' report itself will not be published.

Hampden Park

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a list of tenderers for the upgrading of Hampden park;

(2) by what date tenders are to be submitted for the upgrading of Hampden park;

(3) if he will ensure that at least one independent construction company with its administrative base in Scotland is included on the list of tenderers for the upgrading of Hampden park;

(4) how much the Scottish Office has invested in the joint venture with the Scottish Football Association and the Football Trust for the upgrading of Hampden park.

Sir Hector Monro: The Government are providing £3·5 million as a cash-limited contribution towards a £12 million project being undertaken by the national stadium committee to make Hampden park all-seated, in line with Taylor report requirements. The national stadium committee, set up by Queen's Park FC, the Scottish Football Association and the Scottish Football League to respond to Scotland's national football stadium needs, is solely responsible for all matters relating to the contracts for work to make Hampden all-seated.

National Council for Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Barry Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications programme and its implementation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* The remit of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications does not extend to Scotland. The equivalent body, which is responsible for the accreditation and award of vocational qualifications in Scotland, is the Scottish Vocational Education Council.

The Scottish programme is designed to make available vocational qualifications which are broadly compatible with those being developed by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications. Scottish vocational qualifications—SVQs—embrace industry-determined standards to meet the needs of specific occupations. The target set by the Government was to have these qualifications in place for 80 per cent. of the Scottish work force by December 1992. The Scottish Vocational Education Council is well on course towards meeting this target, 288 individual SVQs having been accredited to date.

Dounreay

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has received on the cause and cost of the technical problem that resulted in the shut-down for an indefinite period of the prototype fast reactor at Dounreay; and when is it expected to re-open.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

We receive regular reports from the Atomic Energy Authority on the performance of the prototype fast reactor. It has been shut down since 29 June 1991 when a leak of oil into the primary sodium cooling circuit was discovered. The major cost has been the loss of electricity revenue. The amount involved is commercially confidential. I understand from the AEA that it hopes to restart the reactor by the end of January.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Collapsed Holiday Firms

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received seeking increased powers to deal with holiday firms which have collapsed without bonding and assistance to those people who have lost money or their holiday.

Mr. Leigh: I have had a number of such representations. I shall shortly be laying before Parliament regulations which will require all organisers of packages, including package holidays, to have security for prepayments in the event of insolvency.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many people were affected by the collapse of Land Travel.

Mr. Leigh: The exact number of people affected by the collapse of Land Travel is not known since claims are still being received by the liquidator. In the region of 40,000 claims have been submitted so far but many of these are for multiple bookings.

Nuclear Reprocessing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the implications for United Kingdom civil nuclear reprocessing at Sellafield and Dounreay of the provisions of articles 107a to 107c on the amendments concerning Euratom in the treaty on European Union (Cm 1934).

Mr. Eggar: There are none. These articles bring the Euratom treaty into line with the treaty of Rome, as amended by the treaty of European union.

Export Licences

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 6 July, *Official Report*, column *28*, if he has now received a response from *The Independent* newspaper in regard to export licences.

Mr. Needham: No.

Wave Energy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to receive the report on wave energy by Tom Thorpe commissioned by his predecessor in April 1989.

Mr. Eggar: The report on the wave energy review is in preparation, and I expect to receive a copy by the end of the year.

Radioactive Materials

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will investigate the discovery of radioactive materials on 11 October at an unlicensed site in Cranbrook, Kent, in regard to the application of safeguards to the materials.

Mr. Eggar: A small radioactive source was discovered at an address in Cranbrook, Kent on 11 October and was taken to Dungeness power station for analysis. If the substance is confirmed to be subject to safeguards legislation it will be declared to Euratom.

Municipal Mutual Insurance

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what meetings and discussions he has had concerning Municipal Mutual Insurance.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department has been in constant contact with Municipal and Mutual Insurance Limited since the company informed the Department in March 1992 that it might have failed to maintain its required minimum solvency margin.

Displays (Safety)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has concerning consultations in preparation for, or draft of, a regulation of the European Economic Community prohibiting the inclusion of artificial or real grapes in floral or similar displays, on the grounds of child or other safety considerations.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 19 October 1992]*: I am not aware of any consultations at present concerning any EC regulations prohibiting the inclusion of artificial or real grapes in the products mentioned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects to reply to the recommendations of the Third Report of the Procedure Committee, Session 1990-91 on Parliamentary Questions.

Mr. Tony Newton: I am considering the report and will reply in due course.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Monetary Co-operation

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which states at present qualify for co-operation under the terms of the declaration on monetary co-operation with non-Community countries.

Mr. Nelson: Whether or not the Community would consider that a particular country qualified for monetary co-operation is a matter for the Council of Ministers. It is therefore not possible to provide a definitive list.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to publish the Bingham report into BCCI in full.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend has concluded that the balance of public interest lies in favour of publishing not only Lord Justice Bingham's recommendations and conclusions, but the report in full.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost to the Exchequer of the Bingham inquiry into BCCI.

Mr. Nelson: The total direct costs of Lord Justice Bingham and his inquiry team to date are some £595,000. These costs are shared equally between the Treasury and the Bank of England. The overall cost to the taxpayer also includes the administration and legal costs of the Government Departments concerned. To provide an estimate of these costs would involve disproportionate cost.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many claims have been paid by the deposit protection board to former depositors with BCCI by *(a)* number and *(b)* value.

Mr. Nelson: I understand that at 19 October 1992 some 9,500 claims had been processed involving payments of some £51·7 million.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with the Governor of the Bank of England concerning the Bingham report into BCCI since he received a copy of the report.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend meets the Governor of the Bank of England frequently and they discuss a wide range of issues.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he intends to publish the Bingham report into BCCI.

Mr. Watts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he intends to publish the Bingham report on the failure of BCCI.

Mr. Nelson: The report of Lord Justice Bingham's inquiry into the supervision of BCCI has been published today, in response to an unopposed motion for the return of papers.

Bank of England

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he intends to announce the name of the next Governor of the Bank of England.

Mr. Nelson: The Governor of the Bank of England is appointed by Her Majesty the Queen on the advice of the Prime Minister. The present Governor's term of office expires on 30 June 1993. The name of the next Governor will be announced in due course.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effects on inflation of the withdrawal from the ERM.

Mr. Nelson: The easing of monetary policy which has occurred since sterling's withdrawal from the ERM is consistent with keeping downward pressure on inflation. I shall be publishing a revised forecast of prospects for inflation in the autumn statement, in the usual way.

Civil Servants

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes have been made in the rules on travel, subsistence and relocation expenses for civil servants.

Mr. Dorrell: As part of our ongoing programme for delegating to departments and agencies greater responsibility for managing personnel management policies, departments and agencies have been given the freedom to determine within defined limits their own rules and rates for subsistence and the use of private cars on official business.

The rates for subsistence will continue to reflect the principle of reimbursement of necessary additional costs. The rates for motor mileage allowance may go beyond reimbursement of motoring costs and provide an incentive for staff to use their cars on official business but only where it is cost effective for the department to do so. We will also be extending the range of measures available to departments and agencies to meet motoring costs incurred on official business by giving departments and agencies the freedom to offer eligible staff an interest free loan towards the purchase of a car needed for official business.

Such loans may be made only in circumstances where this is the most cost effective approach for departments. The package of measures for new recruits has been extended to provide for refund of relocation expenses on the same basis as existing staff, provided it is limited to shortage and hard-to-fill posts.

The use of these additional measures is at the discretion of departments and agencies, and they must be contained within existing resources.

Economic and Finance Council

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community's Economic and Finance Council.

Sir John Cope: The Economic and Finance Council of the European Community met in Luxembourg under my presidency on 19 October.

The Council discussed three issues related to the current review of the Community's future financing: overseas loan guarantees; aspects of the cohesion fund agreed at Maastricht; and the inter-institutional agreement on budgetary discipline and improvement of the budgetary procedure, between the Council, the Commission and the European Parliament. On loan guarantees, the Council agreed in principle to establish a self-standing fund, to make provision against liabilities on loans to third countries guaranteed by the Community. Payments into the fund would be set as a proportion of the value of new loans, and would be financed by a reserve in the financial perspective and the Community budget.

Of the cohesion fund the Council discussed the rules of eligibility and allocation criteria for the fund, and how the provisions of the Maastricht cohesion protocol on macroeconomic conditionality should be applied. All member states agreed that the criterion laid down in article 104c of the Maastricht treaty, on excessive budget deficits, should be the basis of the macroeconomic test; on other aspects no conclusions were reached.

The Council also had the opportunity to give first reactions to the Commission's proposal for a new inter-institutional agreement. The Council agreed that the Commission draft formed a good basis for discussion, and that the Presidency should report member states' initial reactions to the European Parliament.

The Council discussed the need for improved offers of market access for financial services from a number of countries in the GATT round and agreed that the presidency and the Commission should lobby those countries accordingly on behalf of the Community and its member states.

The call for a review of recent economic and financial events in the conclusions of the special European Council was remitted to the Committee of Central Bank Governors and the Monetary Committee for further work.

The Council agreed to the release of the remainder of Russia's share of the Community's 1·25 becu loan to the former Soviet Union for food and medical aid. The Council also adopted a balance of payments loan to Bulgaria but the first tranche will not be released until Bulgaria has reached satisfactory rescheduling agreements with its creditors in the Paris Club. A request from Poland for a structural adjustment loan was remitted to the Monetary Committee for further consideration.

The Council discussed future relations with Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia with Mr. Attali, the President of the EBRD in preparation for the presidency's meeting with those countries on 28 October. The Council also agreed in principle to continue to provide technical assistance funding from the PHARE and TACIS programmes to be administered by the EBRD.

Following the resolution of outstanding problems, the Council adopted the package of eight indirect tax proposals on the structures and rates for VAT and excise duties provisionally agreed at the 27 July meeting of Finance Ministers. This was a key objective for the United Kingdom presidency as agreement was necessary for the introduction of the single market on 1 January 1992.

The agreement includes an undertaking from the United Kingdom that we will progressively reduce the duty differential, between intermediate products (fortified wines) exceeding 15 per cent. alcohol by volume (abv) and those intermediate products up to 15 per cent. abv, to 25 per cent. by the end of 1995. The undertaking also provides for the use of the names "British Sherry", "Irish Sherry" and "Cyprus Sherry" to end by 1 January 1996. In return Spain will discontinue their present action against the United Kingdom in the European Court of Justice.

There was no substantive discussion of the 7th VAT Directive on second-hand goods, including works of art. The Commission explained why such a directive was necessary and it was agreed that the proposal should be remitted to working groups for further discussion.

Research Contracts

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the contracts the Treasury has placed with non-governmental advisory bodies on research and forecasting matters, together with information on the value of all contracts for the last 15 years.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 21 October 1992]*: Details of project expenditure from the Treasury's macroeconomic research budget for 1983-84 to 1991-92, and of planned expenditure for 1992-93 have been placed in the Library of the House. Corresponding information for the microeconomic research budget is also provided. Information could not be obtained for earlier years.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he has taken to carry out the recommendations of the Social Security Advisory Committee that the DSS reviews the procedures for young people claiming income support.

Mr. Burt: Social security administration is subject to continuous review. Procedures for young people are part of this process.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration he has given to the recommendation of the Social Security Advisory Committee in its sixth, seventh and eighth reports that the full rate of income support should be restored for young people under 25 years of age living away from home; and what was his conclusion.

Mr. Burt: We have studied these reports by the Social Security Advisory Committee. We have no plans to change the level of income support personal allowances paid to people aged under 25 years.

Children

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the latest figures showing how many *(a)* families with children and *(b)* children are living on income support.

Mr. Burt: There are 1·3 million claims which include one or more children under 16. The total number of children in families receiving income support is 2·4 million.

Source: Income support annual statistical inquiry, May 1991.

Benefits

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the Government's policy towards the updating of pensions and other benefits.

Miss Widdecombe: The House will be informed in due course.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the failure-to-claim rate in respect of social security benefits; and what savings to social security expenditure this represents.

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the latest figures for the take-up of income-related benefits.

Mr. Burt: We will publish the latest available estimates for take-up of the income-related benefits shortly.

Pensioners

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people living in residential care will not receive an increase in their pension from 5 October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The income support pensioner premiums were increased on 5 October. People living in residential care and receiving the higher income support limits do not receive premiums.

Social Fund

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes he intends to make to the social fund in light of the "Evaluating the Social Fund" report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We are carefully considering the report on the social fund by the university of York's social policy research unit. No decisions have been made about the future operation of the social fund.

HEALTH

Severe Combined Immune Deficiency Syndrome

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what grant the supra-regional services advisory group has recommended for the Newcastle general hospital in respect of severe combined immune deficiency syndrome care.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 22 June at columns *53-54*.

Diet

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, as part of her quality of service objectives, she will require the publication of all reports related to the cost of a healthy diet commissioned since 1986 using public money.

Mr. Sackville: I am not aware of any such reports which have been commissioned by central Government and are awaiting publication.

Secure Places

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will indicate the number of secure places for young people aged under 18 years in England and Wales and their percentage occupancy in 1991-92; and whether she has plans to increase the number of places within the next two years.

Mr. Yeo: On 30 September 1992 there were 290 secure places in local authority community homes in England. In addition, the youth treatment service runs two youth treatment centres providing 60 secure places.

Information about the use of local authority secure units, including numbers accommodated at the end of each month, is in the annual statistical publication "Children accommodated in secure units during the year ending 31 March". The latest available information covers the 12 months ending 31 March 1991. Copies are available in the Library.

Discussions are currently being held with a range of local authorities to determine how the additional secure accommodation which will be required to implement fully the revised juvenile remand arrangements in the Criminal Justice Act 1991 might most effectively be provided.

The information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

West Midlands Regional Health Authority

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to discuss with West Midlands regional health authority its treatment of offers of voluntary part-funding for an magnetic resonance imaging scanner at the Midland centre for neurology and neurosurgery.

Mr. Sackville: The acceptance of voluntary funding is a matter for West Midlands regional health authority.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what are the terms of reference and the time scale for the involvement of Sir Roy Griffiths in the West Midlands regional health authority; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what plans she has for an investigation into the activities of the West Midlands regional health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Sir Roy Griffiths has been asked to work with West Midlands regional health authority to help it discharge its role efficiently and effectively for the future. This work is already underway and Sir Roy will be keeping me in touch as this develops. No time scale has been set for the completion of his work and I have no plans to set up any further investigation into the activities of the West Midlands regional health authority.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the operation of the West Midlands regional health authority's computerised hospital supply system.

Dr. Mawhinney: I understand that the Audit Commission is looking into this matter and is to report to West Midlands regional health authority.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give for England the numbers of people on waiting lists on 30 September 1987 and at the end of each subsequent six-month period, for admission for *(a)* in-patient and *(b)* day case treatment and the numbers on each occasion who were categorised as (i) self-deferred, (ii) waiting under 12 months, (iii) waiting 12 to 24 months and (iv) waiting over two years.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is given in the Department of Health's statistical bulletins which are available from the Library. From March 1992, self-deferred cases are included in the total number waiting.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the reasons for the differences between the figures given for the numbers of people on waiting lists in March and September of 1988 to 1991 in her Department's statistical bulletin 2(5)92 and those given in statistical bulletin 2(8)92.

Mr. Sackville: In statistical bulletin 2(5)92 and in previous bulletins, figures for self-deferred cases were shown separately. From March 1992, self-deferred cases are included in the overall total waiting. This is consistent with the provisional figures from regional health authorities published quarterly.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish her estimates for each six-month period from April 1987 of *(a)* the numbers of people admitted from waiting lists to hospital for in-patient treatment, *(b)* the numbers of people removed from in-patient waiting lists for reasons other than treatment, *(c)* the numbers of people admitted from waiting lists for day case treatment and *(d)* the numbers of people removed from day case waiting lists for reasons other than treatment.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested, which is only available from 1988, is given in the table.

Most removals are due to health authorities validating their waiting lists. It is good management practice to validate lists regularly to ensure they include only those who need treatment. Many patients on waiting lists no longer need to be admitted for treatment because, for example, they have moved or had their treatment elsewhere. Validation leads to fewer cancelled operations and faster treatment for those who need it.

Patients waiting for admission: England

Thousands

Figures—six months period ending	*Number treated from waiting list*	*Number removed for other reasons (not admitted)*
Ordinary admissions		
1987 September	[1]—	[1]—
1988 March	924·7	69·2
September	941·4	72·1
1989 March	938·9	86·3
September	939·5	92·7
1990 March	934·2	103·0
September	910·6	101·6
1991 March	888·3	125·4
September	918·4	115·4
1992 March	938·8	157·8
Day cases		
1987 September	[1]—	[1]—
1988 March	353·3	15·9
September	359·2	18·4
1989 March	392·6	23·9
September	420·5	26·8
1990 March	454·3	31·0
September	465·6	36·4
1991 March	496·6	43·5
September	535·0	47·6
1992 March	601·3	67·3

[1] As Korner based figures were first collected in September 1987 six months flow data was not available until March 1988.

Mersey Regional Health Authority

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the visit of the Minister for Health to the Mersey regional health authority headquarters on 21 September; what subjects were discussed; and what proposals were made.

Dr. Mawhinney: I visited Mersey regional health authority headquarters on 21 September as part of my programme of visits to regions throughout the country. While in Mersey, I also visited the Countess of Chester hospital and the Liverpool drug dependency clinic. I met a cross-section of staff and discussed a range of different subjects.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the visit of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health to the Mersey region on 1 October.

Mr. Sackville: I visited Mersey region on 1 October as part of my programme of visits to regions throughout the country. I visited the regional headquarters, Mersey Regional Ambulance Service NHS Trust, Walton Centre for Neurology and Neurosurgery NHS Trust, Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital NHS Trust and Princes Park health centre. I met a cross-section of staff and discussed a range of different subjects.

Dentistry

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to publish the report of the oral health strategy group on proposed changes to dental policy; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The oral health strategy group was asked, among other things, to advise on the development of an oral health strategy for England. Work on the strategy is still being carried forward.

Home Care Services

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received urging legislation requiring the inspection of private home care services; if she has any proposals to introduce such legislation; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: A small number of representations have been received urging statutory or voluntary control of independent sector domiciliary care agencies. We have no proposals to introduce controls at present.

London Health Care

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to publish the Tomlinson report; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Soon.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drug Prevention

1. **Mr. Booth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to ensure that the drug prevention initiative fully participates in European drug prevention week.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The central drugs prevention unit and the 20 local drugs prevention teams have been actively involved in the planning of events for European drug prevention week. In co-operation with local agencies and community groups, the local teams have devised full and varied programmes. The drugs prevention initiative will make a major contribution to the international seminar and workshop to be held in London on 17 and 18 November.

16. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what commercial support has been received by his Department's drug prevention initiative.

Mr. Jack: In addition to cash donations, commercial support for the drugs prevention initiative has been given in the form of in-kind contributions of a number of specific events and projects. Between 29 October 1990, when the first local drugs prevention team began work, and 31 August 1992 the estimated total amount of quantifiable commercial support was £140,000, in cash and in kind.

Extradition

13. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek amendment to the rules on international extradition regulations, with a view to clarifying the legal position of Libyans suspected of the Lockerbie bombing.

Mr. Kenneth Clark: The legal position is not in doubt. By its resolution 748, the Security Council of the United Nations decided that the Libyan Government must surrender the accused for trial, either in Scotland or in the United States. Under the United Nations charter this obligation prevails over any other obligation which Libya might have under any other international agreement.

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy not to extradite persons to India who would be liable to capital punishment there.

Mr. Jack: It is already Government policy in all cases in which an extradited person might be subject to capital punishment to obtain a satisfactory and acceptable guarantee from the requesting state that the death penalty will not be imposed or carried out. That policy is underpinned by provisions in both the Extradition Act 1989 and the new extradition treaty with India.

Primates

14. **Mrs. Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to improve the standards set out in the code of practice for the housing and care of animals used in scientific procedures with regard to primates.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Home Office code of practice for the housing and care of animals used in scientific procedures is based on guidelines drawn up jointly by the Royal Society and the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare. We have no present plans to amend the code.

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of primates used in scientific procedures in the United Kingdom are single housed in isolation from their fellows.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We are not aware of any cases where primates used in scientific procedures are being singly housed in isolation from their fellows—that is, without any opportunity to see and hear other primates held in the same room.

Holding primates in isolation would need special scientific justification and would require specific authority on project and personal licences issued under Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of primates used in the United Kingdom in scientific procedures in each of the last five years for which figures are available were *(a)* wild caught, *(b)* captive bred outside the United Kingdom and *(c)* captive bred in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not collected on a regular basis, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Guildford and Woolwich Bombings

15. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects Sir John May to complete his inquiry into the Guildford and Woolwich bombings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Sir John May has completed his examination of the circumstances surrounding the convictions of the Maguire family and their co-defendants. I expect shortly to receive his final report on that part of his inquiry. He announced on 31 July how he intends to examine the Guildford and Woolwich case without prejudicing the impending trial of three Surrey police officers. I expect to receive his report on this next year.

Prisons (Overcrowding)

17. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to find a solution to the problem of overcrowding in prisons generally and Cardiff prison in particular.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The existing prison building programme is intended to provide sufficient places for those sent to prison. It was begun in the early 1980s and will have delivered in excess of 11,000 places when it reaches completion in 1994. I hope very much to be able to provide additional accommodation in Cardiff prison, but it is not yet possible to announce our conclusions on this matter.

Police

18. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the level of expenditure on police, excluding police salaries, over the last five years; and how much of this amount was specifically for crime prevention equipment.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Between 1986-87 and 1990-91 central and local government spent £4 billion on non-pay expenditure in the police service. No specific expenditure is allotted by the police for crime prevention equipment.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the estimated cost of overtime payments to police officers in the financial year 1991-92 in respect of the holding of prisoners in police cells in England and Wales, the Metropolitan police district, Greater Manchester and west Yorkshire, respectively.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the cost of overtime payments to police officers is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The table shows the total payments made in 1991-92. The sums paid covered police salary costs, and all other costs arising from the operation including food, medical facilities, repairs to accommodation and transport.

Payment made to police forces, 1991-92

Police force	*Total paid* £
Greater Manchester	20,522,278·17
Metropolitan	11,316,943·02
West Yorkshire	5,425,866·08
England and Wales total	94,739,978·00

Travellers

19. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received regarding new age travellers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have received several hundred letters from Members of Parliament and the public over the last few months.

Vehicle Marking

20. **Mrs. Chaplin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police forces have adopted vehicle-marking schemes.

Mr. Jack: There are now 32 vehicle watch type schemes operating in different police force areas in England and Wales.

Traffic Congestion, London

21. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will discuss with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis the problem of traffic congestion in London.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has no current plans to discuss the subject with the Commissioner.

Special Constabulary

22. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will include the special constabulary in his review of the police service.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No.

Law and Order

23. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on questions relating to law and order over the past three months.

Mr. Jack: I have received very many representations on a wide variety of issues which are covered by the term law and order from hon. Members, organisations and the public.

Frontier Controls

24. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will discuss with the European Commission the implications of article 8A of the treaty of Rome for frontier controls after 1 January 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government's views on article 8A are well known to the Commission, and vice versa. In my right hon. and learned Friend's discussion with Vice-President Bangemann, however, we have agreed to concentrate on practical measures to make it as easy as possible for EC nationals to enter and leave the United Kingdom. My right hon. and learned Friend will report to the House in due course on the outcome of these discussions.

Cheshire Police Stations

25. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have been housed in Cheshire police stations after conviction since 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information available centrally enables me to provide for each month since April 1990 a figure for the average daily total of inmates, both convicted and unconvicted, who should have been in prison but were held instead in police cells in the Cheshire force area. I will arrange for a table, setting out this information, to be placed in the *Official Report*.

On 21 October, the latest date for which information is available there were 27 prisoners in police cells in Cheshire of whom one was convicted and sentenced.

Average daily total of inmates locked out to the Cheshire Constabulary

Month	*Daily average*
April 1990 (w.e.f 9/4/90)	21
May 1 990	17
June 1990	10
July 1990	9
August 1990	9
September 1990	13
October 1990	20
November 1990	20
December 1990	20
January 1991	23
February 1991	24
March 1991	24
April 1991	28
May 1991	25
June 1991	26
July 1991	31
August 1991	33
September 1991	33
October 1991	32
November 1991	42
December 1991	36
January 1992	38
February 1992	42
March 1992	47
April 1992	47
May 1992	39
June 1992	40
July 1992	40
August 1992	41
September 1992	36

Prisons (Children)

26. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of children in prison with their mothers, their ages and the establishment in which they reside.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 8 October 1992, there were a total of 26 babies in the three prison mother and baby units. The 10 babies at Holloway were all under nine months; the seven babies at Styal were between two months and 18 months and the 11 babies at Askham Grange ranged from one month to 18 months.

Criminal Offences

27. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many criminal offences were recorded in the first six months of 1992; and what was the number for the first six months of 1979.

Mr. Jack: Information for the first six months of 1992 is not yet available, but in the 12 months to the end of March 1992, 5·4 million notifiable offences were recorded by the police. But this is not directly comparable with 2·5 million recorded notifiable offences in 1979, because of the new counting rules introduced at the beginning of 1980.

Wheel Clamping

28. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last discussed wheel clamping with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no specific discussion with the Commissioner on that subject. Officials, however, maintain regular contact with the Metropolitan police about the wheel clamping operation.

United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for the replacement of the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement outlining the proposed organisation, structure and services provided by the United Kingdom Immigration Advisory Service; and if he will ensure no final decisions are made until the House has had an opportunity to debate his proposals.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) on 8 July, at columns *202-3*.

Crime

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offences of each category of crime were committed in each of the police divisions of the South Wales constabulary in the year ending March 1992; and what percentage this represented compared to *(a)* the year ended March 1991 and *(b)* the year ended March 1990.

Mr. Jack: The information available centrally for the year ending March 1992 relates to the South Wales constabulary as a whole and is contained in the table. Information on total crime recorded in each police division for calendar years can be found in the annual report of the chief constable for South Wales.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police in the South Wales police force area

	Number of offences in year ending March 1992	*Percentage change year ending March 1992*	
		Over year ending March 1991	*Over year ending March 1992*
Violence against the person	5,180	16	15
Sexual offences	521	−1	6
Robbery	358	47	44
Burglary	37,618	27	48
Theft and handling stolen goods	82,642	7	30
Fraud and forgery	3,615	14	26
Criminal damage	33,466	13	40
Other offences	786	11	38
Total	164,186	13	35

Repatriation

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will give the number of voluntary repatriations over the past 12 months showing *(a)* how many of those who were repatriated suffered from mental illness and *(b)* to what countries they were repatriated;

(2) if he will make a statement on the legal and administrative processes involved in the decision to authorise repatriation.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Between September 1991 and October 1992 there have been 44 cases of voluntary repatriation under section 29 of the Immigration Act 1971, involving 56 individuals. None of these individuals was suffering from any form of psychiatric illness at the time of departure. Under the section 29 scheme, financial assistance is available in certain circumstances from public funds for non-British citizens settled in this country who wish to return permanently to their country of origin. This scheme is administered on behalf of the Home Office by the International Social Service of the United Kingdom, which assesses each application for assistance on its merits, according to certain conditions. If the hon. Member has any particular case in mind, he is invited to write to me and I shall send a substantive reply.

Immigration

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps have been taken to ensure that proposals and resolutions presented for adoption by the immigration Ministers of the member states of the EC meeting inter-governmentally on 30 November and 1 December are in compliance with the international obligations of the member states and Community law.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The proposals and draft resolutions do not constitute legally binding instruments and cannot override Community law or the other international obligations of member states.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what proposals or resolutions are being presented to the immigration Ministers of the member states of the EC meeting inter-governmentally on 30 November and 1 December; what is the status of such proposals; and if he will place copies in the Library;

(2) what steps have been taken to inform Parliament about the contents of proposals and resolutions which will be considered for adoption by the immigration Ministers of the member states meeting inter-governmentally on 30 November and 1 December and the extent to which such proposals or resolutions will affect United Kingdom immigration control, policy and law.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the answers which I gave to his previous questions on this matter on 19 October 1992 at columns *45-50*. Parliament will be informed in the normal way of decisions or resolutions adopted by Ministers.

Blasphemy Laws

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to reform the blasphemy laws.

Mr. Jack: We have no plans to legislate in this area.

Racial Discrimination

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whom he consulted in creating the information pack sent to judges to increase their awareness of their duty to avoid racial discrimination.

Mr. Jack: The publication "Race and the Criminal Justice System" published under section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and drawing on statistics and research findings currently available was published after consultation with the Judicial Studies Board and in particular the chairman of its ethnic minorities advisory committee.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to extend legislative protection from racial discrimination to cover religious discrimination.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In its second review of the Race Relations Act 1976 the Commission for Racial Equality has recommended that consideration be given to legislation on religious discrimination. The Government are currently giving careful consideration to all the recommendations which were put forward in the review.

Race Relations

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has made to the recommendations of the Commission for Racial Equality in the second review of the Race Relations Act 1976.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Commission for Racial Equality has put forward wide-ranging recommendations in its second review of the Race Relations Act 1976. The Government are now giving these careful consideration.

Racial Harassment

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to amend the Race Relations Act 1976 to make racial discrimination and harassment of one private household by another an offence.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* Sanctions against threatening, abusive as anti-social behaviour, which clearly could include racial harassment, are contained in several Acts of Parliament. Sections 4 and 5 of the Public Order Act 1986 may be used where appropriate.

The Government are currently giving careful consideration to the recommendations which were put forward last month by the Commission for Racial Equality in its second review of the Race Relations Act 1976.

Crime Squad Report

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has made to the report of Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary on No. 8 regional crime squad.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I was pleased to note the recent report of Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary which attested to the effectiveness of the existing No. 8 regional crime squad. However, I share the inspector's view that the region would be better served by amalgamating the No. 7 and No. 8 regional crime squads.

Animal Experiments

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will withdraw the project licence authorising the University of Glasgow's department of neurophathology to undertake research on guinea pigs.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend is required by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 to consider the scientific justification for research involving living animals, alongside any adverse effects on the animals involved. He is satisfied that the work authorised at the university of Glasgow meets this test.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the trends in the numbers of animals used in scientific procedures.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There has been a long-term downward trend in the number of experiments using animals, although there are bound to be fluctuations from year to year. For example, the 1991 statistics, published in July, showed that animal testing for cosmetics safety was down on the previous year and so was the number of experiments involving primates, but that there had been a slight increase in the total number of procedures carried out. The main reasons for the latter increase were the development of new techniques involving genetically modified material, and the clarification of rules controlling the number of times individual animals may be used in research.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what reasons underlay his decision to discontinue the listing of statistics for the LD50 and LC50 tests on live animals separately from other statistics relating to laboratory procedures on animals.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The change in the published statistics in 1990 and 1991 was for the sake of clarity, the objective being to ensure that all acute lethal toxicity tests were clearly identified, and not just the formal LD50 and LC50 tests.

Commission for Racial Equality

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to announce the name of the next chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I hope to make an announcement in the near future.

Suspects' Rights

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to ensure that the leaflet which police must give all suspects explaining their rights can be understood by the average suspect.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend recognises that some suspects have reading or learning difficulties. It is in their best interests to tell the custody officer about their problem so that he can explain their rights to them. For those who are reluctant to admit a disability, he is considering the issue of a simplified leaflet which could complement the existing notice of entitlements.

Suspects whose main language is other than English are offered a leaflet in one of the 29 languages now available.

Trial By Jury

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to restrict defendants' rights to trial by jury.

Mr. Jack: We have no current plans to restrict the existing rights of defendants to elect trial by jury.

Police Complaints Authority

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new appointment has been made to the Police Complaints Authority.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Mr. John Cartwright, the former Labour and Social Democrat Member for Woolwich, has accepted my invitation to serve as a member of the Police Complaints Authority. He will take up his post on 26 October.

British National Party

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he intends to make to the statement by police in Woolwich and Plumstead concerning the effect of the activities of the British National party on the level of racial harassment, intimidation and attacks in the area.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I am not aware of any such statement. The number of reported racial incidents in Woolwich and Plumstead is much lower this year than it was last.

Of the 103 racial incidents reported this year, only two were directly attributable to the activities of the British National party. I have every confidence in the ability and determination of the local police to respond effectively whenever any individual steps outside the law with regard to racial harassment.

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what financial provisions, and how much, he has made within his Department in order to look at the potential for deregulation of each of the regulatory measures for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No separate financial provision has been made. Identifying the potential for deregulation is an integral part of this Department's work.

Fire Services (Wales)

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangments he envisages for the organisation of fire services in Wales following the planned introduction of unitary authorities.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: These matters are still under discussion.

General Election

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average cost of the general election to public funds in constituencies in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* Great Britain; and what were the three highest and three lowest in each case.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the cost of the general election in each constituency will not be available until all returning officers' accounts have been submitted and settled. Returning officers have 12 months from the date of the general election in which to submit their claims.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the *(a)* average, *(b)* shortest and *(c)* longest period of time taken to carry out the count for constituencies in (i) England, (ii) Scotland, (iii) Wales and (iv) Great Britain at the general election in 1992.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the time taken to count the votes at parliamentary elections is not collected centrally.

Police Shootings

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the people shot dead by police officers for each year since 1979 giving the date in each case.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is set out in the table:

Year and Date	*Name*
1979—21 March	Paul Andrew Howe
1980—12 June	Gail Kinchen
1985—24 August	John Shorthouse
1987— 6 February	Denis Bergin
19 July	Nicholas Payne
19 July	Michael Flynn
22 November	Glyn Davis
23 November	Tony Ash
1989—13 April	James Farrell
	Terence Dewsnap
1990—26 April	Michael Alexander
27 November	Kenneth Baker
	Ian Garfield
1991—12 August	Gordon
12 October	Derek Wallbanks
10 December	Keith Carrott
1992— 1 January	Ian Charles Bennett
27 February	Barry Clutterham
23 June	Peter Swann

Immigration Records

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what records of passengers arriving at United Kingdom ports of entry, by category of admission, are placed on the immigration and nationality department electronic computer system—INDECS—computer; what actions are recorded about individuals; what criteria are used when considering whether passenger details should be entered on INDECS; and how many entrants to the United Kingdom have had any details entered on INDECS.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 19 October 1992]*: INDECS contains records of passengers given a limited leave to enter the United Kingdom although most people admitted for short-term purposes are not entered on the system. Details on the landing card are recorded with the expiry date of the leave to enter. Any subsequent variations to that leave, and the person's departure from the United Kingdom, are also recorded. Of the 8·1 million admissions of non-EC nationals in 1991, 1·2 million were recorded on INDECS.

Convictions (Safety)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received into the safety of the conviction of Frank Johnson; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 19 October 1992]*: My right hon. Friend is considering representations about this case received recently from the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). Representations have previously been received from Mr. Johnson, from a number of hon. Members and former hon. Members and from the National Association of Probation Officers in conjunction with the organisations Conviction and Liberty; but no grounds for intervention in the case could be found after consideration of any of these particular representations.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 23 October 1992

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drug Addiction

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the drug addicts notified to the Home Office in 1991 were resident in Wales; and how many of those in Wales were *(a)* new addicts, *(b)* under 25 years and *(c)* new addicts under 25 years.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is contained in tables A1, A3, A9 and A10 of the area tables of the Home Office statistical bulletin "Statistics of drug addicts notified to the Home Office, United Kingdom, 1991", a copy of which is in the Library.

South African Security Personnel

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will conduct an immediate investigation into the activities of South African government security personnel in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. Any such activities are subject to the normal process of law.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration was given to deporting Captain Pamela du Randt and Mr. Leon Flores under the prevention of terrorism Acts.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: None. The exclusion powers under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 may be used only in respect of people involved in terrorism connected with the affairs of Northern Ireland.

Asylum

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Sikhs have applied for political asylum since 1984; and how many have been successful.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The statistics on persons applying for asylum do not identify the ethnic origin of the applicant, but are analysed by citizenship. From January 1984 to September 1992 inclusive, some 5,900 Indian citizens, excluding dependants, applied for asylum in the United Kingdom. It is likely that the majority of these applications have been made by Sikhs. Since 1984, no applicants have been found to be genuine refugees and granted asylum, but nearly 800 of those refused asylum have been granted exceptional leave to remain.

No. 8 Regional Crime Squad

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from chief constables in Wales, police authorities in mid and south Wales and other bodies in Wales regarding the future of No. 8 regional crime squad.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend recently received a letter from Mr. Hugh Thomas, the clerk to the South Wales police authority, on behalf of the three police authorities—South Wales, Dyfed-Powys and Gwent—which make up No. 8 regional crime squad, asking whether I will receive a deputation on this subject.

Foreign Entrants

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been allowed to enter the United Kingdom from Somalia and the former Yugoslavia in the last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Provisional figures show that in the 12 months to the end of August 1992, some 3,600 nationals of Somalia and 50,800 nationals of the former state of Yugoslavia were given leave to enter at United Kingdom ports. The vast majority of these persons were visitors, students, transit passengers or passengers returning. In addition, during the same period, some 665 nationals of Somalia and 500 nationals of the former state of Yugoslavia applied for asylum at the ports and were given temporary admission.

Visas

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to curtail or abolish the right of appeal for those refused a visa to visit the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 22 October 1992]:* The Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill, introduced on 22 October, contains provisions to amend part II of the Immigration Act 1971, to remove the right of appeal against certain immigration decisions, including the refusal of a visa to come to the United Kingdom as a visitor.

Commission for Racial Equality

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he has taken on the findings of the Commission for Racial Equality that young black people, particularly in inner cities, were substantially more likely to be charged than whites for similar offences.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 22 October 1992]:* I have recently received this report and will be looking closely at its findings. The report suggests that further data are needed to establish the reasons for differences in prosecution rates, and that these data can be obtained only through permanent ethnic monitoring. The Home Secretary now has a duty under section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 to publish information on race and the criminal justice system, and the first booklet containing such information was published in September this year.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people over the past year, to date, from former states of Yugoslavia, have applied to enter the United Kingdom; how many applied *(a)* to visit, *(b)* to study, *(c)* to settle as a dependent relative, *(d)* to join a relative, *(e)* for political asylum and *(f)* for other reasons; how many applications, in each category, have (i) been granted, (ii) been refused, (iii) are still being considered, (iv) are subject to appeal, or (v) the applicant has been removed from the United Kingdom to return to country of origin.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 19 October 1992]*: The available information relates to nationals of the former states of Yugoslavia admitted or refused at United Kingdom ports, and is given in the table.

Nationals of the former states of Yugoslavia

	January to August 1992[1]
Total admissions (*ie*, persons given leave to enter	33,200
Of whom:	
visitors	21,900
students	1,680
spouses, fiance(e)s, children	50
others[2]	9,540
Persons refused leave to enter and removed[3]	429
Persons applying for asylum at United Kingdom ports[4][5]	930

Notes:

[1] Figures are provisional.

[2] Mainly passengers returning and transit passengers.

[3] The majority of those refused and removed were seeking entry as a visitor or student. No asylum seekers have been returned to Yugoslavia; 43 have been removed to safe third countries.

[4] Covers period January to September 1992.

[5] Such persons are given temporary admission while their application is being considered. Nearly all of these persons are still awaiting a decision. The figure excludes dependants.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Tenancies

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what stage has been reached in the discussions with the industry on the reform of agricultural tenancy legislation; and when he will lay new legislation before the House.

Mr. Gummer: The consultations that I announced to the House on 12 February 1991, *Official Report*, column *391*, have led to a wide measure of agreement within the industry on the principle of reform of the legislation. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I remain convinced that new simpler and leaner legislation is needed to enable farmers and landowners to adapt to changing conditions in agriculture and the economy of the countryside. We have refined our proposals in the light of the consultations and we intend to complete discussions on the outstanding points by the end of the year with a view to introducing legislation as soon as parliamentary time becomes available.

EDUCATION

School Meals

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a table showing the latest figures on the take-up of school meals broken down into *(a)* all schools meals, *(b)* free school meals and *(c)* paid school meals, for (i) primary school children and (ii) secondary school children separately.

Mr. Forth: Provisional information about school meals take up in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England in January 1992 is shown in the table.

(Thousands)

	Paid	*Free*	*Total*
Primary (including nursery)	1,139	681	1,820
Secondary	866	294	1,160

University Technicians

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to ensure consistency in the application of new pay structures for university technicians in different parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Forman: The pay of university technicians, and the consistency of applications of any new pay structure, is entirely a matter for their employers. The Government have no intention of becoming involved in the negotiating arrangements.

Further Education

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many full-time 16 to 18-year-old students in England and Wales fail to complete A-level courses.

Mr. Forman: This information is not available in the form requested.

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many 16 to 18-year-olds stay in full-time education; what proportion takes *(a)* A-levels, *(b)* vocational courses and *(c)* other courses; and what are the corresponding figures five years ago.

Mr. Forman: The information requested is given in the table for young people aged 16 and 17 at 31 August at the start of each academic year:

	1986-87	*1991-92*[1]
Total aged 16 and 17 in full-time education	571,000	677,000
A/AS level—per cent.	54	57
Vocational courses—per cent.	22	25
Other courses[2]—per cent.	24	19

[1] Percentages do not add to 100 because of rounding.

[2] Includes GCSE, courses leading to no explicit qualification and college certificates and diplomas.

Education Reform

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received about the schools' reorganisation proposals published in October 1991 and January 1992 by the Roman Catholic diocese of Arundel and the Brighton Schools Commission; and when he now expects to announce his decision on these proposals.

Mr. Forth: A substantial number of written objections to the proposals have been received and I have also listened to arguments put forward by deputations led by a number of my right hon. and hon. Friends.

The proposals are complex and wide ranging but I hope that our decision can be announced very shortly.

WALES

Environment Wales

• **Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what organisations have been supported by his Environment Wales grant scheme; and what criteria he adopts in awarding grants.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The following organisations have been supported by Environment Wales:

Association of Welsh Wildlife Trusts
Amelia Trust Farm
Brecknock Wildlife Trust
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
Cardiff City Farm
Centre for Alternative Technology
Community Service Volunteers
Field Studies Council
Flat Holm Society
Friends of the Earth
Friends of Forest Farm and the Glamorgan Canal
Greenfield Valley Heritage Trust
Groundwork
Gwent Wildlife Trust
Harvest Trust
Keep Wales Tidy Campaign
Montgomery Wildlife Trust
National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners
National Trust
North Wales Wildlife Trust
Offa's Dyke Association
Open Spaces Society
Pengwern Hall
Pentre Ifan Environmental Centre (Urdd Gobaith Cymru)
Presteigne Recyling Scheme
Prince of Wales Committee
Prince of Wales Committee—Environmental Education Group
Rambler's Association
Royal Society for Nature Conservation
South Glamorgan Play Resource Centre
Track 2000
Treescene
Wales Wildlife and Countryside Link
Welsh Historic Gardens Trust
West Wales Energy Group
Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

The policy for awarding grants under the initiative is outlined in the Environment Wales policy statement, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Environmentally Friendly Farming

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on progress made with the Tir Cymen scheme for environmental friendly farming in Wales; and what resources have been committed to the scheme to date.

Mr. David Hunt: The Tir Cymen scheme was launched on 21 July 1992. The application period for entry to the scheme in 1992 ends on 30 October.

The resources committed to the scheme are £500,000 in 1992-93.

Special Protection Areas

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what additional resources have been committed to establish the five new special protection areas to which reference is made in chapter 18, paragraph 18.5 of "Britain's Environmental Strategy", Cm 2068.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Department has allocated no additional resources specifically related to the designation of the five special protection areas in question.

Singleton Hospital

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations resulted from the consultation on the proposed trust status for Singleton hospital; and how many of these supported the proposal and how many opposed it.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A total of 90 representations have been received in response to the public consultation on the application from the west unit, West Glamorgan health authority to become an NHS trust in April 1993. Where a clear view was expressed, 19 supported the proposal for trust status and with 49 did not.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Action

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give for the most recent date for which figures are available the number of employment action places proposed and filled for each region and for Great Britain.

Mr. McLoughlin: Employment action plans to help 60,000 people in Britain in 1992-93. Figures for planned places are not available by region. Information from the Employment Service indicates that as at 10 September the number of employment action participants was as follows:

ES Region	*Participants*
Northern	1,658
North-west	3,644
Yorkshire and Humberside	2,945
West Midlands	2,250
East Midlands	2,600
London and south-east	6,251
South-west	1,908
Scotland	2,741
Wales	1,790
Great Britain	25,787

Source:—Employment Service benefit-related payment system

PRIME MINISTER

Sir Peter Kemp

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister what were the reasons for Sir Peter Kemp's departure as Permanent Secretary at the Office of Public Service and Science.

The Prime Minister: When Sir Peter Kemp was appointed Second Permanent Secretary in 1988, the main responsibility of his post was to lead the "next steps" project, which he did with distinction. The formation of the Office of Public Service and Science after the general election created a new department with wider responsibilities, demanding different qualities in the Permanent Secretary. Since no suitable alternative post was available at Permanent Secretary level, the Head of the Civil Service decided to ask Sir Peter to take early retirement on the favourable terms available in those circumstances.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will make a statement on the details and grounds of enhancement on pension and other departure terms afforded to Sir Peter Kemp, following his departure as Permanent Secretary at the Office of Public Service and Science;

(2) how many years' service Sir Peter Kemp had left, before normal retirement age, prior to his departure as Permanent Secretary at the Office of Public Service and Science.

The Prime Minister: Sir Peter Kemp was asked to take early retirement, with effect from 14 September 1992, from his post as Second Permanent Secretary of the Office of Public Service and Science.

The terms under which he left were those appropriate to a compulsory early retirement as set out in the civil service pay and conditions of service code. He received six months' pay in lieu of notice and a lump sum compensation payment; he will also receive payment of his pension and lump sum enhanced by two years and 25 days —the period between his date of leaving the service and the normal retirement age of 60.

Fort Victoria

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister what completion date was given by *(a)* Swan Hunter and *(b)* Harland and Wolff, in bidding for the contract to construct the Royal Navy supertanker Fort Victoria; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The original acceptance date for Fort Victoria based on Harland and Wolff's tender was January 1990. The date offered by Swan Hunter Shipbuilders was later that year.

Thames Path

Ms. Walley: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has received concerning the facilitating of the Thames path along the Albert embankment; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Two—from Lambeth council and the Ramblers Association, in relation to part of the proposed Thames path to which the public do not enjoy access at present.

London Police Forces

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the non-Home Office police forces operating within Greater London, and their responsible Minister.

The Prime Minister: A full list of all such organisations operating within Greater London is not held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. The forces concerned range from large organisations such as the British Transport police, the Ministry of Defence police and the Royal Parks constabulary to small groups of constables sworn in by local authorities for specific areas or undertakings. Responsibility for non-Home Office forces rests with the appropriate Government Minister, Department, local authority or the private company concerned.

EC Budget

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy not to agree to an increase in the United Kingdom contribution to the EC budget under the treaty on European union.

The Prime Minister: The draft treaty on European union does not of itself provide for an increase in the European Community budget. In the review of Community future financing now in progress, the Commission has proposed significant increases in Community expenditure and in the own resources ceiling. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has indicated, these increases are not acceptable.

European Union

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will invite Lord Mackenzie Stuart, the retired President of the EC Court of Justice, to discuss with him the effect of article 3b of the treaty on European union.

The Prime Minister: No. As I told the hon. Gentleman on 20 October, *Official Report,* column 326, I share the Lord Chancellor's view that subsidiarity is a principle enforceable by the European Court of Justice.

Government Policy

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister within what period it is his policy to achieve *(a)* full employment and *(b)* a sustainable rate of growth.

The Prime Minister: The Government's policies are designed to achieve sustained non-inflationary growth. This is the best means of promoting sustainable, long-term growth in employment.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on his plans to return to member states some of the power which the EC institutions at present exercise over them; and if he will list the provisions of the Maastricht treaty which he will use for this purpose.

The Prime Minister: The Community exercises only those powers conferred on it by the Community treaties, signed and ratified by all member states. The principle of subsidiarity, as expressed in article 3b of the Maastricht treaty, is designed to ensure that the Community does not go beyond those powers, and that where the treaty allows a choice between Community level action and action at the level of the member state there will be presumption in favour of the latter.

Death Row, Jamaica

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Prime Minister if he will protest to the Prime Minister of Jamaica about the number of Jamaicans held on death row for long periods.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 22 October 1992]*: We have told the Jamaican Government of our concern about the prisoners on death row. I understand the legislation on the death penalty is at present before the Jamaican parliament.

Next Steps Agencies

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the next steps agencies established by this Government since 1979.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 22 October 1992]*: The information requested is set out.

Next Steps—executive agencies established since 1979

Agency	*Launch date*
Accounts Services Agency	1 October 1991
ADAS Agency	1 April 1992
Building Research Establishment	2 April 1990
Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments)	2 April 1991
Central office of Information	5 April 1990
Central Science Laboratory	1 April 1992
Central Statistical Office	19 November 1991
Central Veterinary Laboratory	2 April 1990
Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment	2 April 1991
Civil Service College	6 June 1989
Companies House	3 October 1988
Compensation Agency	1 April 1992
Customs and Excise (30 Executive Units)	1 April 1991
Defence Analytical Services Agency	1 July 1992
Defence Operational Analysis Centre	1 July 1992
Defence Postal and Courier Services	1 July 1992
Defence Research Agency	2 April 1991
Directorate General of Defence Accounts	1 April 1991
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency	2 April 1990
Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency	1 April 1992
Driving Standards Agency	2 April 1990
Duke of York's Royal Military School	1 April 1992
DVOIT	1 April 1992
Employment Service	2 April 1990
Fire Service College	1 April 1992
Forensic Science Service	1 April 1991
Historic Royal Palaces	1 October 1989
Historic Scotland	2 April 1991
HMSO	14 December 1988
Hydrographic Office	6 April 1990
Inland Revenue (34 Executive Offices)	1 April 1992
Insolvency Service	21 March 1990
Intervention Board	2 April 1990
Laboratory of the Government Chemist	30 October 1989
Land Registry	2 July 1990
Medicines Control Agency	11 July 1991
Meteorological Office	2 April 1990
Military Survey	2 April 1991
National Engineering Laboratory	5 October 1990
National Physical Laboratory	3 July 1990
National Weights and Measures Laboratory	18 April 1989
Natural Resources Institute	2 April 1990
Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation	1 April 1992
NHS Estates	1 April 1991
Occupational Health Service	2 April 1990
Ordnance Survey	1 May 1990
Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland	1 April 1992
Patent Office	1 March 1990
Planning Inspectorate	1 April 1992
Public Record Office	1 April 1992
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre	6 July 1989
Queen Victoria School	1 April 1992
Radiocommunications Agency	2 April 1990
RAF Maintenance	2 April 1991
Rate Collection Agency	1 April 1992
Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency	2 April 1991
Registers of Scotland	6 April 1990
Royal Mint	2 April 1990
Scottish Agricultural Science Agency	1 April 1992
Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency	12 April 1991
Service Children's Schools (North West Europe)	24 April 1991
Social Security Agency (NI)	1 April 1992
Social Security Benefits Agency	2 April 1991
Social Security Contributions Agency	2 April 1991
Social Security Information Technology Services Agency	2 April 1990
Social Security Resettlement Agency	24 May 1989
Teachers' Pensions Agency	1 April 1992
The Buying Agency	31 October 1991
Training & Employment Agency (NI)	2 April 1990
Transport Research Laboratory	2 April 1992
United Kingdom Passport Agency	2 April 1991
Valuation Office	30 September 1991
Vehicle Certification Agency	2 April 1990
Vehicle Inspectorate	1 August 1988
Veterinary Medicines Directorate	2 April 1990
Warren Spring Laboratory	20 April 1989
Wilton Park Conference Centre	1 September 1991

NATIONAL FINANCE

Currency Speculators

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he will be making to the EC to curb the activities of speculators in the currency market.

Mr. Nelson: I have no plans to propose controls aimed at curbing the activities of speculators in the currency market.

VAT

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will reduce value added tax to 15 per cent.

Sir John Cope: No. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has no plans to do so.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to ensure that day care and domiciliary care services provided under contract to statutory bodies are not liable to value added tax charges.

Sir John Cope: No. My right [illegible] Friend has no plans to extend the current relevant exemption which is for supplies of welfare services if they are supplied by a charity or public body otherwise than for profit.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if any officials from the Bank of England supervision department have been suspended pending investigations by the Serious Fraud Office into allegations of bribery in relation to the BCCI affair.

Mr. Nelson: The allegations have, at the request of the Bank of England, been investigated by the Serious Fraud Office which announced on 20 October that its investigations had revealed no evidence to substantiate any of the claims made.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he has given to Senator John Kerry's report into the supervision of BCCI; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 22 October 1992]*: My right hon. Friend has seen Senator John Kerry's subcommittee's report of its investigation of BCCI, which goes a good way beyond the supervision of the bank. He notes, that unlike Lord Justice Bingham, Senator Kerry's sub-committee had no access to the Bank of England's documents, took no evidence from the bank or BCCI's auditors, and failed to check any conclusions or findings with either of them.

Revenue Implications

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the revenue lost from *(a)* income tax, *(b)* value-added tax and *(c)* other revenues to the Exchequer for a reduction in employment of 20,000 employees, for a range of different assumptions of average income of such employees.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 22 October 1992]:* The effect of job losses on tax revenues will depend on a large number of factors in addition to the level of income of the employees affected and cannot therefore reliably be calculated.

Invalidity Benefit

Ms. Liz Lynne : To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans there are for the taxation of invalidity benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 22 October 1992]:* I would refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on 19 October, *Official Report*, column *190*.

HEALTH

Bail Hostels

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the operation of catering, sanitary and medical facilities, and so on at bail hostels are subject to the normal inspection of health and safety officers.

Mr. Sackville: Local authorities are responsible for normal inspection of hostels including sanitation facilities, and catering facilities where food is provided to bail hostel residents rather than self catering.

Health and Safety Executive inspectors are responsible for enforcing provisions on the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 at bail hostels. These premises are subject to the same considerations as others for which HSE has enforcement responsibility and may be visited for a variety of purposes, including planned inspection and the investigation of incidents and complaints.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many women in the national health service have agreed to their names being put on a confidential list to be used by her Department to assist NHS managers in a drive to get more women into top positions; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: A total of 973 women have requested that their names be placed on the NHS women's national career development register.

This programme is an innovation, not just for the NHS but for other public and private sector employers. In this respect the NHS is leading the field in women's employment and development by providing a programme of positive action and career development at this level of the organisation.

Creuzfeld-Jakob Disease

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of possible, probable and confirmed *(a)* new cases of and *(b)* deaths from Creuzfeld-Jakob disease in each year since 1986.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) on 23 June at columns *155-56*.

National Incontinence Helpline

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she has made a section 64 grant for the current year to the national incontinence helpline operated by the Newcastle Dene centre; and what similar grants were given in previous years.

Mr. Yeo: A section 64 grant has not been paid to the Dene centre incontinence helpline for 1992-93. Previously £20,000 was awarded over two years from 1988-89. This service has now been secured with the help of the Continence Foundation, which also receives our financial support.

Dentists

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the number of dentists in the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale health authority withdrawing national health service treatment from their existing patients; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Since 3 July 1992, the Lancashire family health services authority, which covers Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale, has not reported any dentists asking for their names to be removed from the family health services authority list. Over the same period, nine dentists in the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale area have notified the family health services authority of their intention to remove 68 adult patients and one child from their patient lists. I am informed by Lancashire family health services authority that there are no patients who have contacted it for assistance in obtaining national health service dental treatment for whom such treatment could not be arranged.

Supra-regional Services

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make available a summary of the funding and levels of activity agreed for 1992-93 with centres designated to provide supra-regional services.

Mr. Sackville: A summary of this information has been placed in the Library as an addendum to the document "Supra regional services 1992-93: announcement by the Secretary of State for Health".

Learning Disabilities

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she proposes to issue guidance on the development of services for people with learning disabilities.

Mr. Yeo: I will be issuing guidance on 26 October to health and local authorities on the development of services to meet the health and social care needs of people with learning disabilities. Copies will be placed in the Library.

Students (Health Care)

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what criteria are used to decide whether a full-time student is eligible to receive full financial assistance with dental and other national health service charges;

(2) if it is Government policy to include a national student loan in their calculations concerning full financial assistance to full-time students for health care.

Dr. Mawhinney: Dental treatment and other national health service services are provided free to patients, including full-time students in higher education, who are eligible for charge exemption on grounds of health or status, or who qualify for full charge remission under the national health service low income scheme. Full or partial help from this scheme is income related taking account of all resources available to individual patients, including student loans.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensions

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what the retirement pension for a single person and a couple would be in April 1993 if it had continued to be uprated with earnings or prices, whichever was the higher, since the link was broken.

Miss Widdecombe: Figures for April 1993 are not yet available. The current—April 1992—rates of basic retirement pension would be £71 for a single person and £113·65 for a couple. This would cost a man on average earnings and his employer an extra £11·20 per week between them in national insurance contributions.

Note:

There are no "single" or "couple" rates of Retirement Pension. The standard pension is calculated on the basis of individual contribution records or, in the case of some married women, on the basis of their husbands' contributions. Adult dependency additions may be awarded where the wife of a pensioner is under pension age. The rates quoted are those which would be payable *(a)* on the basis of a person's own contributions (assuming the contribution conditions were fully satisfied) and *(b)* the total of *(a)* plus a pension based on a husband's contributions or an adult dependency increase.

Therapeutic Earnings

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the rules surrounding the treatment of therapeutic earnings in *(a)* the income support regulations and *(b)* the housing benefit regulations; and what discretion is available to DSS officers and housing benefit officers, respectively, when assessing income from therapeutic earnings.

Mr. Burt: Neither income support nor housing benefit has specific rules about therapeutic earnings.

In income support, both disabled and able-bodied people may work part time—under 16 hours a week—and £5 or £15 a week of their earnings will be disregarded. In the case of a person who is entitled to, or has an underlying entitlement to, the disability premium, the higher, £15, disregard applies.

In addition, certain disabled people—those whose earning capacity is reduced to 75 per cent. or less of what it would be but for their disability, and people in residential care—can work for more than 16 hours a week and still be entitled to claim income support.

Unlike income support, housing benefit is payable irrespective of the number of hours worked. In housing benefit, a person who is entitled to, or has an underlying entitlement to, a disability premium will similarly receive the £15 earnings disregard. Otherwise, the amount of earnings disregarded will generally be £10 in the case of a couple, or £5 in the case of a single person.

Benefits

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many women were in receipt of the housewives non-contributory invalidity pension; how many men were in receipt of the non-contributory invalidity pension from the date of their introduction until 1983; and how many people were in receipt of severe disablement allowance broken down into men and women since 1983.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is given in the tables.

Table 1

Non-contributory invalidity pension (NCIP) and housewives non-contributory invalidity pension (HNCIP) beneficiaries (in 1000s)

Date	NICP Beneficiaries (Male)	HNCIP Beneficiaries (Female)
4 June 1977	55	n/a[1]
3 June 1978	57	40
2 June 1979	61	43
31 May 1980	63	45
30 May 1981	69	49
29 May 1982	75	49
2 April 1983	79	49

Table 2

Severe disablement allowance beneficiaries (in 1000s)

Date	Male	Female	Total
30 March 1985[2]	100	152	252
5 April 1986	103	158	261
4 April 1987	102	158	260
2 April 1988	103	160	263
1 April 1989	109	166	275
31 March 1990	112	172	285
30 March 1991	116	178	293

[1] Figures not available for 1977. HNCIP was introduced on 17 November 1977.

[2] Figures not available for 1983. SDA was introduced on 29 November 1984.

Figures for 1991-92 not yet available.

Numbers rounded to nearest thousand.

The total number of beneficiaries is shown at a point in time for each year from the introduction of the benefit. Beneficiaries in each year are not necessarily the same people.

National Insurance Benefits

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Ainsworth), of 6 July, *Official*

Report, columns *85-86*, if he will make an estimate of the cumulative spending and savings made on the various national insurance benefits since 1979.

Miss Widdecombe: Reliable estimates are not possible because there have been significant changes in the number and characteristics of beneficiaries, and in general economic circumstances, since the measures were introduced.

Earnings Statistics

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures based on the households below average income statistics which show the numbers and proportions of people living below 50 per cent. of average income before and after housing costs in each region of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Burt: A reliable regional breakdown of the numbers and proportions living below half average income could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Statistics for the United Kingdom as a whole are available in "Households Below Average Income", copies of which are available in the Library.

TRANSPORT

British Rail Stations

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment has been made by his Department of the number of stations on the British Rail network that can be safely operated without staff during hours when the stations are open.

Mr. Freeman: Staffing levels are a matter for British Rail and it is for BR to assess, on a station-by-station basis, which stations can be operated without staff. Before reaching a decision to operate a station without staff BR takes full account of any possible implications for safety. A code of practice for unstaffed stations has also been agreed between BR and the Central Transport Consultative Committee, which provides for prior consultation between BR and the relevant area committee before a station is destaffed.

Bridges (Corrosion)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the locations of *(a)* the motorways and *(b)* the trunk roads on which his Department is inspecting bridges with tensioned steel reinforcing that may be suffering from corrosion from de-icing.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: All bridges and other structures on the truck road and motorway network in England are inspected at least once every two years. In addition to these regular inspections, each of the post tensioned structures on the network, of which there are approximately 600, will be given a special, more detailed inspection in the course of the next five years.

Pit Closures

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evaluation he has made of the employment implications for road haulage and rail freight of Her Majesty's Government's decision to contract the coal mining industry with pit closures.

Mr. Freeman: The demand for haulage of coal by road and rail depends on the amounts, types and sources of coal required by power generators and other users. It is for British Rail to assess the impact of changes in the scale and pattern of demand on its operations and staff requirements. No comparable assessment can be made for the road haulage industry because of the great number of flows and operators concerned.

Trunk Roads

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidance is given by his Department to local planning authorities about planning applications for the creation of accesses from trunk roads.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Circular Roads 4/88 "The Control of Development on Trunk Roads", dated November 1988, to chief executives of local authorities sets out the policy and principles which guide the Department in exercising its powers under the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988 and in offering views on planning applications. The guidance covers creation of accesses.

The circular is also widely available to developers along with Circular Roads 6/91, "Development in the Vicinity of Trunk Roads, Agreements under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980", dated October 1991. Copies of both circulars are in the Library.

New proposals for developers' contributions to highway works were announced on 14 August and are currently the subject of public consultation.

Jubilee Line

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the expenditure which has been incurred to date *(a)* on planning and design work, *(b)* on preliminary works currently being undertaken in the vicinity of Westminster station and *(c)* on other preliminary works which have been undertaken to date, in preparation for the extension of the Jubilee line to Stratford.

Mr. Norris: To 10 October 1992, expenditure of *(a)* some £79 million has been incurred on planning and design; *(b)* some £2 million on the preliminary works at Westminster station; and *(c)* some £62 million on other preliminary works, in preparation for the extension of the Jubilee line to Stratford.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be able to approve the construction of the Jubilee line extension.

Mr. Norris: Talks are continuing on the promised £400 million contribution from the private sector. I cannot speculate on the future of the Jubilee line extension in advance of the conclusion of those talks.

North Circular Road

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received concerning access to side roads from the north circular road.

Mr. Norris: A large number of representations concerning access to side roads from the north circular road are currently being considered by the Department in relation to proposed major road improvements.

ACCOMMODATION AND WORKS COMMITTEE

Old Palace Yard

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee (1) what sum has been expended on the refurbishment on 6-7 Old Palace Yard since 9 April;

(2) what is the present cost of the refurbishment and alterations at 6-7 Old Palace Yard.

Mr. Ray Powell: The expenditure on refurbishment of 6-7 Old Palace Yard since 9 April 1992 was £4,700. In addition £7,200 was spent on replacement furniture and essential routine maintenance continued as necessary.

As a consequence of the transfer of the buildings to the other place, the cost of any future conservation and restoration will be the responsibility of that House.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what is the estimated cost of refurbishment and alteration to the premises at 7 Millbank to receive the secretaries who presently work at Old Palace Yard.

Mr. Ray Powell: As plans for the refurbishment of relevant accommodation at 7 Millbank have not yet been finalised, it is not possible to provide this information.

Palace of Westminster

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what sums were spent on the Palace of Westminster and its associated offices during the summer vacation.

Mr. Ray Powell: The cost of the 1992 summer works programme in the Palace of Westminster and its associated buildings was some £5 million.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Works of Art (Export)

Mr. Spring: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when the report of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art, 1991-92, will be published.

Mr. Brooke: The reviewing committee's annual report, 1991-92, has been published today, and copies have been laid in the Libraries of both Houses.

Listed Buildings

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to increase the funds available to local authorities for the maintenance of listed buildings owned by themselves; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will be announcing details of the local government finance settlement in November, which will take into account the pressures falling on local authority expenditure in 1993-94.

Listed Buildings, Buxton

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the current position in respect of the listed crescent in Buxton, Derbyshire which his Department has ordered should be repaired or face compulsory purchase; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Following the visit of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to Buxton in September, there have been discussions between English Heritage and the owners of the former St. Ann's hotel. But the owners have not so far put forward convincing plans for carrying out restoration work to an acceptable timetable. Work is therefore in hand on the preparation of a repairs notice under section 48 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

On 19 October, I met a delegation from Buxton who handed me a petition signed by many local residents. I assured them of my determination to see the crescent restored.

ENVIRONMENT

Tenanted Houses (Transfers)

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the consultation paper on the future arrangement for the voluntary transfer of tenanted houses from local authorities to other landlords.

Mr. Baldry: Soon.

British Coal Opencast

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the procedures whereby British Coal Opencast is given preferential treatment over other mineral operators, and bring British Coal into line with other operators; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Yes. We are bringing British Coal's permitted development rights for opencast exploration into line with those available to other mineral operators by amendment to the General Development Order. Other matters are under review.

Roads (Planning)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement clarifying the role of an inspector when presiding over an appeal against a decision by a local planning authority to refuse permission for the construction of an access from a trunk road to a side road in those cases where the authority concerned had been directed by the Department of Transport to refuse such an application.

Mr. Baldry: The role of a planning inspector in such circumstances is to visit the site, review all the material considerations made in writing or in person at the public inquiry and produce a report with recommendations on whether the appeal may be allowed, subject to conditions, or dismissed. It is then for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to decide the appeal in the light of that report.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance about the impact upon businesses is given by his Department to local planning authorities when considering applications to retain accesses to side roads from trunk roads.

Mr. Baldry: The Department's planning policy guidance note 13 gives advice on highways considerations in development control, including the question of access to primary routes. I am sending my hon. Friend a copy of that note.

Homelessness

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 19 October, to the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson), *Official Report*, column *215*, what plans he has to amend homelessness legislation to end the alleged practices of women becoming pregnant in order to obtain council house tenancies.

Mr. Baldry: The Government have no immediate plans for further legislative change, although the operation of the homelessness legislation is monitored closely.

Drinking Water Inspectorate

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if it remains his policy to transfer the drinking water inspectorate to the proposed environmental protection agency.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. and learned Friend on 15 July 1992 to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones), *Official Report*, column *858*.

Tarmac plc

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he is making to protect the security of defence establishment and royal palace records following the transfer of PSA Projects to Tarmac plc; and whether Tarmac employees will receive any security vetting.

Mr. Howard: Records on work completed by PSA Projects have been archived within government and will not be transferred with PSA Project Ltd. on sale to Tarmac plc. Classified records for current projects will be loaned to PSA Projects Ltd. but will be returned to Government once work is completed. Government Departments will continue to be responsible for security arrangements on their establishments and the same procedures will be followed in the future as has been followed in the past. The private sector, including Tarmac Construction Ltd., has worked on Government defence contacts for many years and is aware of the rules governing the control and access for classified documents. In general, existing PSA Projects staff will continue to work on the projects on which they are currently engaged. Security vetting of any new employees of PSA Projects Ltd. will be organised as necessary after completion of the sale. PSA Projects does not hold records on royal palaces.

Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what performance targets he has set for the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre executive agency for 1992-93.

Mr. Baldry: The key performance measure for the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre is the net balance on its operating account. The target for 1992-93 is an operating deficit of £1·49 million.

The centre has also projected room occupancy levels for the year of 1,242 days usage and revenue from catering commission and presentational facilities, expressed as a percentage of room hire, of 15 per cent. and 18 per cent. The centre will be expected to meet or better these projections.

Merseyside Development Corporation

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the exit plan of the Merseyside development corporation will include the transfer of land and assets to community development trusts; and whether the Merseyside development corporation will be allowed to negotiate during the current period of the transfer of land and assets to community development trusts.

Mr. Robin Squire: The exit plans of Merseyside development corporation will, at the appropriate time, consider all options and assets will be transferred to the appropriate body. MDC is encouraged to dispose of land and assets throughout its lifetime, but is required to obtain market value in relation to the use proposed.

Vehicle Pollution

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will meet with the Institution of Environmental Health Officers and the National Society for Clean Air to discuss an effective framework for vehicle nuisance control that would include noise, smoke and gaseous pollution detection from road vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: As the matter falls within the remit of the Secretary of State for Transport, I have been asked to reply.

Provisions for enhanced emission testing and control at annual testing and spot checks have already been implemented for petrol-powered cars and diesel-powered heavy vehicles as part of an already comprehensive and established framework for curbing nuisance from noise and emissions from vehicles in use. The provisions for emission control will be expanded to remaining diesel-powered cars and light vehicles from 1 January 1993, with further reductions planned in line with our obligations under the European Community roadworthiness directive, 92/55/EEC. Noise controls also form an integral part of current and planned future action, backed by appropriate research at the Transport Research Laboratory, to improve enforcement of this particularly intrusive nuisance. All interested parties, including EHOs and the NSCA, will be fully consulted prior to making new regulations.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Euthanasia

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if, following the conviction of Dr. Cox for attempted murder, he will carry out a review of the law regarding euthanasia.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

The Government have no plans to carry out a review of the law in this area.

DEFENCE

Vacant Property, Northern Ireland

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many units of personnel accommodation are vacant awaiting sale, vacant for letting and vacant awaiting repair in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 30 September 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 32 MOD-owned service married quarters vacant awaiting sale, 179 vacant for letting to entitled service personnel and 108 vacant awaiting works in Northern Ireland. This excludes barrack and mess accommodation.

Nuclear Testing

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how his Department plans to maintain the safety of the United Kingdom's nuclear warheads following the withdrawal of underground nuclear testing facilities in September 1996.

Mr. Aitken: If testing ends in 1996, we shall have to rely on alternative methods to ensure the safety of our weapons. Alternative technologies exist, but are not at present an adequate substitute for underground testing. Their development is a matter which we will now be considering.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the circumstances under which the United Kingdom would continue underground nuclear testing after September 1996.

Mr. Aitken: Assuming the current United States legislation is not amended, the prohibition on testing at Nevada will be lifted if another country tests after September 1996.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies his Department is undertaking regarding the testing of nuclear weapons without resort to underground nuclear testing.

Mr. Aitken: We have been involved with work on alternative technologies for proving nuclear warheads for many years. However, they are not at present an adequate substitute for underground testing.

US Energy Appropriation Laws

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications of the United States energy appropriation legislation for *(a)* the United Kingdom's Trident warhead programme, *(b)* the WE177 replacement programme and *(c)* the ability of the United Kingdom to develop new nuclear warheads.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no implications for the Trident warhead programme, the tests for which have been completed. No decision has been taken on WE177 replacement, but development of a suitable warhead could be completed even assuming that we are unable to test beyond 1996. It remains our view that a minimum programme of testing is the best means of ensuring the continuing safety and credibility of our deterrent.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

East Timor

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Comonwealth Affairs if the Government will exert their influence in the European Community and the United Nations Security Council to urge the imposition of concerted trade sanctions against Indonesia until such time as a United Nations monitored referendum for independence is held in East Timor.

Mr. Goodlad: The Government do not believe that the imposition of trade sanctions against Indonesia would be an appropriate or effective way of promoting a solution to the East Timor question.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Comonwealth Affairs what measures Her Majesty's Government have taken as current President of the European Community to advance Portugal's legal and political efforts to address the political and human rights situation in East Timor.

Mr. Goodlad: As current President of the Community, the United Kingdom has made representations and taken action with the Indonesians on the situation in East Timor on the basis of agreed Community views and policies. We have made clear continuing Community concerns about the human rights situation in East Timor and about disparity in the sentencing of those involved in last year's Dili incident. We have welcomed the recent resumption of a dialogue between Portugal and Indonesia, under the United Nations Secretary-General's auspices, about East Timor.

Nuclear Materials

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to raise the problems of clandestine nuclear materials sales and the import of red mercury from the Commonwealth of Independent States into the European Community in the next meeting of European political co-operation under his presidency.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is this Government's policy to take every appropriate opportunity to raise with other Governments the problem of sales of clandestine nuclear materials from the CIS and elsewhere. We discuss this issue both with our European partners and [illegible] a wider context, with other nuclear suppliers.

Punjab and Kashmir

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of India regarding abuse of human rights by security forces in Punjab and Kashmir; and what was their response.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Both bilaterally and with our European Community partners, we have regularly raised with the Indian Government our concerns about abuses by security forces in Punjab and Kashmir. They have told us of their determination to investigate allegations of abuses and to bring wrongdoers to justice, and that over 250 members of the security forces in Kashmir and Punjab have been punished.

European Community

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals the United Kingdom has put to the European Council to make more transparent its decision-making processes in the European Communities.

Mr. Garel-Jones: As presidency, the United Kingdom proposed an initiative at the Birmingham European Council to increase transparency in the Community's decision-making processes. It was agreed that Foreign Ministers would come forward with suggestions before the Edinburgh European Council, including the possibility of some open Council discussion. The Commission also offered to consult more widely before proposing legislation.

Subsidiarity

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list *(a)* the existing and *(b)* the proposed legislative acts of the EC which he proposes to seek to have withdrawn as offending against the principle of subsidiarity.

Mr. Garel-Jones: It is too early to specify which items will pass or fail the subsidiarity test. We are working to put procedures in place in the Commission and Council to ensure all proposals for legislation in future comply with the principle of subsidiarity. The Birmingham declaration called for decisions on this at Edinburgh, where the Commission will also present the first results of its review of existing Community legislation.

EC General Affairs Council

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement on the outcome of the General Affairs Council on 21 September.

Mr. Hurd: I chaired an extraordinary session of the General Affairs Council in New York on 21 September. The Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones)—represented the United Kingdom.

The Council met to consider the way forward after the French referendum on the treaty on European union. The Council noted that ratification procedures were well advanced in most member states and agreed the importance of a speedy and successful conclusion of the process, without reopening the present text, on the timing foreseen in article R of the treaty.

The Council welcomed the statement issued on 20 September by Economic and Finance Ministers meeting in Washington. Ministers agreed that the preoccupations which had been expressed in the wider debate in all member states over recent months should be addressed in the future internal and external development of Europe. They welcomed the presidency's decision to convene a special European Council in October to consider these issues.

The Council also welcomed the presidency's determination to make progress on other urgent business, including the completion of the single market and negotiations on the Community's finances.

A copy of the declaration issued by the Council on 21 September has been placed in the Library of the House.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Dickens: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council on 5 and 6 October.

Mr. Hurd: I chaired the Foreign Affairs Council on 5 October with the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones)—representing the United Kingdom. My right hon. Friend took the chair for the session on 6 October, attended by my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade.

Foreign Ministers received a report from the Committee of Permanent Representatives on work in hand to follow up the remit from the Lisbon European Council to undertake urgent work on procedural and practical steps to implement the principle of subsidiarity. It was agreed that COREPER should press on with this work, including the adoption of new procedures for addressing subsidiarity in the Council, and report back to the Foreign Affairs Council on 9 November. I also briefed colleagues on the presidency's objectives for the Birmingham Special European Council.

Ministers had a general discussion of the Commission's future financing proposals. I explained how the United Kingdom presidency intended to handle negotiations between now and the Edinburgh European Council.

The Council welcomed the Commission's opinions on the applications from Austria and Sweden to join the Community, and instructed work on the Community's general negotiation framework for the European Free Trade Association applicants to continue. The Council recalled the importance of developing relations with Turkey, Cyprus and Malta in accordance with the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council.

Ministers discussed recent developments in the former Yugoslavia. They expressed full support for the efforts of Lord Owen and Mr. Vance, and agreed that the Community should continue to increase pressure on the Serbs, who were failing to honour the commitments given at the London conference. Ministers agreed on the need for increased help for refugees and displaced persons and called for an end to atrocities and for the investigation of war crimes.

The Council discussed the Uruguay round and agreed that a final effort was needed to conclude the negotiations by the end of the year. It urged the Commission to continue to negotiate constructively and to report to the Birmingham European Council. The Council approved the Commission's mandate for negotiations with third countries for extension of the multi-fibre arrangement. The Council noted with concern the large number of anti-dumping and countervailing duty cases filed by US industry against EC steel products, and called for an early resumption of talks on the multilateral steel arrangement. The Council discussed the establishment of the single market in bananas, and re-affirmed the aim to renew agreement by the end of this year.

The Council agreed the negotiating directives for new partnership and co-operation agreements with the states of the former Soviet Union. The Council heard an account from my noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development on the visit of the troika of Development

Ministers to Somalia. Ministers agreed a statement expressing sympathy for the victims of the air crash near Schiphol airport.

Ministers met the Foreign Ministers of Poland, Hungary and the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic in the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council and issued a joint statement welcoming the process of strengthening dialogue and co-operation between them.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement in the *Official Report* on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 20 July.

Mr. Hurd: I chaired the first Foreign Affairs Council of the United Kingdom presidency in Brussels on 20 July. The Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones)—represented the United Kingdom.

The main item on the Council's agenda was the follow-up to the Lisbon European Council. I explained how the United Kingdom presidency intended to handle negotiations on the Community's finances over the next six months, and there was broad support for our approach. On subsidiarity, President Delors reported on the Commission's planned new working procedures and on its review of existing Community rules. The Council instructed the Committee of Permanent Representatives to examine possible new Council procedures. On enlargement, the Council agreed to consider the available Commission opinions on the European Free Trade Association applicants on 5 October. Ministers discussed a presidency paper on developing EC relations with Turkey. I briefed EC partners about the presidency's plans to invite the Foreign Ministers of Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia to a meeting in the margins of the October Foreign Affairs Council and to host a meeting with Heads of State or Government of these countries in London on 28 October.

Ministers had a full discussion on the former Yugoslavia and issued a statement reaffirming their commitment to Lord Carrington's conference. I reported on my visit to the region. Ministers decided that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia should not be regarded as the sole successor of the former Yugoslavia and that it should therefore be excluded from international bodies. Ministers agreed that an additional 120 mecu package of emergency EC aid should be made available immediately for use in the former Yugoslavia. They welcomed the decision of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to convene an international conference on refugees in and from the former Yugoslavia. The Council adopted a Commission proposal to amend the seventh directive on aid to shipbuilding. It had a preliminary discussion of the Commission's negotiating mandates for partnership and co-operation agreements with the former Soviet Union. It also discussed the Commission's mandate for a revised co-operation agreement with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and a proposal by the European Court of Justice to transfer a range of cases from its jurisdiction to that of the court of first instance.

Ministers agreed a statement marking the third anniversary of Aung San Suu Kyi's detention. I reported on plans to arrange a visit by the troika of Foreign Ministers to South Africa in early September.

A Co-operation Council with Egypt was held in the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council.

Nuclear Tests

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's policy towards a moratorium on United Kingdom nuclear tests.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Rather than declare unilateral moratoria, we believe the right approach is to restrain testing to the minimum level necessary to ensure the safety and credibility of nuclear weapons. In our case, this has meant testing less than once a year.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's assessment of the potential impact of a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty on the United Kingdom's nuclear weapons arsenal.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We believe a limited programme of nuclear tests continues to be the best means of ensuring the safety and credibility of our nuclear deterrent.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the maximum number of underground nuclear tests that the United Kingdom is permitted to carry out under the terms of the United States energy appropriation legislation.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Three.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what restrictions are placed on the purposes for which the United Kingdom may conduct underground nuclear tests under the terms of the United States energy appropriation legislation.

Mr. Garel-Jones: None.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards the negotiation of a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have always accepted the long-term goal of a comprehensive test ban, to be achieved on a step-by-step basis.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's assessment of the potential impact of a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty on the prospects for agreement at the non-proliferation treaty extension conference in 1995.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The case for extension of the non-proliferation treaty stands irrespective of the state of progress towards a comprehensive test ban.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the United Kingdom will resume direct negotiations towards a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty.

Mr. Garel-Jones: When we believe it would be in the best interests of our security to do so.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the conditions under which the United Kingdom may be entitled to conduct a nuclear test under the terms of the United States energy appropriation legislation.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act requires the United States President to determine that nuclear tests conducted by the United Kingdom are in the interests of United States national security.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what alternative sites are being considered by his Department for conducting underground nuclear tests.

Mr. Garel-Jones: None.

EC Treaties

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those topics which under the current treaties of the European Community, as amended by the treaty on European union, will be within the exclusive competence of the Community, with an authority for each item on the list.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General's answer to his question of Tuesday 19 May 1992. The European Community has exclusive competence where that is conferred upon it by treaty provision or measures taken under the treaty. It is not possible to draw up an exhaustive theoretical list. Current examples include the common agricultural policy, the common commercial policy and the external tariff.

Human Rights Mission (China)

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the forthcoming human rights mission to China by Lord Howe of Aberavon.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister proposed to Premier Li Peng in January that a delegation should visit China to exchange views on human rights issues and to study China's provisions and practices in this area. The Chinese People's Institute for Foreign Affairs has invited my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Howe to lead a delegation to China between 1 and 8 December. Lord Howe has invited three hon. Members and a number of experts in the relevant field to accompany him. Details of the programme are under discussion.

European Year of Elderly People

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek an increase in the budget allowed to the Commission for the European year of elderly people.

Sir John Cope: I have been asked to reply.

When the Budget Council met on 23 July, to establish its first reading draft budget for 1993, it agreed the figure of 3·5 million ecu for the programme for the elderly and the European year of older people and solidarity between generations, judging this to be appropriate provision for 1993.

SCOTLAND

Anaesthetists

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by regional health board the current establishment requirement for anaesthetists; and what is the number in post.

Mr. Allan Stewart: No establishment requirement figure is set by the Scottish Office. The numbers—whole-time equivalent—of consultant anaesthetists in post in Scotland at 30 September 1991, the latest date for which information is available, are given in the table:

Consultant anaesthetists in post by health board as at 30 September 1991

	Whole-time equivalent
Scotland	294·9
Argyll and Clyde	15·6
Ayrshire and Arran	19·6
Borders	5·0
Dumfries and Galloway	6·5
Fife	14·0
Forth Valley	13·0
Grampian	26·9
Greater Glasgow	86·9
Highland	8·5
Lanarkshire	24·5
Lothian	47·8
Orkney	—
Shetland	—
Tayside	25·6
Western Isles	1·0

Water and Sewerage

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the members of his advisory committee on water, stating for each their relevant qualifications and any shareholdings held in the private water companies in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend has no advisory committee on water.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to bring forward amendments to section 1(a) of the Water (Scotland) Act 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Alternative forms of organisation for water and sewerage services in Scotland are currently being considered. A consultation paper will be issued shortly.

Property Law Report

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to receive the report of the Scottish Law Commission on property law and abolition of the feudal system.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Law Commission is at present analysing responses received to its discussion paper No. 93, "Property Law: Abolition of the Feudal System", published in July 1991, and will publish a final report thereafter. Since several substantial issues have been raised by consultees, the commission is unable to give a precise indication of when the report will be available.

Youth Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the latest figures on the youth training guarantee defined from the careers service management returns supplement of 10 September, and in particular *(a)* the number of clients who have left full-time education and are maintaining contact with the careers service, *(b)* the number of clients in the guarantees and currently seeking a youth training place and *(c)* the number of clients know to be endorsed for special training needs including 1991 and 1992 leavers and others for each of the regions and islands authority areas and for Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The arrangements for obtaining management information from the careers service in relation to the youth training guarantee are still developing. Discussions are taking place to ensure that the data are reliable and consistent. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment told the Select Committee on Employment on 21 October that she would make available to the Select Committee final figures from the October return when they are available. I shall write to the hon. Member with the figures for Scotland as soon as I am in a position to do so.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to make available resources to non-governmental organisations to travel to, attend and participate in the public inquiry beginning on 1 December into Scottish Nuclear's proposals to build a dry store for nuclear waste at Torness.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 23 October 1992]*: It remains the Government's policy that it is for non-governmental organisations and individuals attending public inquiries to meet their own expenses.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations Her Majesty's Government have received from *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* abroad in regard to plans to export plutonium from Sellafield to (i) Japan and (ii) Europe.

Mr. Eggar: No arrangements have been made at this stage for the shipment of plutonium from the United Kingdom to Japan. My Department has received a number of communications on the export of plutonium. Plutonium arising from civil reprocessing at Sellafield is transferred overseas only subject to the application of safeguards and on receipt of assurances covering peaceful use, physical protection and controls on re-transfer.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what criteria are used by the Government to decide which countries are suitable to receive exports of plutonium from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: All applications for the export of nuclear materials from the United Kingdom are given careful consideration before an export licence is granted. The guidelines for British policy on exports and transfers of nuclear materials, including plutonium, were first announced by the then Foreign Secretary, now Lord Callaghan, on 31 March 1976 at columns *515-16* and have been applied by successive Governments.

Particular attention is paid to whether the receiving country is a party to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty or has an equivalent commitment or has concluded a full-scope safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency. Consideration is also given to other factors such as strategic concerns, the risk of diversion or a lack of effective export controls of the receiving country.

Coal

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what investment has been made by his Department and previously by the Department of Energy into the combined-cycle clean coal-burn topping prototype plant at Grimethorpe since the inception of the project; what investment has been made by foreign investors in the project; and if he will make a statement on the future of the project.

Mr. Eggar: My Department and the former Department of Energy have provided approximately £11·6 million towards the funding of the clean coal-burn topping cycle prototype plant at Grimethorpe. Overseas commitments to the topping cycle programme at Grimethorpe amount to approximately £1·4 million. Government funding ensured the successful completion of experimental work at the Grimethorpe facility earlier this year.

Experimental work to further advance various technical aspects of the topping cycle is currently being undertaken at the coal research establishment, Cheltenham. Meanwhile, my Department has provided £170,000 towards an independent expert review of the topping cycle concept to assess whether and how this technology should be taken forward. A report on the findings of this review is currently being considered by my Department.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many pits there were in Leicestershire in 1962, 1970, 1980, 1990 and to date; and how many jobs there were in those pits.

Mr. Eggar: The number of deep mines in Leicestershire, and the number of men employed at those collieries, has declined sharply due to exhaustion of economic reserves. The figures are as follows:

	Number of deep mines	*Number of men employed*
1962	12	9,545
1970	9	7,280
1980	9	7,328
1990	2	1,099
1992	1	419

The one remaining mine, Asfordby, is a new colliery with extensive reserves and has benefited from £217 million of capital investment to date. It is expected to commence production in 1993-94.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what quantities of coal were imported in each of the years 1985 to 1991 and the current year to date; and how much in each year was not suitable for use in power stations.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is as follows:

		Quantity (thousand tonnes)
Year	*Total coal imports*	*Not suitable for use in power stations*[1]
1985	12,732	8,357
1986	10,554	6,852
1987	9,781	7,065
1988	11,685	7,886
1989	12,137	8,763
1990	14,783	9,282
1991	19,491	10,281
[2]1992	14,469	6,316

[1] Coking coal and anthracite.

[2] January to August.

Source: Customs and Excise.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much German coal was imported into Britain in 1991 and so far in the current year.

Mr. Eggar: The amount of coal imported into the United Kingdom from Germany in 1991 and January to August in 1992 was as follows:

Year	*Quantity (thousand tonnes)*
1991	220
[1]1992	160

[1] January to August.

Source: Customs and Excise.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will take steps to ensure that surpluses within the mineworkers' pension scheme are not utilised to pay for forthcoming redundancy packages in the coal mining industry.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for the trustees of the mineworkers' pension scheme.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the response of Her Majesty's Government to the proposal of the European Commission permitting use of natural gas for the generation of public electricity supplies; what assessment he has made of the implications for the use of indigenous coal resources; and what notification of adopting such a policy was given to the House or the public in his related memorandum.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 22 October 1992]:* The European Commission's 1975 directive, 75/404/EEC, restricting the use of natural gas in electricity generation was repealed on 18 March 1991 by directive 91/148/EEC in the light of the increased availability of gas and the need for generators throughout the Community to be able to switch to low-polluting fuels. This information was conveyed to the House in a reply by the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy, the hon. Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) on 16 April 1991, *Official Report,* column *134.*

The choice of fuel for use in power stations is a matter for the operators of those stations, subject to meeting emission limits set by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, and other relevant statutory requirements.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans of the Central Electricity Generating Board for future production of electricity from coal-burning stations were abandoned, subsequent to arrangements concerning privatisation; and what would be the approximate cost per unit of such generation at *(a)* current coal costs and *(b)* costs expected in 1993.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 22 October 1992]:* The CEGB planned the construction of three 1,800 MW coal-fired power stations in the period prior to privatisation. No application for consent was made for Kingsnorth B in Kent, and the application for Fawley B in Hampshire was subsequently withdrawn. West Burton B in Nottinghamshire was granted consent in March 1990, but construction was not begun.

The cost of electricity from these stations would depend on the contractual terms under which the stations were constructed and operated as well as coal costs.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has made of the total value of stores, machinery, materials and other contracts made by British Coal with other bodies or persons, and supplied for the 31 coal pits now proposed for closure, for each of the calendar or financial years 1989 to 1991.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 22 October 1992]:* My Department does not receive management information from British Coal at the level of detail requested. These are matters for British Coal.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the lowest price per gigajoule at which any supplier of gas or coal produces or supplies its fuel to electricity generators at 1992 prices, followed in no less than 10 categories by similar prices at equal steps to the highest price at which he expects production costs or contracts for future generating stations in the next 10 years, *(b)* the installed capacity for which it would be economic to generate at each respective price for coal, *(c)* new coal generation capacity contracted for, but not in production, *(d)* with minimum burn requirement on the basis of those contracts already made, *(e)* and *(f)* repetition of the two preceding columns in respect of new gas generation capacity not operating, but for which statutory approval has already been given and *(g)* and *(h)* the approximate respective capacities of gas and coal generation expected to be used in 1993, in respect of each price in that year, using levels of demand and supplies of electricity from other sources, of 1991, at each price shown in *(b)* and *(c)*.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 22 October 1992]:* Under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 and preceding legislation, consents have been given that allow for the construction of around 13 GW of major—above 50 MW—gas-fired plant in England and Wales, in addition to that currently available for generation. Possession of a construction consent does not automatically mean that a project will proceed.

There is no new coal generation capacity contracted for but not currently available for generation.

The other matters on which information is requested are commercial matters for the generating companies and fuel supply companies.

World Uranium Hearings

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if his Department was represented at the world uranium hearings held in Salzburg in Austria, on 13 to 19 September.

Mr. Eggar: My Department was not represented.

Nuclear Industry (Privatisation)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to privatise the Atomic Energy Authority and British Nuclear Fuels.

Mr. Eggar: No decisions have been taken on whether any parts of the nuclear industry should be privatised.

Electricity

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last discussed electricity pricing with the Director General of the Office of Electricity Regulation; and what decisions were taken.

Mr. Eggar: I have consultations with the Director General of Electricity Supply from time to time on a range of issues. Licence conditions, including the electricity price controls, are a matter for the director general.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what response he has made to the public statement of the chief executive of PowerGen on the relative costs of coal and gas-fired electricity production and on the policy of regional electricity companies on contracts for electricity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The relative costs of coal and gas-fired electricity depend significantly upon the contractual terms of fuel purchase and the contractual terms under which the power station is to be constructed and operated. These are commercial matters for the companies concerned. My Department will be assessing the evidence available on the comparative costs of power stations using different fuels as part of the Government's review. It is for the Director General of Electricity Supply to ensure that regional electricity companies comply with their obligation to purchase electricity from the most economic source available.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will specify the statutory authority by which the suppliers of natural gas to undertakings using such gas for generation for sale to the electricity pool are permitted to charge for gas that may not be consumed; and if he will give consideration to introducing legislation to prohibit any such practice.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 22 October 1992]:* The contractual arrangements between suppliers of natural gas and customers engaged in electricity generation are a commercial matter for the companies concerned.

Government Intervention

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all occasions *(a)* since April 1992 when the Government intervened to assist British industries and *(b)* since January 1982 when the Government intervened to assist British computer and computer component manufacturers.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has created a number of new industry sponsorship divisions within the Department whose role is to assist individual sectors of industry to compete in world markets. The Department also operates a wide range of schemes providing specific help to industry, including research and development support, regional selective assistance, export support and a range of support for small and medium-sized companies. Companies in the computing sector have obtained substantial benefit from these schemes over the past decade and will continue to receive support and help from my Department where this is appropriate.

LINK Initiative

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the programmes and projects approved under the LINK initiative as at 31 March 1991, 31 March 1992 and currently.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* The table below lists—in date order of announcement—each of the programmes under the LINK initiative, together with the number of projects approved in each programme for the financial years ending 31 March 1991 and 31 March 1992, and, according to information available to date, those which have been approved so far during the current financial year, ending 31 March 1993. To list all projects individually would incur disproportionate cost. Twenty-seven programmes were announced up to 31 March 1991 and a further three were announced up to 31 March 1992; no new programmes have been announced so far during the current financial year. Four hundred and fifty-nine projects have been approved to date.

Programme	*Start Date*	*Projects approved by 31 March 1991*	*Projects approved by 31 March 1992*	*Projects appoved since 31 March 1992*
Molecular Electronics	3 February 1988	4	0	0
Advanced Semiconductor Materials	3 February 1988	9	2	1
Industrial Measurement Systems	3 February 1988	23	9	3
Eukaryotic Genetic Engineering	3 February 1988	6	3	1
Nanotechnology	3 February 1988	9	7	6

Programme	*Start Date*	*Projects approved by 31 March 1991*	*Projects approved by 31 March 1992*	*Projects appoved since 31 March 1992*
Biotransformations	15 April 1988	12	2	0
Personal Communications	13 June 1988	8	8	1
Selective Drug Delivery and Targeting	14 June 1988	4	0	2
Construction Maintenance and Refurbishment	14 June 1988	7	2	2
Food Processing Sciences	7 September 1988	21	1	3
Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration	17 April 1989	7	2	2
Optoelectronic Systems	26 April 1989	18	9	2
Design of High Speed Machinery	10 May 1989	15	6	2
Structural Composites	16 May 1989	14	6	4
Protein Engineering	12 June 1989	7	4	3
Biochemical Engineering	15 June 1989	16	9	1
New Catalysts and Catalytic Processes	19 June 1989	6	1	4
Power Electronic Devices and Derived Systems	27 July 1989	4	10	1
Control of Plant Metabolism	19 September 1989	4	2	0
Molecular Sensors	27 September 1989	11	6	4
Technology for Analytical and Physical Measurement	27 September 1989	17	7	10
Transport Infrastructure and Operations	2 April 1990	4	9	1
Asymmetric Synthesis	13 June 1990	0	1	19
Crops for Industrial Use	26 June 1990	1	5	3
Enabling Technologies for Advanced Rotorcraft	22 October 1990	0	2	1
Medical Implants	11 December 1990	0	2	3
Agro-Food Quality	18 December 1990	0	14	3
Hydrocarbon Reservoirs	30 April 1991	—	5	2
Technologies for Sustainable Farming Systems	1 July 1991	—	12	0
Enhanced Engineering Materials	17 September 1991	—	1	1
TOTAL		227	147	85

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish tables showing the cumulative and annual total of expenditure under the LINK initiative as at 31 March 1992, together with the projected outturn for 31 March 1993, together with a breakdown of those tables showing regional expenditure.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* The table gives the cumulative and annual DTI expenditure on advanced technology programmes as at 31 March 1992 together with the projected outturn for the financial year to 31 March 1993. Information on a regional basis could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

ATP/DTI Expenditure	*Amount £*
Cumulative to 31 March 1992	47,285,663
Annual 1991-92	17,741,694
Forecast Expenditure 1992-93	23,460,000

Advanced Technology Programme

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the programmes and projects approved under the advanced technology programmes as at 31 March 1991, 31 March 1992 and currently.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* The table lists the programmes approved under the advanced technology programmes as at 31 March 1991, 31 March 1992 and currently. The number of projects approved under each programme is also shown. Details of the individual projects could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

ATP Approved Projects to 15 October 1992

Programme	*Programme approved*			*Projects approved by*		
	31 March 1991	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*31 March 1991*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Gallium Arsenide	Y	—	—	13	1	—
Advanced Robotics	Y	—	—	7	4	1
National Electronics Research Initiatives	Y	—	—	1	1	1
Wealth From The Oceans	Y	—	—	7	8	2
Superconductivity	Y	—	—	6	1	4
Information Engineering	Y	—	—	99	21	—
Computer Aided Engineering	Y	—	—	20	8	3
Systems Technology and Integration	Y	—	—	26	4	—
Safety Critical Systems	Y	—	—	1	15	1
Parallel Applications	—	Y	—	—	4	—
Open Distributed Systems Architecture	—	Y	—	—	1	—
Manufacturing Organisation, People and Systems	—	Y	—	—	4	5
Compounds Semiconductor Technology	—	Y	—	—	1	2
VLSI Design Automation	—	—	Y	—	—	6
Advanced Silicon Technology	—	—	Y	—	—	2
Speech and Language Technology	—	—	Y	—	—	2
Total	9	4	3	180	73	29
Other Approved Programmes (No Projects)						
Tracked Transport Systems	—	—	Y	—	—	—
Competitive Manufacturing	—	—	Y	—	—	—
Intelligent Systems	—	—	Y	—	—	—
Innovation in Industrial Lithography	—	—	Y	—	—	—
Computer-supported Co-operative Work	—	—	Y	—	—	—

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish tables showing the cumulative and annual expenditure on advanced technology programmes as at 31 March 1992, together with the projected outturn for 31 March 1993 and a breakdown of those totals showing regional expenditures.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* The table details the cumulative and annual Government expenditure on collaborative research under the LINK initiative for the financial year ending 31 March 1992 and the projected outturn for the financial year ending 31 March 1993. Also shown is the cumulative expenditure at 31 March 1991, 31 March 1992 and 31 March 1993. Total expenditure should be double the Government expenditure by virtue of industry's own expenditure on LINK projects. Information on a regional basis could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

	1988-89 -1990-91 Out-turn £	*1991-92 Out-turn £*	*1992-93 Projected Out-turn million*
Government expenditure (£)	9,796,800	17,762,600	[1]27
Government cumulative expenditure (£)	9,796,800	27,559,400	[1]55

[1] Rounded

Parcelforce

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to introduce legislation to privatise Parcelforce; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 20 October 1992]:* I have no plans to introduce legislation to privatise Parcelforce and see no need for a statement at this stage.

British Coal Pension Scheme

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the President of the Board of Trade in what circumstances funds from the British Coal pension scheme may be used for expenditure incurred in connection with pit closure other than payments for the exclusive benefit of retired and serving miners.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 22 October 1992]:* This is a matter for the trustees of the British Coal pension schemes.

Trentham Colliery

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) pursuant to his statement of 19 October, if he will give details of the anticipated production, seam by seam, projected for the second half of the financial year 1992-93 at Trentham colliery;

(2) if he will give details of each development for which there was a prior approval at Trentham colliery at the commencement of the 1992-93 financial year, and specify which have been shelved and the reasons in each case.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 22 October 1992]:* The issues which the hon. Member raises are matters for British Coal.

Skelton Grange Power Station

Mr. Battle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when Skelton Grange power station, Leeds is due to close.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 22 October 1992]:* This is a commercial matter for National Power, the station's owner.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 26 October 1992

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

EC Research Programmes

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster following his letter of 15 July to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, if he will list the actions taken to ensure the effective management of EC research programmes.

Mr. Waldegrave: Her Majesty's Government consistently pressed for proper assessment of proposals and rigorous evaluation of results to ensure effective management of research programmes. The EC Council of Research Ministers on 12 October welcomed the evaluation of the second EC R and D framework programme carried out by CREST—the EC science policy advisers' committee. The report was prepared under United Kingdom chairmanship, and a copy will be placed in the House of Commons Library. The Council considered that this report should help to determine future EC R and D priorities, and underline the need for regular and independent evaluations.

EC Biomedical and Health Programme

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the result of discussions between Vice-President Pandolfi and the advisory committee on the biomedical and health programme of the EC, to which he referred in his letter of 15 July.

Mr. Waldegrave: The immediate problems with the scientific evaluation process were resolved without the need for direct discussions with Vice-President Pandolfi. The Commission is now considering which proposals to approve for funding, in the light of the advisory committee's views.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Property Speculation

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, if the Church Commissioners will establish an inquiry into their loss on property speculation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alison: The Archbishop of Canterbury, as Chairman of the Church Commissioners, recently announced that he has:

(1) asked Coopers and Lybrand to examine and report upon *(a)* the Commissioners' borrowings and *(b)* the information flow required for the management of their assets; and

(2) appointed a group to consider that report and related matters in the light of recent experience, and to make such recommendations as they think fit to the Commissioners.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Technologies

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to his Russian and Chinese counterparts, in regard to the recently announced sale of missile guidance technology, rocket engines and nuclear technologies from Russia and China, in the context of the permanent five's commitment to control proliferation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We regularly raise our concerns about missile and nuclear non-proliferation matters with the Russians and Chinese, in the context of the permanent five process, bilaterally and with our EC partners.

Middle East

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what decisions were taken on the application of the International Atomic Energy Agency's safeguards in the middle east during the 36th annual general conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency in September.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Resolution GC (XXXVI)/1045 on application of International Atomic Energy Agency's safeguards in the middle east was adopted by consensus at this meeting. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Languages

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will grant funding from his Department to the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have no intention of doing so at the present time.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to make representations to the Council of Ministers to enable the European charter on regional or minority languages adopted by the Standing Conference of European Regional and Local Authorities to become adopted as a European convention.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Committee of Ministers has already taken the decision to adopt the European charter on regional or minority languages as a convention. It will be open for signature from 5 November 1992.

Romania

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current state of the United Kingdom's relationships with Romania; and if he has any plans to carry them forward.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom enjoys satisfactory relations with Romania. We look forward to developing these with a new Romanian Government which will carry forward reform in that country. As presidency of the European Community, we are working for the early signature of an association agreement between Romania and the Community.

UN Peacekeeping Reserve Force

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to support proposals by the United States of America for the establishment of a permanent United Nations peacekeeping reserve force.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is our view that the appropriateness of UN forces to a country or a conflict and the size and shape of those forces are best addressed on a case-by-case basis. We do not therefore support the establishment of a permanent UN peacekeeping reserve force, although it should be noted that, by completion of our deployment to UNPROFOR in Bosnia, some 3,500 British troops will be on UN service making us the third-largest troop contributor to UN operations.

Mordechai Vanunu

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Government of Israel over the continued imprisonment in solitary confinement of Mordechai Vanunu in Israel.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no formal locus to raise Mr. Vanunu's case with the Government of Israel. He has been treated in accordance with normal Israeli judicial process. We are in touch with the Israelis privately about some aspects of his imprisonment.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he has had from *(a)* Belarus, *(b)* Ukraine and *(c)* Kazakhstan to his recommendations on accession to the NPT.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 14 July 1992, at column *587*. The three states in question have since given further assurances that they will accede to the NPT as non-nuclear weapons states, and we continue to press them to do so rapidly. We welcome the recent accessions of Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for the purposes of article 3b of the Maastricht treaty, which areas of responsibility fall within the exclusive competence of the European Community.

Mr. Garel-Jones I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on 23 October, at column *409*.

The European Community has exclusive competence where that is conferred upon it by treaty provision or measures taken under the treaty. It is not possible to draw up an exhaustive theoretical list. Current examples include the common agricultural policy, the common commercial policy and the external tariff.

Poland

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in respect of Polish citizens refused entry to the United Kingdom, how many such refusals there were in the last available year; and how many of those refusals were subject to appeal proceedings.

Mr. Wardle: I have been asked to reply.

In the 12 months to the end of August 1992, 445 nationals of Poland were refused leave to enter and removed at United Kingdom posts. Information on the number who exercised their right of appeal is not available centrally.

ENVIRONMENT

Rents

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the actual rent levels set, and the percentage increase on previous registrations, where applicable, for *(a)* housing association tenancies and *(b)* other tenancies, (i) where the rent was subject to appeal to the rent assessment committee and (ii) where the rent offices' registration was not subject to appeal, in each region of England over the period 1988 to 1992; and if he will publish figures on the retail prices index and the index of house prices over the same period.

Mr. Baldry: Information is given in the table on means registered rents and those which were determined after appeal to the rent assessment committee.

Rent Officer Statistics

	(a) HA tenancies				*(b) Other tenancies*			
	Mean registered rent £ p.a.	*Mean percentage change on previous rent*	*Mean RAC determined rent £ p.a.*	*Mean percentage change to registered rent*	*Mean registered rent £ p.a.*	*Mean percentage change on previous rent*	*Mean RAC determined rent £ p.a.*	*Mean percentage change to registered rent*
Northern								
1988	1,199	13	NA	NA	1,032	15	NA	NA
1989	1,202	13	2,048	0	1,008	17	1,258	2
1990	1,396	18	1,849	1	1,134	22	1,267	6
1991	1,494	22	1,717	3	1,193	27	1,405	5
1992 H1	1,650	22	2,052	−3	1,345	27	1,278	1
Yorkshire and Humberside								
1988	1,235	15	NA	NA	1,098	18	NA	NA
1989	1,343	18	1,753	2	1,061	20	1,308	8

	(a) HA tenancies				*(b) Other tenancies*			
	Mean registered rent £ p.a.	*Mean percentage change on previous rent*	*Mean RAC determined rent £ p.a.*	*Mean percentage change to registered rent*	*Mean registered rent £ p.a.*	*Mean percentage change on previous rent*	*Mean RAC determined rent £ p.a.*	*Mean percentage change to registered rent*
1990	1,513	22	1,697	−1	1,251	24	1,364	6
1991	1,646	23	1,811	−2	1,347	26	1,381	7
1992 H1	1,746	22	1,862	−3	1,472	24	1,498	3
East Midlands								
1988	1,326	15	NA	NA	1,116	19	NA	NA
1989	1,381	17	1,564	−5	1,071	20	1,439	1
1990	1,567	19	1,752	1	1,334	25	1,491	2
1991	1,668	21	1,757	0	1,450	24	1,594	7
1992 H1	1,871	23	1,740	4	1,537	23	1,662	3
East Anglia								
1988	1,318	14	NA	NA	1,396	21	NA	NA
1989	1,428	17	1,141	4	1,437	22	1,838	4
1990	1,515	17	1,916	2	1,528	21	1,889	3
1991	1,757	21	3,696	1	1,630	19	1,876	6
1992 H1	1,709	20	2,059	6	1,717	19	1,900	3
Greater London								
1988	1,372	18	NA	NA	1,658	18	NA	NA
1989	1,508	19	1,414	16	1,634	18	1,911	9
1990	1,677	21	1,850	9	1,859	20	2,264	9
1991	1,868	23	2,043	10	1,987	22	2,502	9
1992 H1	1,952	23	2,169	10	2,160	23	2,578	12
Rest of South East								
1988	1,499	16	NA	NA	1,436	20	NA	5
1989	1,607	17	1,803	6	1,503	21	1,835	5
1990	1,811	21	2,162	1	1,692	25	1,915	4
1991	1,981	24	2,033	1	1,946	31	2,124	3
1992 H1	2,189	27	2,262	−1	2,112	32	2,296	4
South West								
1988	1,495	19	NA	NA	1,481	22	NA	NA
1989	1,664	21	1,996	5	1,573	25	1,839	7
1990	1,876	25	1,839	−2	1,686	26	1,872	5
1991	2,076	27	2,228	0	1,906	27	2,151	6
1992 H1	2,210	26	1,985	−6	2,103	29	2,402	5
West Midlands								
1988	1,222	15	NA	NA	1,096	16	NA	NA
1989	1,297	16	1,628	0	1,051	16	1,321	3
1990	1,444	20	1,641	1	1,276	19	1,266	3
1991	1,584	23	1,834	3	1,359	23	1,419	7
1992 H1	1,732	23	1,762	4	1,469	23	1,558	4
North West								
1988	1,107	14	NA	NA	974	14	NA	NA
1989	1,186	16	1,425	3	972	16	1,227	5
1990	1,289	18	1,457	3	1,025	19	1,070	6
1991	1,379	19	1,523	5	1,091	20	1,125	4
1992 H1	1,501	19	1,302	4	1,216	19	1,172	3
England								
1988	1,302	16	NA	NA	1,330	18	NA	NA
1989	1,395	17	1,554	7	1,321	19	1,572	6
1990	1,557	20	1,729	2	1,519	22	1,669	6
1991	1,702	22	1,747	4	1,665	25	1,878	7
1992 H1	1,832	23	1,866	4	1,827	25	2,040	7

United Kingdom	*Retail price index*	*Mix adjusted house price index*
1988	106·9	167
1989	115·2	202
1990	126·1	199
1991	133·5	196
1992 H1	137·7	191

Figures for 1992 refer to the first half year.

Figures for Rent Assessment Committee appeals for 1988 are not available separately for housing associations.

Rents are registered for a period of two years. The percentage changes on previous rent quoted in the answer refer to the change over the two year period.

The percentage changes to registered rent refer to the change arising from the rent assessment committee's decision.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish his Department's latest estimate of the total sum set aside by local authorities in England derived from capital receipts not available for reinvestment.

Mr. Robin Squire: About £5 billion of the total of £5½ billion set aside by local authorities as provision to meet credit liabilities at 31 March 1991 is likely to have originated from set aside capital receipts.

Thames House

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements the London Docklands development corporation is making to replace Thames house as a training centre in the royal docks.

Mr. Robin Squire: The London Docklands development corporation is asking consultants to evaluate the training requirements of the area, as a first step to securing permanent accommodation for Newham community college, which currently uses this building.

EC Life Programme

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make representations to the European Community to increase available funding under the European Community's Life programme for land management work and monitoring.

Mr. Maclean: The priorities agreed by the management committee for Life funding in 1993 include actions relating to land use planning and management, and to environmental monitoring networks.

The indicative allocation of resources for each of the five "fields of action" is given in the Life Regulation—Council regulation (EEC) No. 1973/92. The precise level of resources allocated to land management or monitoring projects will reflect the number and quality of applications.

Poop Scoops

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to speed up local poop-scoop byelaws by allowing all local authorities to designate areas en bloc at the time of contract service planning; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Whilst we are keen to speed up the byelaw-making process, designation in the manner suggested is not possible under the present enabling legislation.

Environmental Protection Agency

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress being made in setting up a national environmental protection agency.

Mr. Maclean: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones), at columns *857-58*.

Improvement Grants

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to make changes to the improvement grant system to spread the available cash to more applicants and to take account by disregard in calculating income of mortgage payments and all disability benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The changes to the house renovation grant system announced on 16 July—*Official Report*, column *1047*—are designed to enable help to be given to more low income grant applicants by, among other things, making higher allowance in the means test for the general costs, including housing costs, they face. It would complicate an already necessarily complex system to make specific allowance for mortgage costs in the means test. The test already disregards disability benefits on the same basis as housing benefit.

Municipal Mutual Insurance Company

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will include in the calculation of local authority standard spending assessments increased insurance premiums as a result of the collapse of the Municipal Mutual Insurance Company.

Mr. Robin Squire: There is no separate provision for insurance premiums within standard spending assessments. In setting total standard spending for local authorities for 1993-94 proper account will be taken of all authorities' spending needs.

Urban Land

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many hectares of land in Britain have become urbanised so far this year; what were comparable figures for 1989, 1990 and 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The information requested is not available.

The Government recognise the need for information on land use change to inform planning policy and to contribute to the wider debate on national land use policy issues. In 1985 the Department of the Environment established a new series of land use change statistics—LUCS—which are collected by Ordnance Survey as part of its map revision process. Recent research has confirmed the value of these data, especially for monitoring land changing to urban uses. The LUCS data show that in England during the period 1985-87 there was an average net transfer of 6,000 hectares a year from rural uses to urban uses, as defined for LUCS purposes. At present, the Ordnance Survey is testing new procedures with the objective of providing consistent information for all urban areas across the country within one year of any change occurring.

Recent research on rates of urbanisation has concluded that the overall area of land likely to change to urban use between 1981 and 2001 in England is in the order of 105,000 hectares, representing 0·8 per cent. of England's area. By 2001 it is forecast that around 11 per cent. of England is likely to be in urban use. The Department has also recently carried out research to investigate ways of improving information on land use stock and is proceeding to develop the methodology and carry out pilot work for a land use stock system.

Opencast Coal

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those sites where British Coal is *(a)* prospecting for opencast coal and *(b)* actively applying for permission to opencast coal; and what assessment he has made of the damage to wildlife should opencast coal mining proceed on each of these sites.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not held centrally. MPG 3 advises mineral planning authorities to consider in detail the environmental and other effects of every proposal for opencast coal mining. It also makes clear that environmental assessment is required in appropriate cases.

Air Monitoring

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evaluation he has made of the effectiveness of air monitoring conducted by local authorities under the requirements of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Maclean: Local authorities are not specifically required to undertake air monitoring by the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Normally the operator of a process prescribed for local authority air pollution control under part I of the Act will be required to carry out any monitoring needed to demonstrate compliance with the conditions of the plant's authorisation. Local authorities may, exceptionally, decide to carry out such monitoring themselves.

Recycling

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further encouragements he intends to announce to get industry more involved in recycling and especially the down-stream line of recycling; and how his targets are being met.

Mr. Maclean: The Government's policy is that manufacturers, distributors and retailers should take their share of responsibility for what ultimately happens to products which they place on the market. I therefore welcome the recent initiative announced by the vehicle manufacturers in this area. A full statement of Government policy on recycling and an account of progress against targets is set out in "This Common Inheritance: the Second Year Report" (Cm 2068).

Environmental Protection Act 1990

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what study his Department has done on the cost implications for local authorities of enforcing and administering the Environmental Protection Act 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Discussions between my Department and the local authority associations about the local government finance settlement have covered the cost implications of administering the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The Act provides in some cases for local authorities to charge to recover their costs.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to establish a centralised data bank of successful prosecutions conducted under the duty of care provisions in section 34 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Maclean: The Home Office keeps records of the numbers of prosecutions in England and Wales and the number resulting in convictions, as notified to it by the courts. Statistics to be kept for offences under the Environmental Protection Act will include separate figures for offences under section 34 of the Act.

I understand that waste regulation authorities, through the co-ordinated local authority database of registered waste carriers (CLADWAC), have set up a system for the exchange of information about convictions for offences prescribed under the Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989, for the purposes of waste carrier registration. These prescribed offences include offences under section 34 of the 1990 Act.

Wildlife Habitat

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take during the United Kingdom presidency to ensure that the United Kingdom complies with assurances already given on the protection of wildlife habitat.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom has an excellent record in Nature Conservation. We have built steadily on the framework for conservation provided by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to implement our declared policies and meet our international commitments. The Government are considering what additional measures are necessary to fulfil its obligations under the recently agreed Habitats Directive. Members are required to introduce the necessary legal measures by June 1994.

European Economic Area

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the criteria to be adopted to judge whether environmental difficulties arising from the economic area agreement are persistent; and how intervention will be judged as appropriate, in regard to the safeguard measures set out in article 112 of the "Agreement on the European Economic Area", Cm. 2073.

Mr. Maclean: Decisions on environmental difficulties which might arise under the agreement would need to be addressed in the light of the circumstances at the time.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he intends to take as President of the European Environment Council to achieve the objectives set out in article 73 of the "Agreement on the European Economic Area", Cm. 2073.

Mr. Maclean: The Government strongly support the objectives set out in article 73, which reflects paragraph 1 of article 130R of the treaty of Rome. However, since the agreement on the european economic area has not yet entered into force, and will not do so during the United Kingdom presidency, there is no role for my right hon. and learned Friend under the agreement in his capacity as President of the Environment Council.

Waste Brokers

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many copies of the departmental consultation paper on the draft registration of waste brokers scheme, pursuant to EC directive 91/156/EEC, have been issued; and what responses have been received to date.

Mr. Maclean: In England and Wales approximately 1,850 copies of the consultation paper on the draft registration of waste brokers scheme have been issued and 68 responses have been received to date.

EC Environment Report

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response has been made by Her Majesty's Government to the report by the president of the Court of Auditors of the European Communities concerning the environment—Fin 249—dated 21 September.

Mr. Maclean: The Government attach importance to such reports and will ensure that it is followed up effectively. It was raised at the Environment Council on 20 October and will be taken into account in our approach to the review of the structural funds. We shall be issuing an explanatory memorandum shortly.

Environment Research Programme

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response has been made to the report of the environment research programme by the Advisory Committee on Science and Technology issued in May.

Mr. Maclean: The Government today published their response to the Advisory Council of Science and Technology (ACOST) advice on environmental research programmes.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has, on behalf of the Government, welcomed the report as a very helpful contribution to the Government's developing policy on science and technology research.

The Government's response to the ACOST report is published by the Office of Science and Technology (Office of Public Service and Science).

Newt Colony, Barnfield Pond

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 14 July, *Official Report*, column *649*, what proposals he now has for protection of the newt colony at Barnfield pond.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have been asked to reply.

The consultant's assessment requested by English Nature indicated that realignment of the new road in the vicinity of the Barnfield pond would significantly increase the cost of the scheme and delay progress. Following further discussions with English Nature and Dr. Cummins a suitable new habitat for the newt colony was identified close to the existing site. The Department will be working closely with them on the detail of the revised habitat area.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Fraud

35. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement about prosecutions in serious fraud cases.

The Attorney-General: The current caseload of the Serious Fraud Office is 53 cases. Of these, 25 are being tried or are awaiting trial in the Crown court, 14 are awaiting committal or transfer to the Crown court and 14 cases are under investigation.

Crown Prosecution Service

36. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement about the staffing of the Crown prosecution service.

The Solicitor-General: In the last 12 months the Crown prosecution service has recruited 194 lawyers, bringing the total complement of lawyers in post to 2,068. The number of administrative staff in post is 4,094.

Criminal Justice

37. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Attorney-General what action the Director of Public Prosecutions is taking to speed up criminal justice.

The Attorney-General: The Crown prosecution service has taken a leading role in the working group on pre-trial issues whose report is now being implemented. Its recommendations cover all stages of cases and offer benefits in efficiency and effectiveness for the entire criminal justice system.

Court Cases

39. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Attorney-General what steps his Department is taking to speed up the progress of cases coming to court.

The Attorney-General: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett). The Serious Fraud Office and the Crown prosecution service have also been participating in a working group on long criminal trials and ways to reduce their length. I expect a consultation paper to be published shortly.

Serious Fraud Squad

38. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Attorney-General how many times in the past year officers of the Serious Fraud Squad have visited Switzerland and Liechtenstein.

The Solicitor-General: Since 1 January 1992 staff employed by or seconded to the Serious Fraud Office have made four separate visits to Switzerland or Liechtenstein in the course of inquiries. In addition, a number of visits to these countries have been made by police officers working in conjunction with the Serious Fraud Office.

British National Party

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer of 13 July, *Official Report*, column *399*, if he will institute an independent review into the level of evidence required for a realistic prospect of conviction for offences contrary to part III of the Public Order Act 1986.

The Attorney-General: No. I am satisfied that the correct criteria are being properly applied by the Crown prosecution service to cases involving allegations of such offences.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Kurds

46. **Mr. Rooney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has for further helping the Kurds in Iraq.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have spent £52·4 million since April 1991 on aid for Iraqi civilians. Further relief assistance is urgently needed before the onset of winter. We are therefore making available today a further £2·75 million, of which £2·5 million will be provided to the World Food Programme for urgently needed edible oil and pulses, and £0·25 million to British non-governmental organisations for relief activities in northern Iraq.

Southern Africa

47. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action his Department is taking in relation to the drought in southern Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My noble Friend, the Minister for Overseas Development, has so far committed more than £51 million of bilateral aid in response to the drought in southern Africa. Taking into account our share of the EC special food aid programme, estimated at £11·3 million, this brings our overall response to around £63 million.

Malawi

48. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what pressure the Overseas Development Administration is bringing to bear on the Government of Malawi to encourage progress towards democracy.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: At the Paris consultative group meeting in May, bilateral donors and the EC imposed restrictions on new aid. The United Kingdom has withheld balance of payments support, suspended new training awards and restricted certain other kinds of assistance. Humanitarian aid is not affected by these conditions and has continued to be provided both for Malawians and for Mozambican refugees in Malawi. At a political level, and in concert with our EC partners and others, we continue to stress to the Malawi authorities the need for a material and permanent improvement in human rights.

Earth Summit

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been achieved towards the developmental goals discussed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The sustainable development commission will be established at the current United Nations General Assembly session. We expect the global environment facility replenishment discussion to start early next year. Sustainable development is the central aim of our aid programme; we shall focus further on Agenda 21 priorities, to reflect the important agreements reached at Rio.

Caribbean

Mr. Deva: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on Britain's bilateral aid programme to the countries of the Caribbean.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: For the financial year 1991-92 expenditure on the bilateral country programmes for the Commonwealth Caribbean exceeded £40 million. In addition, the Commonwealth Development Corporation —CDC—maintains a substantial investment programme; new CDC investment there in 1991 totalled £33·5 million. This year bilateral country aid is expected to remain at approximately the same level.

Bananas

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the availability of aid for Caribbean producers during periods of low market prices for primary produce like bananas.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We contribute to the EC scheme for the stabilisation of export earnings—Stabex—under Lomé IV, through which 1·5 billion ecu—£1·2 billion—is available during the period 1990-95 towards offsetting any shortfalls for a number of commodities including bananas.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to support economic diversification as a replacement for the banana market in Caribbean ACP nations.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our bilateral aid programmes in the Commonwealth Caribbean, as elsewhere, aim to assist long-term economic and social development. In deciding country aid allocations and how funds are used, we take into account all aspects of the individual country's economic development. In the Caribbean our aid has been used to improve the physical infrastructure and human skills needed to help the economies to diversify. We have given particular support to agricultural diversification in these countries in the past and expect to continue to do so. The Commission proposal on the common organisation of the market in bananas is under discussion in the Community. It reflects the commitments to Caribbean and other African, Caribbean, Pacific—ACP—producers contained in Lomé IV.

South Africa

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions in the past 10 years the Government have made formal or informal representations to the South African Government about illegal activity by their employees or agents in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since 1984 there have been six incidents involving South African diplomats on which we have made representations. These incidents involved drinking and driving and public order offences. Representations were also made over a break in at the African National Congress offices in 1982 and an attempt in 1989 to obtain the design for the Blowpipe missile and the arrest in April this year of two South African intelligence agents.

UNCED Agenda 21

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place in the European Council meetings since June on the implementation in Europe of Agenda 21 agreed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The implementation of Agenda 21 was discussed at the informal Environment Council at Gleneagles on 19 September and the Environment Council in Luxembourg on 20 October. Discussion focused on the establishment of the sustainable development commission —SDC—which will have a central role in ensuring effective implementation of Agenda 21. As agreed at the Lisbon Council in June, the Community has taken the lead on this. The SDC will be established by the UN General Assembly this autumn.

Humanitarian Services

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how much money the Overseas Development Administration has paid the Ministry of Defence as a cost of providing humanitarian services in each of the last five years;

(2) on what occasions and for what purposes the Overseas Development Administration has paid the Ministry of Defence for providing humanitarian services in each of the past five years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 23 October 1992]:* The following amounts have been paid:

1988: Total £891,536	
Treatment of victims of a Pakistan explosion in a United Kingdom military hospital	£154,054
Army medical teams and supplies—earthquake relief in Nepal	£621,467
RAF airlift, HMS Active, RFA Oakleaf and Royal Engineers —Hurricane Gilbert in Jamaica	£116,015
1989: Total £181,092	
RAF airlift and Royal Engineers—Hurricane Hugo in the Caribbean	£181,092
1990: Total £79,443	
Royal Engineers and RAF aircraft—Cyclone in Western Samoa	£79,443
1991: Total £7,294,040	
Provision of army ration packs for UN in Liberia	£11,145
RAF aircraft to deliver relief goods for landslide victims in Chile	£12,897
Use of RFA Fort Grange, helicopters and boats for cyclone relief in Bangladesh	£616,000
Operation "Safe Haven" (Army) and air supply (RAF) for Kurdish refugees from Iraq	£6,653,998
1992 (to date): Total £134,708	
Royal Engineers and RAF transport for cyclone relief in Western Samoa	£127,583
RAF flights in Turkey for Erzincan earthquake	£7,125

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the formula used for calculating the cost of humanitarian services charged to the Overseas Development Administration by the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 23 October 1992]:* The Ministry of Defence raises charges on an extra cost basis. This comprises those costs which would not have otherwise been incurred as a result of undertaking a task.

Iraq

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on humanitarian conditions in northern Iraq; and what representations he has made to the United Nations to alleviate the conditions of the Iraqi Kurds.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 23 October 1992]:* The situation in northern Iraq gives cause for the gravest concern. The continuing blockade of Kurdish areas by the Government of Iraq has resulted in serious shortages of food, fuel and other essential supplies. A major international relief operation, led by the United Nations, is needed to ensure that stocks of relief supplies are moved into these areas before the onset of winter.

We provided two members of a joint EC/US needs assessment mission which has just returned from northern Iraq. We await their full report.

We have pressed the United Nations to hasten its relief operation, to which we are ready to contribute. We therefore welcome the recent announcement of the signing of the latest memorandum of understanding between the United Nations and the Government of Iraq, which will form a basis for further United Nations action.

Zimbabwe

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the impact of flooding in south-eastern Zimbabwe; and what action the Overseas Development Administration has taken in the area.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 23 October 1992]:* Localised flooding occurred over the weekend of 17-18 October due to violent thunderstorms in part of Zaka and Bikita Districts of Masvingo Province. According to reports received so far, one person was killed by lightning and severe structural and other damage sustained to a number of buildings, including schools. The Zimbabwean authorities have advised us that they are to await detailed damage reports before considering whether any external assistance is needed. The area is one which has been particularly affected by the drought in the region and where we have been assisting with emergency drought relief. As a result of the storms, a number of dams are now filled to capacity.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Probate Service

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will take steps to ensure that the quality and level of service provided by the Probate service in England and Wales will continue to be maintained; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In his report of February 1992 "Probate—Service to the Public" the Comptroller and Auditor General commented favourably on the standard of service provided. The report indicated a number of areas where the service could be further improved and these are being pursued within the Department.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Lottery

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 19 October, *Official Report* column 5, which consultants have been appointed to carry out research on behalf of his Department and advise on aspects of the national lottery; and when they are due to provide their report.

Mr. Brooke: The GAH Group of 4-6 Arne street, London WC2E 9NB are the consultants appointed to advise the Department on aspects of the national lottery. Their final report was submitted on 7 October.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the names and addresses of the professional advisers he has engaged in connection with the planning, operation and marketing of the proposed national lottery.

Mr. Brooke: In August the Department appointed the GAH Group of 4-6 Arne street, London WC2E 9NB to advise on aspects of the proposed national lottery. Further advice will be sought as necessary.

Control of the Press

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what plans he has to introduce legislation giving greater effective sanctions, including fines, to the Press Complaints Commission against newspapers found to have violated Press Complaints Commission regulations concerning decency in the press;

(2) what plans he has to establish a statutory independent press authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I shall consider what, if any, action needs to be taken when I have received and studied Sir David Calcutt's report on press self-regulation. Meanwhile, I have no plans for legislation.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the progress of the Calcutt commission concerning privacy and the press.

Mr. Brooke: I understand from Sir David Calcutt that he hopes to present his report to me early in 1993.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Deregulation

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what financial provisions, and how much, he has made within his Department in order to look at the potential for deregulation of each of the regulatory measures for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Atkins: There has been no financial provision made in respect of programme expenditure for deregulation in Northern Ireland. The Department of Economic Development has however allocated approximately £20,000 in staff time and resources to the deregulation initiative in 1992-93.

Examiner of Statutory Instruments

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who now holds the post of Examiner of Statutory Instruments in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Mates: Mr. P. L. Oakey.

General Election

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost of the general election to public funds in each of the Northern Ireland constituencies ranking them from lowest to highest.

Mr. Hanley: The chief electoral officer is required to submit accounts to the Secretary of State within 12 months of the election. The figures set out in the table are based on an initial examination of those accounts.

	£
South Antrim	51,630·06
Belfast West	52,400·10
Belfast East	55,658·89
East Antrim	57,788·27
Newry & Armagh	63,898·16
North Antrim	64,072·67
North Down	64,539·11
Belfast South	65,202·40
Strangford	65,632·01
Upper Bann	66,756·61
East Londonderry	67,858·27
Lagan Valley	67,912·93
Belfast North	68,017·46
Foyle	74,711·92
South Down	78,638·68
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	79,216·99
Mid Ulster	90,100·38
Total	1,134,024·91

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland Ministers last met within the framework of the Anglo-Irish Agreement; and when they will next meet.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The last meeting of the Anglo-Irish intergovernmental conference was held on 27 April 1992 and the next will be held on 16 November.

Planning Applications

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many planning applications have been *(a)* approved and *(b)* refused in each year since 1980 in areas of outstanding natural beauty in the constituency of South Down;

(2) how many planning applications have been *(a)* approved and *(b)* refused in each year since 1980, in areas of special scientific interest in the constituency of South Down.

Mr. Atkins: The information in the form requested is available only from January 1987 and is as follows:

Constituency of South Down

	Areas of outstanding natural beauty		*Areas of special scientific interest*	
Period	*Approvals*	*Refusals*	*Approvals*	*Refusals*
1987	294	63	2	0
1988	313	69	0	0
1989	234	70	2	0
1990	232	51	2	0
1991	274	80	0	1
[1]1992	224	61	0	0
TOTAL	1,571	394	6	1

[1] To date.

Electricity

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the standard costs of electricity installation in each year in respect of domestic properties since 1 April 1980 to 31 March 1992 in the constituency of South Down.

Mr. Atkins: NIE's standard charges for electricity installation for housing developments of 12 houses-flats or more in the period from 1 April 1987 to 31 March 1992 were:

	Connection charge £	
	per house	*per flat*
1987	150	113
1988	160	120
1989	170	130
1990	184	140
1991	245	184
1992	257	193

Reliable figures for earlier years are not available. Supplies to smaller developments or individual properties are charged at 60 per cent. of the estimated cost of providing supply.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the current standard costs of electricity installation in respect of domestic properties in the constituency of South Down.

Mr. Atkins: NIE's standard charges for electricity installation for housing developments of 12 houses-flats or more are £257 and £193 per unit respectively. Supplies to smaller developments or individual properties are charged at 60 per cent. of the estimated cost of providing supply.

Lords Lieutenant

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list *(a)* the names and *(b)* the occupations of each lord lieutenant and deputy lord lieutenant currently in post; who is responsible for their nomination; and what (i) salary and (ii) honoraria, allowance or expenses each receives.

Mr. Mates: In Northern Ireland lord lieutenants are appointed by Her Majesty under article 2 of the Northern Ireland (Lieutenancy) Order 1975, on the advice of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Deputy lieutenants are nominated by the lord lieutenants and subject to Her Majesty's non-disapproval which is signified by the Secretary of State, are appointed under article 3 of the same order. There are currently some 147 deputy lieutenants. A list of their names is set out in the table. Details relating to the occupation of each are not known and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Lord lieutenants and deputy lieutenants are unsalaried. Lord lieutenants—but not deputy lieutenants—may claim from central funds reimbursement of travel, postage, telephone calls and other non-entertainment expenses incurred in the course of their official duties.

LIEUTENANCY

County of Antrim

Deputy Lieutenants

Leslie, Major James Francis, TD, MA, JP, DL
Reade, Major R. H., MC, DL
Massereene & Ferrard, The Viscount, DL
Stewart-Moore, Commander James, DL
Windsor, Colonel R. F. M., DL
O'Neill, Lt-Colonel, the Right Hon. The Lord, TD, DL
Kinahan, Mr. C. H. G., CBE, DL
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Newtownbreda Forensic Laboratory

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the level of security at the forensic laboratory, Newtownbreda, on Wednesday 23 September; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mates: For obvious reasons, it is not the practice to disclose security arrangements.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the latest estimates by the Registrar General of Populations of those aged 17 years and over, plus 63 per cent. of those aged 16 years, for each district council area and parliamentary constituency, together in each case with the equivalent year's electoral registration figures.

Mr. Hanley: Electoral registration figures for 1992 were given in my reply to the hon. Gentleman on 12 May 1992 *Official Report*, columns *75-76*. Population estimates based on district council areas will not be available until the results of the 1991 census in respect of Northern Ireland become available shortly. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Local Government Staff Commission

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the expenditure of the Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland for the years 1990-91, 1991-92 and the budget for 1992-93.

Mr. Atkins: The expenditure of the Local Government Staff Commission during 1990-91 was £88,977 and during the year 1991-92 was £122,431. The estimated expenditure for 1992-93 is £326,700.

PRIME MINISTER

Environment Policy

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Prime Minister if he will establish an interdepartmental co-ordinating committee to monitor the environmental impact of EC policies.

The Prime Minister: The Government have already taken steps to ensure that in the United Kingdom the environmental consequences of their policies, wherever they arise, are properly considered through, inter alia, the setting up of a ministerial committee on the environment and the appointment of Ministers with responsibility for green issues in each Department. The United Kingdom also works for the integration of environmental needs into other policies in the EC.

Citizens Charter

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister what steps he is taking to satisfy himself that the working of the social security system with regard to applications for mobility allowance, attendance allowance and disability living allowance fall within the guidelines laid down by him for his citizens charter; and if he will clarify departmental responsibilities on this matter.

The Prime Minister: The chief executive of the Benefits Agency is responsible for the administration of social security benefits and is accountable to the Secretary of State for Social Security for his performance.

The Benefits Agency has taken vigorous action through the summer to accelerate the processing of claims and to reduce significantly the amount of work outstanding in relation to mobility allowance, attendance allowance and disability living allowance. The chief executive wrote to all hon. Members on 6 July and again on 19 October setting out progress.

Pit Closures

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list, by county, the number of people who have so far telephoned his response number at 10 Downing street in respect of the proposed pit closures; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have received a substantial number of representations on this issue.

EC Budget

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will put to the Heads of Government a plan for a common coal policy on the lines of the common agricultural policy to be financed out of the United Kingdom's net contribution to the EC budget.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 23 October 1992]*: There is already an agreed Community policy on coal. The United Kingdom looks to the Commission, in its scrutiny of state aids for coal, to see that this policy is followed in all member states.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Conference

Mr. Cash: To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans there are to hold a conference of Parliaments of EC member states during the United Kingdom presidency of the EC.

Mr. Newton: Heads of State and Government reaffirmed at the special European Council in Birmingham the importance they attach to the conference of Parliaments. Preparatory discussions are taking place under the United Kingdom presidency to do the groundwork for a conference, which may take place in 1993. Detailed arrangements are being discussed through the usual channels.

Questions

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects to reply to the third report of the Select Committee on Procedure, Session 1990-91, on parliamentary questions, HC-178.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on Thursday 22 October, at column *363*.

EDUCATION

European Computer Networks

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his reply of 13 July to the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith), *Official Report*, column *443*, if he will make a statement on the current provision of pan-European computer networks, and the progress of Super Janet.

Mr. Forman: The information systems committee—ISC—of the Universities Funding Council is participating in a European multi-protocol project to connect European countries via high bandwidth computer networks. This project went live earlier this month. The United Kingdom and Germany were the first two countries to be connected. The ISC is continuing to promote a single pan-European infrastructure for networking.

A formal invitation to tender has been issued to several companies for Super Janet, which will provide an advanced optical fibre network for the academic community. A pilot network is expected to be established in 1993 to enable early demonstration of applications over the network.

A-level Teachers

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the different scales of pay between A-level teachers in schools, A-level teachers in sixth-form colleges and A-level teachers in further education colleges.

Mr. Forman: Teachers in secondary schools and sixth form colleges can be paid an incentive allowance, at the discretion of the governing body, for taking on extra responsibilities. In further education colleges lecturers are paid on one of two scales or on a management spine. In neither case are there separate scales or allowances for teaching A-levels. On 1 April 1993, further education corporations, including the former sixth form colleges, will have responsibility for determining the pay and conditions of their staff.

Further Education (Funding)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what transitional funding was available and under what formula for polytechnics leaving the local education authority sector; and what are the equivalent figures and formulae for further education colleges.

Mr. Forman: Transitional funding of some £6 million was allocated in 1988-89 to polytechnics and colleges entering the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council sector. Each polytechnic and college transferring out of local authority control received a fixed sum of £40,000, plus a variable component relating to full-time equivalent student numbers.

The Further Education Funding Council has announced allocations for transitional funding in 1992-93 totalling some £15 million for institutions joining the new further education sector. The allocation for each college transferring out of local authority control comprises a fixed sum of £25,000, plus a variable component relating to student numbers at the institution, calculated half by full-time equivalent numbers and half by enrolments.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if it remains his policy that the Further Education Funding Council should give priority equally to full-time 16 to 19 years courses and courses which provide for part-time students.

Mr. Forman: The Government's aim is that there should be an increase in both full and part-time participation. My right hon. Friend has told the Further Education Funding Council that, in particular, the Government attach importance to the achievement of an increase in the participation of 17-year-olds in full-time education and training.

Prison Education Service

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the status of staff from further education colleges working for local education authorities in the prison education service where redundancy following compulsory competitive tendering is concerned.

Mr. Forman: The employment beyond 1 April 1993 of staff engaged in prison education depends on the terms of each individual's contract of employment. Both LEAs and colleges will have the opportunity to tender to the Home Office for the provision of education to the prison service after that date. Those who are successful will want to consider making use of staff previously engaged in prison education. We cannot know whether any staff will be made redundant until this process has been completed.

Further Education (Buildings and Equipment)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he has now received the Further Education Funding Council's surveys of buildings and capital equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: My right hon. Friend has received and is considering both surveys. Allocations to the Further Education Funding Council for 1993-94 and the following two years will be determined in the course of the present public expenditure survey.

Transport Budgets

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidance he has issued to local education authorities to ensure a fair distribution of transport budgets between pupils and students attending maintained schools and colleges in the further education sector.

Mr. Forman: Local education authorities will have a duty from 1 April 1993 to treat full-time students who attend colleges in the further education sector no less favourably as regards transport than pupils of the same age who attend schools maintained by an LEA. Guidance on this new duty will be given to LEAs in a circular on the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, a draft of which was issued for consultation on 27 July.

Japanese

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many teachers qualified to teach the Japanese language are currently employed by local education authorities and teaching in *(a)* secondary schools to GCSE and *(b)* in sixth forms teaching to A-level; and if he will make a statement on the teaching of Japanese in English schools.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is not collected centrally. All secondary school pupils will be required to study a modern foreign language as part of the national curriculum. Japanese is one of the 19 languages eligible to be a national curriculum foundation subject.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list those schools which have applied for grant-maintained status from April 1993 and had their application approved but the commencement date deferred until September 1993.

Mr. Forth: There are no schools that fall into this category.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools have to date (i) applied for and (ii) received approval for grant-maintained status from his Department in each of the London boroughs.

Mr. Forth: There have been 13 applications for grant-maintained status from primary schools in the London boroughs, of which 10 have been approved and two are under consideration. There have been 57 applications from secondary schools in the London boroughs, of which 44 have been approved and 13 are under consideration. Details are given in the table.

	Primary		*Secondary*	
	Applied for GM	*Approved GM*	*Applied for GM*	*Approved GM*
City	—	—	—	—
Camden	—	—	—	—
Greenwich	—	—	—	—
Hackney	—	—	—	—
Hammersmith	1[1]	—	1	1
Islington	—	—	—	—
Kensington	—	—	1	1
Lambeth	1	—	2	1
Lewisham	1	1	—	—
Southwark	—	—	1	1
Tower Hamlets	—	—	1	1
Wandsworth	2	1	5	4
Westminster	—	—	—	—
Barking	—	—	—	—
Brent	—	—	3	2
Barnet	—	—	3	2
Bexley	2	2	—	—
Bromley	2	2	11	9
Croydon	—	—	2	1
Ealing	2	2	6	5
Enfield	—	—	—	—
Haringey	—	—	—	—
Havering	—	—	—	—
Harrow	—	—	—	—
Hillingdon	2	2	11	8
Hounslow	—	—	—	—
Kingston upon Thames	—	—	1	1
Merton	—	—	—	—
Newham	—	—	1	1
Redbridge	—	—	—	—
Richmond upon Thames	—	—	—	—
Sutton	—	—	7	5
Waltham Forest	—	—	1	1

[1] Rejected

Parents Charters

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what consultations were undertaken with service users in the course of the production of the parents charter, the Welsh Office parents charter and the Scottish Office parents charter.

Mr. Forth: A number of surveys of parents' knowledge of the education system have been commissioned by the Government in recent years. These have showed that some parents were unaware of even their most basic rights in relation to their children's education and that most would welcome more information about schools. The parents charter for parents in England was designed to meet these needs. The charters produced for parents in Wales and Scotland are the responsibilities of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Scotland.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the current pupil-teacher ratio in England and Wales; and what was the ratio in 1982.

Mr. Forth: Provisional figures for January 1992 show an overall pupil-teacher ratio in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England of 17·45:1. In January 1982 the figure was 18·46:1. Information on schools in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education by how much teachers' pay has increased since 1979.

Mr. Forth: We estimate that average teachers' pay at 1 April 1992 was £20,630. This represents an increase of 273 per cent. in cash terms since 1979 or a real-terms increase over that period of 46 per cent.

Education Spending

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the percentage of gross domestic product spent by the United Kingdom on education; what are the comparable figures for *(a)* Germany, *(b)* the United States and *(c)* Japan; and what account is taken of private education in those figures.

Mr. Forman: The readily available information is as follows:

Total Public Expenditure[1] as a Percentage of Gross National Product (Calendar Year)

	1988
United Kingdom	4·6
USA[2]	5·3
Germany	4·2
Japan[2]	4·3

Sources: UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1991.
Education Statistics for the United Kingdom 1991.

[1] Public subsidies to the private sector are included.

[2] Estimated. Includes some private funds, but excludes fees.

Torquay Boys Grammar School

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has for expediting the application made for grant-maintained status by Torquay boys grammar school in July.

Mr. Forth: The governing body of the school published proposals on 17 July 1992. My right hon. Friend will reach a decision on the proposals as quickly as possible, compatible with full and careful consideration of the educational issues involved.

Teachers

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many teachers were in post in 1987 and at the most recent available date.

Mr. Forth: The number of school teachers in post in LEA-maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England in January 1987—full-time equivalents—is 402,300. The corresponding figure for 1992, which includes grant-maintained schools, is 394,900.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will specify the number of teachers in each local education authority who *(a)* are disabled, whether registered or not as disabled and *(b)* not disabled who have retired early on medical grounds in the last five years of which figures are available.

Mr. Forth: The information requested at *(a)* is not held by the Department. Again, the information requested at *(b)* is not held in relation to disabled teachers who have retired on medical grounds or on a local education authority basis, but the total number of teachers in England and Wales who have retired on those grounds, for whatever reason, over the last five years is as follows:

	Number
1987-88	2,528
1988-89	3,406
1989-90	4,041
1990-91	4,934
1991-92	4,545

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give *(a)* the total number of teachers and *(b)* and the proportion of the total number of teachers who become disabled after appointment in each local education authority who left the profession in the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is not held in the Department in relation to disabled teachers. However, the proportion of teachers in England and Wales who have retired on medical grounds during the last five years, for whatever reason, against the total number of teachers is as follows:

	Number of teachers	*Percentage retired due to ill-health*
1987-88	647,619	0·39
1988-89	607,279	0·56
1989-90	605,815	0·67
1990-91	594,494	0·83
1991-92	581,424	0·78

Food Skills

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to ensure that food preparation skills, in relation to diet and nutrition, remain part of the national curriculum.

Mr. Forth: Aspects of food and nutrition are covered in national curriculum science and technology. My right hon. Friends, the Secretaries of State for Education and for Wales, will give careful consideration to the recommendations of the national curriculum technology review group when its report is submitted at the end of October and its subsequent proposals for curriculum change will be the subject of extensive consultation. There are no changes planned to the national curriculum science order.

Young Children

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on his Department's response to the emergency resolution from the National British Association for Early Childhood Education on the provision of publicly funded education and care for all young children, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Forth: The BAECE has not yet submitted its resolutions to my right hon. Friend. When it does so they will be carefully considered.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Young Offenders

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what number and proportion of cautioned juvenile offenders in the latest available year had been cautioned on *(a)* one previous occasion, *(b)* two previous occasions, and *(c)* more than two previous occasions respectively;

(2) what number and proportion of cautioned juvenile offenders in the latest available year in *(a)* the Metropolitan police district, *(b)* south Wales, *(c)* Greater Manchester, *(d)* Merseyside, *(e)* the west midlands, *(f)*

West Yorkshire, and *(g)* Northumbria had been cautioned on (i) one previous occasion, (ii) on two previous occasions, and (iii) on more than two previous occasions respectively.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is in the tables. This information has been produced from a study of persons cautioned during the week of 25 to 29 November 1991 which will be analysed via the Offenders' Index for conviction history. Table 1 gives the number of juveniles by their cautioning history and table 2 gives the percentage of juveniles with their cautioning history for each relevant police force. Care should be taken with the percentages in table 2, where the actual number of persons in the category is small, as these are liable to some sampling error.

Table 1

Juveniles in 1991 cautions sample by previous cautioning history

	Number of previous cautions				
Police force area	*0*	*1*	*2*	*More than 2*	*Total persons*
Metropolitan	59	25	10	9	103
South Wales	24	5	2	2	33
Greater Manchester	92	20	5	3	120
Merseyside	23	5	1	—	29
West Midlands	62	8	3	3	76
West Yorkshire	108	33	13	2	156
Northumbria	36	7	5	—	48
All police forces	985	202	101	46	1,244

Table 2

Juveniles in 1991 cautions sample by previous cautioning history

	Percentage previously cautioned				
Police force area	*0*	*1*	*2*	*More than 2*	*Total in sample (=100 per cent.)*
Metropolitan	57	24	10	9	103
South Wales	73	15	6	6	33
Greater Manchester	77	17	4	3	120
Merseyside	79	17	3	—	29
West Midlands	82	11	4	4	76
West Yorkshire	69	21	8	1	156
Northumbria	75	15	10	—	48
All police forces	73	16	8	3	1,244

Percentages may not add up to exactly 100 per cent. due to rounding.

Asylum

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the meeting on the Asylum Bill between Dr. Max Perutz, FRS and senior officials of his Department.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I wrote to the hon. Member on 14 October inviting Dr. Perutz to contact officials in the immigration department if he wished to arrange a meeting. To date he has not done so.

Theft

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his latest estimate of the percentage of annual retail turnover lost through unauthorised entry to premises by retailers in the United Kingdom; and what information he has on the percentage lost through similar crime by retailers in other EC countries.

Mr. Jack: It is estimated that retailers lose around two per cent of turnover annually through the disappearance of stock. This loss includes thefts of all descriptions; the proportion attributable to unauthorised entry is not known and cannot be ascertained. Information about losses elsewhere in the EC is not available.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's contribution to the European centre for the validation of alternative methods in animal research.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government supported the establishment of the European centre for the validation of alternative methods at Ispra in Italy, and we shall, along with our partners, endeavour to ensure that the centre is a success.

The United Kingdom has not been asked to make a specific financial contribution towards the work of the centre. Were Community-wide funding to be sought for the centre, any agreed United Kingdom contribution would be made as part of the United Kingdom's overall contribution to the Community's budget.

Mid Glamorgan Regional Crime Squad

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to retain a regional crime squad based on South Glamorgan, Mid Glamorgan, West Glamorgan, Dyfed, Powys and Gwent, currently known as No. 8 regional crime squad.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. I believe that the region would be better served by amalgamating No. 7 and No. 8 regional crime squads.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the number of notifiable offences committed in each of the cities or areas covered by a safer city project in the 12 months ended *(a)* March 1990, *(b)* March 1991 and *(c)* March 1992;

(2) if he will list the number of notifiable offences committed in each of the cities or areas now covered by a safer city project *(a)* in 1989, *(b)* in 1990 and *(c)* in 1991.

Mr. Jack: Figures available centrally are for calendar years only, and are contained in the table.

Safer city areas—Notifiable offences[1]

Safer city area	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Birmingham	99,749	111,881	127,548
Bradford	46,533	56,107	70,267
Bristol	50,121	61,806	72,363
Coventry	31,296	37,212	40,331
Derby	17,124	21,088	26,566
Hammersmith and Fulham	20,044	20,581	16,113
Hartlepool	9,144	11,112	13,395
Hull	40,543	47,501	54,478
Islington	23,006	26,253	21,124
Leicester	30,718	38,501	48,311
Lewisham	25,305	26,736	19,153
Middlesbrough	20,674	26,217	25,876
Nottingham	48,535	58,523	67,765
Rochdale	20,322	24,085	28,282
Salford	29,454	30,589	33,594
Sunderland	33,186	36,937	41,155
Tower Hamlets	25,557	24,857	19,267
Wandsworth	26,407	31,032	21,429
Wirral	26,982	25,503	28,991
Wolverhampton	23,670	28,045	31,476

[1] Excluding criminal damage £20 and under.

Prison Service

Mr. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on introducing the private sector into the running of prisons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Private sector involvement in the prison service is being introduced through the contracting-out and market-testing of both entire establishments and individual services within prisons. The aim is to raise standards and improve value for money.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what have been the costs of privatising catering services in Her Majesty's prison service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The value of the contracts awarded to commercial companies for inmate catering services in Her Majesty's prison service is £1,940,263. The costs of letting and administering the contracts were met from a number of separate budgets and are not readily available.

Railway Stations (Fire Inspections)

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, as part of his quality service objectives, he will require the publication of the results of all fire brigade inspections at British Rail stations commissioned since 1985 using public money.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: British Rail stations require a fire certificate in accordance with an order under the Fire Precautions Act 1971. The issue of such certificates is the responsibility of fire authorities, which are specifically forbidden under section 21 of the Act from disclosing, except in clearly defined circumstances, any information obtained by their employees during an inspection.

Arson

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of arson were reported in Wales in 1990, 1991 and 1992; what was the estimated total property damage resulting from these fires; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: There were 1,123 notifiable offences of arson recorded by the police in Wales in 1991 compared with 904 offences in 1990. Information for 1992 is not yet available. Information is not collected centrally on total property damage resulting from these fires. I do not intend to make a statement.

Metropolitan Police Commissioner

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to appoint a serving police officer as the next Commissioner of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend announced on 23 October that the Queen has appointed Mr. Paul Condon, at present chief constable of Kent, to succeed Sir Peter Imbert as Commissioner.

M25

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will detail the funding arrangements and level of service agreed between the Government and the forces policing the M25.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There are no special funding arrangements between the Government and those police forces responsible for policing the M25. The level of service provided is an operational decision for the individual chief officers of the six police forces through which the motorway travels. Policing decisions are co-ordinated by the M25 chief constables committee.

Fire Brigades (Fleet Maintenance)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the fire brigade authorities which have put their fleet maintenance tenders out to external companies indicating which tenders have resulted in split contracts.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Only Hertfordshire fire brigade has contracted out its vehicle fleet maintenance; there is one contractor.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what research has been conducted by his Department on the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering of fleet maintenance of fire brigade vehicles upon brigades who currently utilise mechanics who also act as part-time fire fighters;

(2) what steps are being taken to ensure that external companies granted fleet maintenance tenders for fire brigade vehicles offer a 24-hour service in a permanent site which grants around-the-clock access;

(3) if he will make it his policy to ensure that all persons involved in fleet maintenance of fire brigade vehicles are directly accountable both operationally and financially to their local chief fire officer;

(4) what account has been taken by his Department on the effect of the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering of fire brigade fleet maintenance upon *(a)* the flexible use of vehicles in the course of an emergency and *(b)* the ability of each fire brigade to reach the required incident response standards.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Provision of services and equipment is a matter for fire authorities. All the representative bodies and the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council have been widely consulted on the question of compulsory competitive tendering. My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to announce his conclusion on the issue in relation to fire brigades before long.

Hostels

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the percentage of site purchase and refurbishment costs which his Department grants for *(a)* probation hostel beds and *(b)* for bail hostel beds.

Mr. Jack: Site purchase and construction or refurbishment costs for both probation and bail hostels are met initially by a 100 per cent. capital grant from the Home Office. Over a period of time 20 per cent. of this cost is recovered from local authorities.

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the percentage of operating costs which his Department pays for *(a)* probation hostel beds and *(b)* bail hostel beds.

Mr. Jack: Eighty per cent. of the operating or revenue costs of probation and bail hostels are met by Home Office grant. The remaining 20 per cent. is provided by payments from local authorities.

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what restrictions are currently placed on hostels taking in residents when those persons are not domiciled in the county where the hostel is sited.

Mr. Jack: None.

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what audit checks take place in respect of probation hostels and bail hostels.

Mr. Jack: All claims submitted by probation and bail hostels are subject to audit by independent auditors approved by, and acting in accordance with instructions issued by, the Audit Commission.

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what rules govern salary levels, expenses levels and perks such as vehicles and promotion in respect of probation and bail hostels.

Mr. Jack: Probation officer grades working as wardens and deputy wardens at probation and bail hostels are employed under terms and conditions set by the joint negotiating committee for the probation service. Their pay is determined by the Secretary of State. Other wardens and deputy wardens, and all assistant wardens, are employed in accordance with terms and conditions set by the residential and allied staffs committee of the National Joint Council for the Local Authorities Administrative, Professional, Technical and Clerical Services. All other staff are either employed in accordance with terms and conditions set by the National Joint Council for Local Authority Services (Manual Workers), or are recruited on the basis of locally negotiated agreements.

Michael Sams

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the route taken on 29 September when remand prisoner Michael Sams held at HMP Winson Green travelled to Skipton, Yorkshire; how many prison officers accompanied him; what form of transport was used; and what additional security cover was used.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is not the practice to disclose the detailed security arrangements which are applied to the escort of category A prisoners outside a prison service establishment, or details of routes taken. In the instance referred to, the prisoner and a prison service staff escort travelled in a secure prison vehicle and additional security measures were taken by the police.

HMP Bullwood Hall

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement in respect of the hunger strike held by inmates at HMP Bullwood Hall in October.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Between 25 September and 1 October a number of prisoners at Bullwood Hall intermittently refused prison meals as a protest against the small amount of evening association provided. Plans which were already in hand to increase evening association were in fact implemented on 24 September.

Entry Clearance

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for entry clearance as working holidaymakers have been *(a)* received, *(b)* granted, and *(c)* refused in (i) India, (ii) Bangladesh, (iii) Pakistan, (iv) Australia, (v) Canada, (vi) Ghana and (vii) Nigeria during 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not available centrally.

Racial Harassment

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the number of local housing authorities in which racial harassment by one council tenant of another is currently a ground for eviction.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

Information on the content of tenancy agreements is not collected centrally. However, a survey in 1991 established that 88 local housing authorities experienced a problem with racial violence and harassment in council housing. Of these, about half—46—stated that they would try to deal with perpetrators of racial violence and harassment by use of notice of seeking possession, the initial step in legal proceedings which can ultimately lead to eviction if the case is proved in court.

Motor Projects

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department has allocated to motor projects for young people convicted of the offence of taking away a vehicle without the owner's consent in the current financial year.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 23 October 1992]:* The Home Office has so far this financial year approved grants supporting motor projects totalling £263,375 through the probation supervision grant scheme, the aims of which include providing demanding programmes of supervision for dealing with offenders in the community. This brings the total allocation of grants to motor projects under this scheme since 1990, when such funding began, to almost £500,000. The main focus of motor projects funded through this scheme will be young offenders convicted of motor-related offences.

The Home Office has also allocated about £59,000 to motor projects in this financial year through the safer cities programme.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many projects aimed at diverting young people from involvement in vehicle-related crime have been *(a)* wholly funded and *(b)* partly funded by his Department in England and Wales in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 23 October 1992]:* Home Office funding of projects for diverting young people from crime, including vehicle-related crime, is provided under the safer cities programme which was set up in 1988, and the probation supervision grant scheme—formerly the young adult offender grant scheme—which was introduced in 1989.

The information is as follows:

Diversionary projects for young people funded or partly funded by the Home Office

	Vehicle-related projects		*Other projects*	
Year	*Wholly funded*	*Partly funded*	*Wholly funded*	*Partly funded*
1988-89	—	—	5	1
1989-90	7	—	93	—
1990-91	9	3	273	13
1991-92	13	9	300	12

Though final figures for 1992-93 are not yet available, between April and October of this year there were 22 partly or wholly funded vehicle-related projects and 312 partly or wholly funded other projects.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many times per annum meetings take place of the full committee of the Standing Conference on Crime Prevention; when the last meeting took place; and when he expects the next meeting will be called.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 23 October 1992]:* The last meeting of the Home Office Standing Conference on Crime Prevention took place on 18 December 1990. Previously the conference had taken place on an annual basis. A conference has not been planned for this year because, as part of our focused approach to crime prevention, the resources normally devoted to it have been channelled to support the national effort against car crime, through car crime prevention year and its national publicity campaign. Car crime currently accounts for nearly one-third of all recorded crime. Consideration is currently being given to future meetings of standing conference.

By the end of this year as part of our crime prevention strategy Home Office Ministers will have supported and contributed to many local and national crime prevention conferences and meetings including the car crime prevention year launch and review conferences, Crime Concern's conference on "Young People and Community Safety", a conference organised by Crime Concern and the Community Development Foundation entitled "Towards Safer Communities" and the national neighbourhood watch co-ordinators conference planned for November.

Suicide

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of suicides of young people *(a)* aged under 21 years and *(b)* aged between 21 and 30 years in 1991 and the two preceding years; and if he will express these figures as a percentage of the total number of deaths by suicide in those three years.

Mr. Yeo: I have been asked to reply. The information is shown in the table.

The number of reported suicides (ICD* E950-E959) of young people *(a)* aged under 21 years; *(b)* aged 21-29 years; and *(c)* these numbers expressed as a percentage of the total number of deaths by suicides in each of those years. England and Wales 1989, 1990 and 1991.

ICD* International Classification of Diseases; ninth revision.

Year	*Age-group all ages*	*(a) Under 21 years*	*(c) per cent.*	*(b) 21 years-29 years (inc)*	*(c) per cent.*
1989	3,717	165	4·4	722	19·4
1990	3,950	187	4·7	843	21·3
1991	3,893	171	4·4	794	20·4

Source: OPCS

NATIONAL FINANCE

Currency Speculation

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to curb the activities of speculators in the currency market.

Mr. Nelson: I have no plans to introduce controls aimed at curbing the activities of speculators in the currency market.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the Government's policy in regard to the inclusion by banks in their ethical policies of an undertaking not to speculate against the pound.

Mr. Nelson: This is a matter for the banks not the Government. But as a practical matter it would be impossible to distinguish so-called speculation from transactions driven by the genuine needs of customers such as fund managers and corporate treasurers who are taking investment decisions or hedging in the foreign exchange market to protect themselves from currency fluctuations. Moreover it would not be realistic to impose restraints on UK-based banks when sterling is traded worldwide.

Currency Intervention

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will invite the National Audit Office to examine the question of the intervention in the currency market on 14 to 18 September.

Mr. Nelson: It is not for me to direct the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Economic and Monetary Union

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration has been given to sterling's institutional relationship with the single currency if the United Kingdom does not accept stage three of economic and monetary union.

Mr. Nelson: If the United Kingdom does not move to stage 3 of economic and monetary union as set out in the Maastricht treaty, the relationship of the pound sterling to the single currency would be a matter for decision at the time. The treaty does not prescribe the relationship between the currencies of those member states participating in stage 3 and those of non-participants.

Exchange Rates

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the present exchange rate of the pound sterling with *(a)* the United States dollar and *(b)* the German mark; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lamont: The approximate sterling exchange rates at close of business on Friday, 23 October were US dollars 1·6145 and deutschemark 2·4702 respectively.

World Bank

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the annual World bank meeting held in Washington in September, and on any decisions made at that meeting about additional environmental expenditure.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply.

Finance Ministers reviewed the world economic scene, resource flows to developing countries and other issues including progress with the debt strategy and trade policy. On the environment, they welcomed the wide-ranging consensus reached at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. They noted that UNCED had called for additional funding to be channelled through existing institutions, including the global environment facility. They also agreed that continuing consideration should be given to an "earth increment" for environmental purposes in the negotiations for the 10th replenishment of the International Development Association.

International Development Association

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy towards increasing United Kingdom funding for the International Development Association.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply.

The United Kingdom is playing a constructive role in the negotiations on the 10th replenishment of the International Development Association. The overall size of the replenishment and burden-sharing among donors are among the issues still to be resolved.

Currency Trading

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total volume of currency traded from London in the last year for which figures are available; and what percentage is for *(a)* international trading requirements and *(b)* speculative currency deals, respectively.

Mr. Nelson: Total volumes of foreign currency traded in London are not monitored on a regular month-by-month basis. The Bank of England does, however, conduct a wide-ranging survey of foreign exchange business in London every three years. The latest survey, conducted by the bank during April of this year, indicated average gross daily turnover of about $300 billion—around £190 billion at current exchange rates—in London. Within this total, it is impossible to distinguish so-called speculative deals from transactions carried out to finance flows of trade or for fund-management or hedging purposes.

EC Economies

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the economies of the EC currently measure up to the convergence criteria of the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Nelson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 20 October at column *245*.

Financial Reserves

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the levels of financial reserves on 10 April; and what they are at present.

Mr. Nelson: The levels of the United Kingdom foreign exchange reserves at the end of April and September 1992 were respectively $45,775 million and $42,677 million. The level of the reserves is not published on an intra-mensal basis.

Cohesion Fund

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the United Kingdom qualifies for contributions from the EEC cohesion fund on 1991 and 1992 gross domestic product figures.

Mr. Nelson: The cohesion fund envisaged in the Maastricht treaty will be a structural fund; and the usual method of calculating relative wealth for these funds is to use purchasing power parities. On that basis, the United Kingdom would not qualify on 1991 gross domestic product figures, the latest year for which outturn data are available, or forecasts for 1992.

Balance of Payments

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will consider the division of balance of payments figures into different categories so as to show the imports and exports of food, oil, manufactured products, goods for retail sale, cars and aircraft and also into categories which show import and export figures for European and non-European countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The Central Statistical Office already publishes separate figures for the following categories of overseas trade in a monthly press notice and monthly "Review of External Trade Statistics":

Food, beverages and tobacco;
Oil;
Manufactures;
Consumer goods (as opposed to capital and intermediate goods within manufacturers);
Passenger motor cars;
Trade with European countries (distinguishing between the European Community, the rest of Western Europe and Eastern Europe including the former Soviet Union);
Trade with non-European countries (distinguishing between various area groupings).

Consolidated figures are not published for aircraft as the amount of trade in them is relatively small and highly erratic, but monthly data on exports and imports of individual types of aircraft are published by the CSO in a business monitor—MM20—"Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom".

Agriculture

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce a scheme to provide tax relief for companies and businesses providing services to agriculture to enable them to retain employees who would otherwise be made redundant.

Mr. Dorrell: My right hon. Friend has no plans for new tax relief for agricultural service businesses.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce a scheme to provide increased tax relief on capital assets held by companies and businesses providing services to agriculture to enable them to retain employees who would otherwise be made redundant.

Mr. Dorrell: I have no plans to do so.

Bloodstock Industry

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assistance will be provided under the distance selling scheme and the flat rate scheme to vendors of horses selling for less than £15,000.

Sir John Cope: Bloodstock industry representatives have indicated that both schemes could be of some assistance when selling horses with a value of £15,000 or less. It is for individual vendors to assess the advantages of the new arrangements which will be able from 1 January 1993.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce regulations to enable race horse owners to be registered for VAT.

Sir John Cope: Eligibility for VAT registration is governed by both European Community law and United Kingdom law. Under the present rules of racing, race horse owners in the United Kingdom do not qualify for VAT registration because it is not a business activity making taxable supplies. This opinion has been upheld in individual cases by the independent VAT tribunals.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate has been made of the financial effect on the domestic bloodstock industry of the new VAT required to be imposed as part of the EC single market changes on 1 January 1993.

Sir John Cope: It is not possible to make any reliable estimate of the financial effects future changes to the VAT regime will have on the United Kingdom bloodstock industry. VAT is only one of several factors which determine its finances, but, as long as the industry ensures that its members fully understand the new rules for the single market, they should not be significantly disadvantaged by them.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement outlining the ways in which the changes to be introduced on 1 January 1993 to the VAT regime affecting the bloodstock industry achieves parity of treatment between British breeders and their overseas counterparts.

Sir John Cope: The present VAT arrangements will in large part remain after 1992, although in some cases in a different form. British breeders should therefore maintain broadly the same position in relation to their overseas counterparts as now. The introduction of an agricultural flat-rate scheme in the United Kingdom in 1993 will be an extra scheme, not currently available, which will allow those breeders who opt to become flat-rate farmers to sell horses and nominations free of VAT, in exactly the same way as their European counterparts.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will reconsider introducing regulations to enable a low VAT rate to be applied to the United Kingdom bloodstock industry; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The Government's policy is to maintain a simple VAT structure with a single positive rate. Any concession for racehorses would inevitably bring pressure for a similar concession on a wide range of goods and services, where it was felt that the case was just as strong as that for bloodstock.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the level of public expenditure by region in each year since 1979-80 *(a)* in overall terms and *(b)* in per capita terms at current and 1979-80 prices.

Mr. Portillo: Information on the level of general Government expenditure by region in England was published in the "Statistical Supplement to the 1990 Autumn Statement", Cm 1520, for 1987-88 and in the "Statistical Supplement to the 1991 Autumn Statement", Cm 1920, for years 1988-89 and 1989-90. Information on the level of public expenditure by region in England on a consistent basis is not available prior to 1987-88.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to conduct an annual regional analysis of general Government expenditure within England.

Mr. Portillo: In response to a request from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee—fifth report for 1991, HC 290—a regional analysis of general Government expenditure within England is conducted annually. The results of the 1990 exercise were published in the "Statistical Supplement to the 1990 Autumn Statement", Cm 1520, and the results of the 1991 exercise were published in the "Statistical Supplement to the 1991 Autumn Statement", Cm 1521. The results of the 1992 exercise will be published in the "Statistical Supplement to the 1992 Autumn Statement".

Financial Statistics

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list, for each of the years 1974-75 to 1992-93 (planned), *(a)* in market price and *(b)* in constant prices (i) gross domestic product and (ii) public sector borrowing requirement, (1) including privatisation receipts and (2) excluding privatisation receipts, (iii) general Government expenditure, as defined in United Kingdom accounts, (iv) general Government receipts, as defined in United Kingdom accounts, (v) general Government expenditure, as defined in the European system of integrated accounts, (vi) general Government receipts, as defined in the European system of integrated accounts, (vii) borrowing as defined in the European system of integrated accounts, (viii) (ii) (1) and (2) as a percentage of (i) and (ix) (vii) as a percentage of (i).

Mr. Portillo: Most of the figures requested are available from the CSO database, which can be accessed through the House of Commons Library. The identifiers are as follows:

	Identifier
(a) GDP at current prices	CAOB
(b) GDP at constant market prices	CAOQ
(c) PSBR including privatisation receipts	ABEN
(d) PSBR excluding privatisation receipts	ABII
(e) General government expenditure United Kingdom definition	ABAB
(f) General government expenditure, ESA definition	see table
(g) General government receipts, ESA definition	see table
(h) General government borrowing, ESA definition	CSNK

Items *(c)* to *(h)* are not available at constant prices. Items *(f)*, *(g)* and *(h)* are available only for calendar years.

General Government total receipts and expenditure on ESA definitions are not available on the database and are shown in the table.

Forecasts for 1992-93 for gross domestic product, the public sector borrowing requirement, and general Government expenditure as defined in United Kingdom accounts were published in the 1992-93 Financial Statement and Budget Report in March. A revised forecast will be published in the autumn statement. There are no forecasts made on ESA definitions.

	On ESA definitions: General government	
	Receipts (f)	*Payments (g)*
1974	56,702	53,524
1975	76,442	71,438
1976	89,524	83,355
1977	97,516	92,554
1978	110,410	102,999
1979	127,123	120,674
1980	156,531	148,431
1981	181,710	171,493
1982	194,156	186,214
1983	211,558	201,373
1984	226,991	214,156
1985	240,509	230,250
1986	255,840	245,137
1987	269,908	264,257
1988	288,880	289,750
1989	310,317	310,041
1990	350,391	341,582
1991	383,220	367,150

These series are only calculated for calendar years. Forecasts are not available.

Debt in Africa

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions on alleviating debt in Africa were held at the annual International Monetary Fund and World bank meetings in Washington in September.

Mr. Nelson: Discussions at the annual International Monetary Fund and World bank meetings in September covered the international debt strategy. Ministers welcomed the enhanced debt relief extended to the poorest and most heavily indebted countries by the Paris club, including to date the African countries of Benin, Equatorial Guinea, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zambia, and urged the Paris club to recognise the special situation of some highly indebted lower-middle income countries on a case by case basis. The Paris club was also invited to maintain its continuing review of the debt strategy.

Correspondence

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the target times within which Treasury Ministers aim to reply to letters sent to them by hon. Members on behalf of their constituents.

Sir John Cope: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has set the following targets for replies to ministerial correspondence:

Letters for ministerial reply on matters concerning Her Majesty's Treasury: Reply to be posted within 15 working days.

Letters for ministerial reply on matters concerning other Chancellor's Departments, including Inland Revenue and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise: Reply to be posted within 18 working days.

Letters for ministerial reply on matters requiring a report from a local Inland Revenue tax office: Reply to be posted within 23 working days.

These targets come into operation from Monday, 2 November. The targets will be kept under review. Details of the extent to which they have been met will be published in the Chancellor's Department's departmental report.

BCCI

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total number of claims made to the deposit protection board by former depositors of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International by *(a)* number and *(b)* value; and how many are still to be processed.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 22 October 1992]:* I understand that at 19 October 1992 some 16,500 claims had been lodged with the board. Of these some 5,500 claims are with the liquidators awaiting proof of debt forms to be lodged, and some 1,500 claims are in course of payment or awaiting responses to inquiries. No details are maintained of the total value of claims.

WALES

Dentists

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many Danish dentists he proposes to allow to complete their training in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This is not a matter in which the Secretary of State has any specific remit. The General Dental Council is responsible for determining the eligibility of EC qualified dental practitioners for employment in the United Kingdom, whether in training grades or as independent practitioners.

Promotional World Tour

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list each private or voluntary body or association or private individual from Wales or elsewhere in the United Kingdom associated by arrangement with either his Department, the Welsh Development Agency or the Wales tourist board with the current Wales promotional world tour; and if he will specify to which event on which leg of the tour the arrangement has been made.

Mr. David Hunt: My recent inward investment mission involved representatives of the Welsh Office, the Welsh Development Agency and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, as well as many individuals in the companies concerned.

Radioactive Substances

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has regarding the breaches of the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 by Xidex (UK) Ltd. of Brynmawr, Gwent.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Under the provisions of the Radioactive Substances Act 1960, the chief inspector of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution—HMIP—is responsible for deciding in which cases prosecution action may be appropriate. My right hon. Friend and I were informed of legal action planned by the inspectorate against Xidex (UK) Ltd. and the reasons for it.

"Think Globally, Act Locally"

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many copies of the Government booklet "Think Globally, Act Locally" issued in September, have been distributed in Wales; and what criteria have been adopted in drawing up the distribution list.

Mr. David Hunt: This Department of the Environment booklet is being given a wide circulation throughout the United Kingdom. It is expected to be of general interest and DOE's initial circulation has included some 300 copies to local government, libraries, environmental groups, Members of Parliament and others in Wales.

Environmental Research

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to publish his Department's study of environmental research priorities in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: As is made clear in the Welsh chapter of "This Common Inheritance—The Second Year Report", this is an internal review of the Welsh Office's environmental research programme. I will be considering whether and in what form the review, when completed, might be published.

Panteg

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much his Department has spent to date funding the survey of polychlorinated biphenol contamination in Panteg, to which reference is made in chapter 18, paragraph 13.21 of Britain's Environmental Strategy, Cm 2068.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A total of £159,000.

Nuclear Plants

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will invite European Commission safety inspectors to evaluate the radiation protection arrangements in place at the Wylfa and Trawsfyndd nuclear plants under the provisions of article 35 of the Euratom treaty.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The United Kingdom Government have agreed with the European Commission the procedures to be followed in carrying out, under article 35 of the Euratom treaty, verifications of the operation and efficiency of environmental monitoring facilities in the United Kingdom. It is for the Commission in the first instance to indicate which monitoring facilities it would wish to visit under these arrangements; it has not yet made any formal requests to so so.

RECHAR

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made in resolving the dispute over the allocation of EC RECHAR funds in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: There is no dispute. The RECHAR programme for south Wales was adopted by the European Commission in February. A package of projects to take up most of the available funds has been agreed in principle by the programme co-ordinating committee. Full applications are now being assessed, and I anticipate that the first formal approvals will take place well before the end of the year.

Electricity Interconnector

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if plans by the National Grid Company and the Irish Electricity Supply Board to develop an interconnector link between Ynys Môn and north Dublin are subject to European environmental impact directives.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Proposals for the transmission of electrical energy, other than by overhead cable, are not subject to directive 85/337/EEC which covers the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment.

Environmental Education

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made to date with his departmental commitment to promote environmental education in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Environmental education has been given a place in the curriculum of all primary and secondary schools as a result of the introduction of the national curriculum. It is an integral element in a number of subjects including science, geography, history and technology. The Curriculum Council for Wales is currently producing guidance for schools on environmental education as a cross-curricular theme and this will be circulated to schools shortly.

The Curriculum Council for Wales and the Countryside Council for Wales have held a joint conference on practical ways of teaching environmental education in schools and a successful environmental competition has been held for schools in Wales.

An expert committee on environmental education in further and higher education has been set up to look at the provision of environmental education and will be reporting to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and my right hon. Friend shortly.

Coal

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what calculations he has made of the effect upon the Welsh economy and communities of coal mine closures since 1984.

Mr. David Hunt: While I appreciate the immediate difficulties for individuals and communities that the closure of coal mines presents, over the past decade we have been able to diversify the Welsh economy to a point where it is much stronger and more resilient rather than being over-dependent on a small number of sectors as was the case in the past.

Contaminated Land Register

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the impact on land values of the implementation of the contaminated land register in Wales under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In drawing up its revised proposals for contaminated land registers, the Government have sought to take account of the possible consequences for land values in England and Wales. This aspect will be considered further however, along with other relevant issues, in the light of the responses to the recent consultation exercise.

NHS Trust Unit

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many civil servants of which grade work *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part of their time within the NHS trust unit within his Department, and what is its estimated total establishment cost in the current financial year and next financial year.

Mr. David Hunt: The complement of the Department's NHS trust unit consists of four full-time civil servants:

	Number
Grade 7	1
Higher Executive Officer	1
Executive Officer	1
Administrative Officer	1

Estimated total establishment cost for the current financial year amounts to £127,191. Figures for the next financial year are not available.

Household Waste

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales(1) what tonnage of household waste is produced in each local authority area in Wales;

(2) how many household waste landfill sites there are in each local authority area in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is available only from district councils which have responsibilities for investigations of controlled waste arising in their areas and for the licensing of disposal sites.

Baglon Hospital Site, Port Talbot

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what effects have been undertaken by his Department to *(a)* research the quality of soil for heavy metal contamination, *(b)* consider the level of legal waste disposal and illegal tipping in the vicinity and *(c)* research the effect of toxic deposits in water-courses and emission levels into the air prior to the development of the Baglon hospital site in Port Talbot.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The interdepartmental committee on the redevelopment of contaminated land has published guidance on the assessment and remedial measures for these types of site. West Glamorgan health authority which has full responsibility for the new hospital scheme, are expected to follow these guidelines. There is also a statutory responsibility on the local planning authority under the planning and building regulation procedures to satisfy itself before approval to proceed is given that the proposal takes proper account of any contamination that may exist.

Development of Contaminated Land

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps are taken by his Department prior to the building of new hospitals in Wales, to *(a)* research the quality of the soil for possible contamination, *(b)* monitor the level of toxic emissions into the locality, *(c)* measure toxic deposits into the watercourse of the locality and *(d)* research the level of risk from localised waste disposal and tipping, both illegal and legal.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Welsh Office circular 22/87 provides guidance about the development of contaminated land. Responsibility for assessing whether land is suitable for hospital building, including whether it is contaminated, rests primarily with the health authority concerned. The local planning authority also has a statutory duty under the planning and building regulations to satisfy itself before approval to proceed with any scheme is given that the proposal takes proper account of any contamination that may exist.

Acid Rain

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many sites of special scientific interest in Wales have been damaged by *(a)* acid rain and *(b)* other agricultural damage in 1991; what are the names and locations of these sites and the total number of hectares; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There are now 845 sites of special scientific interest in Wales. In 1991, 42 sites were subject to some damage from agricultural practices. Between 1988 and 1992, 41 freshwater sites were subject to some damage from acidification. Of these 83 sites, six have been subject to some damage from agriculture and acidification. Data on acidification to dry land sites should be available next year. I have placed copies containing details of these sites in the Library of the House.

Exam papers (Welsh Language)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of students who submitted exam papers in Welsh in 1991; what was the cost of having these papers translated into English; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The latest available statistics from the Welsh Joint Education Committee show that in 1991 a total of 1,093 candidates submitted Welsh medium papers for A/AS level and 9,679 for GCSE examinations. There are no costs to students associated with translation as schools choose to enter candidates through either the medium of Welsh or English.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to review the system whereby students submitting certain exam papers in Welsh in the coming school year will have to pay to have them translated into English; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The principal examining body for GCSE and A-level examinations in Wales is the Welsh Joint Education Committee—WJEC. There are no translation costs, as examination papers submitted by pupils in the medium of Welsh are marked by the WJEC's Welsh-speaking examiners and are not translated into English.

Urbanised Land

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hectares of land in Wales have become urbanised so far this year; if he will give comparable figures for 1989, 1990 and 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: A limited amount of information on land-use change is provided by statistics derived from records compiled by Ordnance Survey during the course of its map revision work. A large proportion of changes of use are not collected until some time after the year of change, resulting in substantial time lags before there are adequate data to estimate total change occurring during a particular year. The latest available data suggest that between 1985-87, the average recorded net change of land from rural to urban use in Wales was 560 hectares per year. Information for later years is not available.

Fishguard

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received to his consultative paper on assisted areas advocating the creation of development area status for the Fishguard travel-to-work area.

Mr. David Hunt: Five.

Japanese

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many teachers qualified to teach the Japanese language are currently employed by local education authorities and teaching in *(a)* secondary schools to GCSE level and *(b)* in sixth forms to A-level; and if he will make a statement on the teaching of Japanese in Welsh schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on teachers qualified to teach Japanese is not available.

We have continued to promote the teaching of Japanese in schools in Wales through the Japanese in schools initiative launched in 1989. The initiative has established a sixth-form course of study and assessment scheme accredited by the Welsh Joint Education Committee and has supported teaching of Japanese in 14 schools participating in the initiative.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received in total to his consultation paper on assisted areas; and how many of these representations advocated *(a)* the creation of further development areas, *(b)* the creation of further intermediate areas, *(c)* the maintenance of the status quo, *(d)* the reduction of development areas and *(e)* the reduction of intermediate areas.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received 76 representations. Of these, 35 argue for the creation of further development areas; four advocate creation of further intermediate areas; and 37 are in favour of the status quo. I have received no requests for a reduction in assisted areas of either status.

The division of representations does not correspond to the overall number received because a proportion of the submissions make a case for more than one travel-to-work area; others do not argue for or against any particular area, but confine their comments to the review itself.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales in his review of assisted area status, how many submissions from within each Welsh constituency he has received; if he will extend the period for receiving submissions in relation to the current review of assisted area status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received 76 representations on the assisted areas review, the majority of which are from local authorities. In most cases, the areas covered by these local authorities overlap constituency boundaries and it is not possible, therefore, to provide the information in the form requested.

The deadline for receipt of representations from the various interested bodies was 30 September. This gave consultees nearly four months in which to respond. A few organisations gave us advance notice that they might over reach the deadline by a few days and we have, therefore, made allowances. In view of the number of representations already received, I do not believe it is necessary to extend the deadline.

The information contained in the representations is currently being considered and we hope to be able to make a decision on the review by the end of the year.

Power Station, Trawsfynydd

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future of the magnox power station at Trawsfynydd.

Mr. David Hunt: The nuclear installations inspectorate is currently examining Nuclear Electric's revised safety case for a resumption of electricity generation. The station will resume operations only if the nuclear installations inspectorate is entirely satisfied that it is safe to do so.

Town and Community Councils

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to review the working of German communes—community councils—as part of his study into the role and function of town and community councils in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: No, but I would be happy to receive any observations on such matters which the hon. Gentleman might wish to make.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many responses he has received to his Department's consultation paper on town and community councils; and how many of these advocate an enhanced representational rôle for the councils.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received 353 responses to the consultation paper. The detailed analysis of these responses is continuing, but, of those which have been examined, most support an enhanced representational role for local councils.

Less-favoured Areas

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of Welsh farmers are included in the less-favoured area scheme; what is the average income of Welsh farmers included under this scheme; what is the average income of farmers under this scheme in the EC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: A total of 69 per cent. of Welsh farmers farm in the less-favoured area. They benefit from a wide range of support measures including hill livestock compensatory allowance, sheep and suckler cow premia and capital grants which together are worth over £123 million annually.

The net income of Welsh farmers included under these schemes—averaged over the three years 1988-89 to 1990-91—is £10,200. Comparable income figures are not available for the EC.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the average income of Welsh farmers under the less favoured area scheme in 1990, 1991; and what is expected in 1992.

Mr. David Hunt: Net farm income figures of LFA livestock farms for the years 1989-90 and 1990-91 were £10,100 and £7,600 respectively—Welsh Office press notice of 16 January 1992. Provisional results for 1991-92 suggest that incomes on these holdings have risen to around £11,600.

Pit Closures

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is *(a)* the number of coalminers in Wales who will be made redundant under recent closure plans, *(b)* the average number of tons per month produced by Welsh collieries and *(c)* the average comparable number in English collieries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: *(a)* Both Taff Merthyr and Betws collieries are due to close at the end of the 90-day statutory consultation period. This will result in the loss of approximately 500 jobs.

(b) Based on the actual saleable outputs for the six months to the end of September 1992, the four Welsh collieries mined in total an average of 156,785 tonnes per month giving an average output per colliery of 39,196 tonnes.

(c) During the same period the 45 English collieries mined in total an average of 4,636,149 tonnes per month giving an average output per colliery of 103,026 tonnes.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the freedom from closure of Tower colliery at Hirwaun, Mid Glamorgan over the next two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have been told by the chairman of British Coal that there are no plans to close this colliery.

Dairy Farms

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost of sampling visits to dairy farms in Wales by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, in 1990, 1991 and 1992; what is the projected charge for 1993; and what is the criteria for any change of the charge.

Mr. David Hunt: On the basis of the latest information available, the cost in 1992 will be about £30,000. Separate figures for Wales are not available for 1990 and 1991. Charges are based on financial years and the proposed charge for 1992-93 is £63. The charge for 1993-94 will be decided prior to 1 April 1993. The objective of the charge is to recover the full cost of sampling and testing work; thus, any change to the level would be to reflect the effectiveness of meeting that objective.

Valleys Programme

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the annual spending totals for each year on the valleys programme since its inception.

Mr. David Hunt: The annual spending totals on the relevant central Government programmes for each year of the valleys programme since its inception are:

Financial year	*£ million*
1988-89	139·330
1989-90	137·440
1990-91	148·810
1991-92	[1]171·033

[1] Estimated outturn.

Economic Council

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish full details of the composition and structure of the Economic Council for Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: As I announced to the House on 19 October, I issued on that day a consultation paper on the proposed Welsh economic council. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Orimulsion

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from National Power regarding the proposal to burn orimulsion at Pembroke power plant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None. In order to proceed with its plans to burn orimulsion at Pembroke power station, National Power requires permission from the Department of Trade and Industry and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution—HMIP—under the Electricity Act 1989 and the Environmental Protection Act 1990 respectively. No decisions have been taken; but I understand that HMIP has recently indicated to the company that it does not consider that orimulsion could be burnt at Pembroke without further measures to protect the environment.

Point of Ayr Colliery

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make an early visit to the Point of Ayr colliery to meet management and unions.

Mr. David Hunt: I had several meetings on the subject of the Point of Ayr colliery on 23 October 1992, but I have no immediate plans to visit the colliery again.

HEALTH

Central Health Monitoring Unit

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what powers she has to ensure that trusts and other providers of health care share information with the central health monitoring unit, regardless of commercial confidentiality; and what examples there have been of providers refusing to co-operate in statistical surveys initiated by the central health monitoring unit.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Secretary of State has particular powers under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 to require trusts to provide whatever information she requires to discharge her responsibilities. Information from the national health service is agreed through a joint Department of Health/national health service consultative committee and there is accountability through the management chain for the provision of that information from providers and purchasers of health care in the national health service. There have been no problems with the exchange of information.

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what kind of data the central health monitoring unit is collecting; and what use it is currently making of such information;

(2) what level of resources, including staffing, is being allocated to the central health monitoring unit;

(3) if she intends to publish regularly the data collected by the central health monitoring unit;

(4) if she will outline the role of the central health monitoring unit; and if she will make a statement detailing its current workload and its plans for future projects.

Dr. Mawhinney: The central health monitoring unit was set up in March 1989 to provide the Department with epidemiological data to underpin its strategic, managerial and policy work. The unit, which is headed by a medical epidemiologist, comprises 12 posts including epidemiological, statistical and administrative support.

A major function of the unit is to collate published statistics on health from a wide range of sources and to assess and present health trends in, for example, mortality, morbidity and risk factors. The health survey for England, a survey being taken forward by the unit, involves the collection of information from individual households and the results will be published annually.

The unit is currently engaged in producing a series of epidemiological overviews on various aspects of the health of the population; in developing a health survey programme; and, in contributing to the development and monitoring of the health strategy. The series of overviews is being published. The first, on the elderly, was published in September 1992. Other assessments of health trends by the unit are published in the chief medical officer's annual reports.

Glaucoma

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to provide for free eye tests for people under the age of 40 years where *(a)* there is a family history of glaucoma and *(b)* they are from communities at greater risk from glaucoma than others.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have no current plans to alter the present categories of those eligible for free sight tests.

Needles (Diabetics)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) of 13 July, *Official Report*, column *513*, if she has now decided to make Novopen needles for diabetics available by prescription from general practitioners.

Dr. Mawhinney: We are continuing to consider the case for authorising general practitioners to prescribe both insulin injection pens and needles but, in reaching a final decision, we shall need to take into account current public expenditure constraints.

Food Hygiene

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about the timing and scope of her proposed new regulations covering food handlers and food hygiene qualifications.

Mr. Sackville: We expect to issue a consultation document, as announced in July, before the end of the year on draft regulations which would require food businesses to train, instruct and supervise their staff in food hygiene commensurate with their task in the preparation or handling of food.

Interleukin-6

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether she will set out the role of Mr. Stuart Ingham, then the district general manager of Leeds Western health authority, in the investigation into the alleged fraud at the Leeds general infirmary in 1989 in relation to the research project on Interleukin-6; and if she will make a statement;

(2) whether she will set out the role of Coopers and Lybrand in the investigation into the alleged fraud at the Leeds general infirmary in 1989 in relation to the research project on Interleukin-6; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The 1989 inquiry considered Dr. Chapman's allegations concerning a consultancy arrangement between a Belgian pharmaceutical company and the head of the bio-chemistry department at Leeds general infirmary. A separate inquiry into Dr. Chapman's allegations concerning research into Interleukin-6 was conducted by the university of Leeds earlier this year and further inquiries are currently under way.

Mr. Stuart Ingham, as district general manager of the then Leeds Western health authority, was responsible for the day-to-day running of the authority. Mr. Ingham had no direct role in the 1989 investigation which was carried out by a Member of Coopers and Lybrand staff and, with their agreement, a professionally qualified auditor of the then Leeds Western health authority who was responsible to the authority's director of finance.

The 1989 investigation did not substantiate the allegations made by Dr. Chapman. This investigation has recently been reviewed by a partner in Coopers and Lybrand, who had not been previously involved. He concluded that the findings of the 1989 report were justified and that there would be little merit in reopening the investigation.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate has been made as to the financial loss to the national health service of the fraud in 1988-89 with the Interleukin-6 research project at the Leeds general infirmary; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Interleukin-6 research project is currently the subject of further inquiries by the university of Leeds. Until that inquiry is concluded there are no grounds for supposing that there has been an avoidable loss of funds to the national health service. Research cannot be expected always to result in a usable product or testing process.

Ethical Standards

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to write again on ethical standards in medical research, as promised in her letter of 15 July to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State wrote to the hon. Member on 20 October 1992 following my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's letter of 15 July 1992.

Smoking

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the health education authority's estimate of the number of premature deaths caused by smoking in the past year in the Stoke-on-Trent, North constituency; and what action she will take to reduce the number of such premature deaths in the future.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Health Education Authority estimates that, in the Stoke-on-Trent, North constituency, 225 people die each year because of smoking. The White Paper "Health of the Nation" commits us to ambitious targets to reduce smoking and sets out a detailed strategy to achieve them including action on price, health education and ensuring effective controls on advertising. It also sets out the key role of health authorities in leading action to improve the health of local people including action to reduce smoking.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the latest estimates by the Registrar-General of Populations of those aged 17 years and over, plus 63 per cent. of those aged 16 years, for each district council area and parliamentary constituency in England and Wales, together in each case with the equivalent year's electoral registration figures.

Mr. Sackville: The information has been placed in the Library. The Registrar-General's provisional mid-1991 estimates of residents aged 17 years and over plus 63 per cent. of those aged 16 years in each local authority area of England and Wales are compared with roughly corresponding 1992 electorate figures. These population estimates are the first to be based upon information collected in the 1991 census. They include an allowance for census under-enumeration. There are no similar population estimates for parliamentary constituencies.

Residential Homes

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will review her policy towards small residential and nursing homes to make it easier for bona fide private sector owners to register and operate homes with four or fewer beds;

(2) if she will consider allowing discretion to local officers to register small residential and nursing homes with four or fewer beds in rural areas where inadequate numbers of beds are available in the public sector;

(3) if she will make a statement outlining the reasons for refusing to register residential and nursing homes in the private sector with four or fewer beds.

Mr. Yeo: All independent nursing homes, whatever their size, are required to register with the health authority in whose area they fall.

At present private and voluntary residential care homes with fewer than four residents in need of care—small homes—are exempt from the registration requirement of the Registered Homes Act 1984. This exemption will be removed when the Registered Homes (Amendment) Act 1991 comes into force on 1 April 1993.

The only ground on which a local authority will be able to refuse to register someone liable to register in respect of a small home will be that that person or someone else involved in running the home is unfit to do so. This lighter regulatory approach is further reflected in the Residential Care Homes (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 1992 which were laid on 21 September 1992.

Neither the Registered Homes Act nor the Department's guidance to local authorities differentiates between homes in rural and other areas. But they do provide scope for account to be taken of the particular circumstances of each home and the needs of its residents.

Nutrient-based Products

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many product licence applications have been *(a)* received and *(b)* refused for nutrient-based products since 1 January 1990.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Royal Orthopaedic Hospital, Birmingham

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received regarding plans by South Birmingham health authority to close the Broad street site of the Royal orthopaedic hospital in Birmingham in advance of the completion of the formal consultation period; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for the West Midlands regional health authority and we have not received any such representations.

Community Services, Birmingham

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the budget of the East Birmingham district health authority was spent on community services during 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville: Details of health authority budgets are not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Nigel Thompson, chairman of East Birmingham health authority, for details.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the cost of preparing NHS trust applications *(a)* nationally, *(b)* by region and *(c)* by district for the whole NHS trust programme to date.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the cost of employing management consultants and private agencies to assist in the preparation of self-governing trust applications *(a)* nationally, *(b)* by region and *(c)* by district for the whole programme to date.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, West, *Official Report*, 18 May, column 63, if she will break down the details for expenditure on NHS trusts by *(a)* region and *(b)* district.

Dr. Mawhinney: Expenditure on trusts is made centrally; to regional health authorities; and to trusts themselves through district health authorities. The information is shown in the table:

Total expenditure on national health service trusts by region

	First wave 1990-91 £'000s	*Second wave 1991-92 £'000s*	*Third wave 1992-93 [1]£'000s*
Northern	663	1,590	132
Yorkshire	651	1,578	192
Trent	651	2,630	204
East Anglian	434	789	120
North West Thames	892	3,873	151
North East Thames	1,314	2,139	187
South East Thames	265	2,174	194
South West Thames	1,531	801	84
Wessex	868	1,841	120
Oxford	217	1,351	108
South Western	1,953	2,367	84
West Midlands	868	1,578	192
Mersey	1,736	2104	84
North Western	434	1,506	84
Other[2]	230	279	164
TOTAL	12,470	26,600	2,100

[1] Denotes spending to date.

[2] Denotes central spending not allocated through regions.

Expenditure on NHS Trusts by district—first wave

Health Authority	*Amount £000*
Northern	
Newcastle	380
Yorkshire	
Bradford	190
Leeds Eastern	190
Leeds Western	190
Trent	
Doncaster	190
North Lincolnshire	190
Sheffield	190
East Anglian	
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	190
Norwich	190
North West Thames	
Parkside	190
North Herts	190
Hillingdon	380
North East Thames	
Tower Hamlets	190
Hampstead	190
Haringey	190
Bloomsbury	380
Southend	190

Health Authority	*Amount £000*
South East Thames	
Lewisham and North Southwark	190
South West Thames	
Croydon	380
Kingston and Esher	190
Mid Surrey	190
Merton and Sutton	190
North West Surrey	190
South West Surrey	190
Wessex	
Bath	190
West Dorset	570
Oxford	
Oxfordshire	190
South Western	
Bristol and District	380
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	380
Somerset	380
Cheltenham and District	190
Torbay	190
West Midlands	
Mid Staffordshire	380
Rugby	190
Walsall	190
Mersey	
Wirral	190
Liverpool	760
Crewe	190
Halton	190
St. Helens and Knowsley	190
North Western	
South Manchester	190
Central Manchester	190

Expenditure on NHS Trusts by district—second wave

Health Authority	*Amount £000*
Northern	
South Tees	452
Gateshead	226
North Tees	226
Northumberland	226
Newcastle	226
Yorkshire	
Bradford	226
Airedale	226
Northallerton	226
Scarborough	226
York	226
Harrogate	226
Trent	
Doncaster	226
Bassetlaw	226
Nottingham	452
South Lincolnshire	226
Rotherham	226
Barnsley	226
Sheffield	678
East Anglian	
East Suffolk	226
West Norfolk	226
Huntingdon	226
North West Thames	
North Bedfordshire	226
Hounslow and Spelthorne	226
Ealing	226
South Bedfordshire	452
North West Hertfordshire	452
Harrow	226
East Hertfordshire	226
Parkside	294
Barnet	452
Hillingdon	452
North East Thames	
Basildon and Thurrock	226
Mid Essex	452
North East Essex	678
Waltham Forest	226
City and Hackney	23
Southend	226
South East Thames	
Brighton	226
Camberwell	23
Eastbourne	226
Hastings	226
Maidstone	226
Bromley	226
West Lambeth	249
Dartford and Gravesham	226
Lewisham and North Southwark	226
South West Thames	
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	226
North West Surrey	452
Wessex	
Bath	904
East Dorset	678
Oxford	
Aylesbury Vale	226
East Berkshire	452
Milton Keynes	452
South Western	
Bristol and District	678
Bristol and Western	226
Gloucester	226
Plymouth	226
Exeter	452
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	226
West Midlands	
Mid Staffordshire	226
Coventry	226
Herefordshire District	226
South Warwickshire	226
South East Staffordshire	226
East Birmingham	226
Mersey	
Wirral	226
Liverpool	452
South Sefton	678
Southport and Formby	226
St. Helens and Knowsley	226
North Western	
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	226
Rochdale	226
Oldham	226
West Lancashire	226
Lancaster	452

Child Care Schemes

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many children were on holiday child care schemes in each year since 1979; and, of those, which were provided by local authorities and the voluntary sector, respectively; (2) how many children were receiving out-of-school child care in each year since 1979; and, of those, which were provided by local authorities and voluntary agencies, respectively.

Mr. Yeo: The inspection and registration of day care services for young children under the Children Act 1989, is a matter for the Department of Health. Information about the number of children under five provided with day care by local authorities and the numbers of local authority registered and exempt day care places is published in "Children's Day Care Facilities at 31 March . . ., England". The most recent publication is for 1991. A copy is available in the Library.

New information on the number of children on the register of local authority out of school clubs and the numbers of local authority, registered and exempt places in out-of-school clubs and on holiday play schemes will be issued during 1993.

The Department is currently funding an initiative to encourage the development of out-of-school care and I understand that work is well under way in the Department of Employment towards its new initiative to promote additional out-of-school schemes.

TRANSPORT

Rail Passengers Charter

12. **Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what effect the rail passengers charter has had on British Rail's performance to date.

Mr. Roger Freeman: Published performance figures show that many of British Rail's lines have shown improvements in punctuality and reliability since the passengers charter was published on 4 March. The latest results show that 13 out of 15 network SouthEast route groups are now achieving or exceeding their 1992 charter standards for punctuality.

Crossrail

13. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about progress on the crossrail link in London.

Mr. Norris: A Bill for the construction of crossrail was deposited in Parliament in November 1991 and is currently awaiting its Second Reading.

Cyclists' Touring Club

14. **Mr. Hinchcliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met representatives of the Cyclists' Touring Club to discuss road safety.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Officials and Ministers at the Department have regular contact with the Cyclists Touring Club through meetings and correspondence covering a broad range of issues. I last met with the CTC in July this year.

Traffic Speeds

15. **Ms. Glenda Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what financial assistance he plans for 1992 to assist local authorities to reduce traffic speeds in residential streets.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: For 1992-93 over £42 million has been earmarked for local safety schemes, an increase of 38 per cent. over last year. Schemes to save road casualties by reducing traffic speeds in residential areas are eligible for transport supplementary grant.

International Flights

16. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to liberalise transatlantic air services and encourage more international flights from regional airports.

Mr. Norris: In the past seven years, we have seen a 40 per cent. increase in the number of international routes served from regional airports. British Airways has recently proposed new routes from Manchester and Birmingham to the States. Both my right hon. Friend the Secretary of state and the US Secretary for Transportation are taking a close interest in the progress of liberalisation talks. Difficult issues remain but work on them has been accelerated.

Red Routes

17. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a further statement on the effect of red routes on community life in London.

Mr. Norris: Communities along the pilot red route corridor have benefited from a 17 per cent. reduction in accidents, 11 new or improved crossing places for pedestrians and three for cyclists, 107 side road entries made safer, traffic calming measures in the surrounding area, 620 new free short term parking spaces, and faster and more reliable bus services including a new express service.

Aviation Package

18. **Mr. Sproat:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has made further progress in the matters arising from the third aviation package.

Mr. Norris: The third air transport liberalisation package will come into effect on 1 January 1993. Work is now in hand to make the necessary changes to existing United Kingdom legislation.

Under the United Kingdom presidency, work is going forward on other aviation issues including airport slot allocation and state aids.

Channel Tunnel

19. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the new channel tunnel Waterloo terminal to be completed.

Mr. Freeman: The new international terminal at Waterloo should be completed by the summer of 1993.

27. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he has made to finalise plans for the second London channel tunnel station.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail plans to develop King's Cross as the second London Channel tunnel terminal. The King's Cross Railways Bill is currently before Parliament.

29. **Ms. Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the Government's plans for the channel tunnel high-speed rail link.

Mr. Freeman: Currently Union Railways—British Rail's subsidiary—is refining the easterly approach route to London selected by the Government last October. It will report at the end of the year on a reference case route and local options. The Government will then decide on a preferred route for full public consultation.

Roadbuilding (Conservation)

21. **Mr. Heald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration is given to conservation during the building of roads.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We shall continue to ensure that environmental considerations are given full weight in the development of trunk roads.

We take account of the possible environmental impact of proposals even before they enter the roads programme, and we maintain that high degree of consideration throughout their development. A recent example is our delaying the construction of the A20 at Dover so that the Bronze age boat could be rescued.

British Rail

23. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received on his plans for the future of British Rail.

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) earlier today.

Second Severn Crossing

24. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with the consortium constructing the second Severn crossing.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department is in frequent discussion with the concessionaire, Severn River Crossing plc, on a range of issues connected with the existing Severn bridge and the new bridge now under construction by the company.

London Docklands

25. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on Government support for *(a)* underground and *(b)* riverbus services to London docklands.

Mr. Norris: *(a)* the Government have supported London Underground Ltd. in developing the Jubilee line extension, which would greatly improve access to London docklands. We have not authorised the start of construction of the JLE which would take total expenditure to over £1·8 billion, while talks continue on the promised £400 million contribution from the private sector.

(b) We have consistently maintained that Riverbus is, and should remain, a private sector project.

Bournemouth Central Station

26. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the restoration of Bournemouth Central station to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that British Rail hopes work on the restoration of Bournemouth station can begin in 1994, and should take about 15 months to complete.

Class 158 Rolling Stock

28. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the current performance of the Regional Railway class 158 rolling stock.

Mr. Freeman: Any such assessment would be a matter for British Rail. I understand that the teething problems experienced on introduction of this stock have now largely been overcome.

Pedestrian Crossings

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve pedestrian safety at pelican and zebra crossings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Although existing types of crossings have a generally good safety record, the progressive introduction of a new type, the Puffin, is intended to improve both safety and pedestrian amenity.

A1

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve the safety standards of the A1 between Newcastle and Edinburgh.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: A large programme of safety improvement schemes has been instigated for this section of the A1. Some of the works are complete, and others are currently under construction or in planning.

International Transport

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has made to the European Commissioner for transport concerning the designation of key international road and rail routes by the Commission; and if he will make a statement on the implications of such designation on road and rail infrastructure funding in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: Department of Transport officials take part in Commission working groups developing guidelines for road and rail networks of Community interest. In the light of this work the Commission is putting a number of proposals to the Council of Ministers for eventual decision. Projects contributing to the networks may be eligible for EC funding under the current transport infrastructure programme or a future trans-European networks programme under the Maastricht treaty.

Under Maastricht it is in any event agreed that it will be for each member state to approve the guidelines and projects of common interest relating to its own territory.

Motorways

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to reduce the length of time taken by contractors to complete road works on motorways.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Under the citizens charter my Department is committed to using the lane rental form of contract on all suitable major maintenance schemes from next April. Under this scheme the contractor receives a bonus for finishing early, and incurs a charge if he is late completing the works. At present about half of all major maintenance schemes are let on a lane rental basis. These contracts are completed approximately 30 per cent. faster than works under conventional contracts. Night time and 24 hour working are used wherever it is practicable and safe to do so.

Bypass Demonstration Project

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to draw conclusions from the bypass demonstration project.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The conclusions will be available in the form of guidance for local authorities after the project is completed in 1994. Interim progress reports will be published at six-monthly intervals. The first is due to be published in November this year.

InterCity

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what requirements he has placed on InterCity regarding the need for InterCity trains to have back-up air conditioning when the main power unit fails.

Mr. Freeman: The exact specification of new rolling stock is a matter for British Rail's judgment.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the recent Central Transport Consultative Committee's findings on punctuality of the West Coast main line InterCity service.

Mr. Freeman: The Central Transport Consultative Committee commented on the performance of West Coast main line InterCity services in its 1991-92 annual report. A copy of this report has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what notice was given to Her Majesty's Government by InterCity of the changes to plans to introduce InterCity 250 trains on the West Coast main line railway, the termination of direct WCML InterCity services to Blackpool and the withdrawal of services to Shrewsbury.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail advised the Government of its plans not to proceed with the InterCity 250 project for the West Coast main line, and to withdraw InterCity through trains to Blackpool and Shrewsbury, in advance of their official public announcements.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the reliability of the East Coast main line services provided by InterCity since the electrification of the route; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I know that BR is disappointed with the reliability of services on the East Coast main line—for the year to date, 98·9 per cent. of scheduled trains have run. BR has been experiencing initial problems with the new InterCity 225 trains but these are now being overcome. The line has also been beset by vandalism and the theft of lineside cabling, but action taken by BR and the police has been effective and the incidence of vandalism has now been reduced.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidance he has given to InterCity regarding the safety implications of train vestibules blocked by luggage in crowded trains.

Mr. Freeman: The Health and Safety Executive's railway inspectorate has not given any specific guidance about the storage of luggage on InterCity trains. It is for British Rail to safeguard the safety of all its passengers and it would certainly expect its staff to respond to any situation which they considered dangerous.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with InterCity about future plans for the West Coast main line railway.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail is currently re-assessing all options for replacement rolling stock on the West Coast main line. However, it hopes to start work on re-equipping the infrastructure of the line shortly.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he proposes to have with InterCity regarding the provision of European night services via the channel tunnel operating from Edinburgh and stations south of Edinburgh when the tunnel comes into operation in 1995; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: This is a matter for European Passenger Services and its continental partners, whose current plans include only a daytime through service on the East Coast main line from Edinburgh. A night-time service is planned from Glasgow on the West Coast main line. Levels of service will be reviewed in response to demand.

Foreign Drivers

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will commission a study to see whether any reduction in accidents was achieved by the experiment conducted in Northumberland to provide stickers for foreign drivers to remind them to drive on the left; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have no knowledge of any such experiment in Northumberland, although I understand that such stickers have been distributed by the police to foreign drivers in Scotland.

Rail Fares

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the criteria by which fares are adjusted or increased by British Rail; and what input his Department has.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail take account of many factors in setting fares. These include the level of investment required to maintain and improve services, market conditions and the quality of service. Ministers are consulted in view of their role in setting the financial framework and objectives for BR.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to increase efficiency on the London to Tilbury and Southend line; and how much fares will increase on this line on average in the new year.

Mr. Freeman: Work on the resignalling project for the line is progressing. British Rail believes this project to be the key to improving the reliability of the line.

Fares on the LT&S line—other than Travelcard—will rise by 5 per cent. compared with an average of 7·5 per cent. on Network SouthEast as a whole.

Plutonium (Air Transport)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review the current safety arrangements for the air transport of plutonium following the El-Al cargo plane crash in Amsterdam.

Mr. Norris: The transport of radioactive materials is governed by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) regulations. The standards are stringent. They require containers to remain secure after severe impact and severe fire.

The IAEA keeps its standards under review, and is undertaking a study of air transport aspects. Any resulting recommendations for changes to present regulations will be considered during the next major review of IAEA transport regulations.

Bus Fares

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce regulations to entitle all children between the ages of five and 16 years to half price bus fares.

Mr. Freeman: Local authorities already have powers to include children under 16 years in a concessionary fares scheme, and decisions on whether to do so are for them. In addition, bus companies are free to offer cheap fares on a commercial basis to children of any age.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effects of bus deregulation on the price of children's bus fares.

Mr. Freeman: No separate assessment has been made of the effects of deregulation on children's bus fares. But a recent survey by my Department showed that the proportion of districts in England and Wales in which local authorities operate concessionary fares schemes for children is broadly unchanged since deregulation.

Rail Travel

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the cost of mainline travel from London to South Wales since 1989.

Mr. Freeman: The level of fares on InterCity services is a matter for the commercial judgment of British Rail.

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the potential private operators who have expressed an interest in operating private rail freight services over British Rail tracks.

Mr. Freeman: There has been a number of expressions of interest in the operation of private rail freight services.

Discussions with individual companies have been on a commercially confidential basis.

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the potential private operators who have expressed an interest in bidding for private railway franchises.

Mr. Freeman: Before the issue of the consultation document on 12 October we have received expressions of interest about running franchised passenger railway services from around 50 companies. I am sure that the consultation document will engender further interest. All approaches are being treated on a confidential basis and it would be inappropriate for me to name the companies or indicate their specific interests at this stage.

Baggage Security

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to issue a directive to all airports and airlines to implement the mandatory ICAO annex 17 (4.3.1.) baggage security standard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: We are satisfied that the standard is already being met.

Bromford Viaduct, Birmingham

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the work on the parapet rail on Bromford viaduct in Birmingham will be completed.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Bromford viaduct parapet rail refurbishment contract on the M6 between junction 5 (Castle Bromwich) and junction 6 (Gravelly Hill) is due for completion towards the end of February 1993.

Kidderminster-Blakedown-Hagley Bypass

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many objections to the line of the Kidderminster-Blakedown-Hagley bypass have been received by his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Some 2,700 of which 2,500 are pre-printed postcards completed by individuals in response to a campaign launched by Friends of the Earth.

Search and Rescue Service

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to involve the helicopter service from Belgium in providing a search and rescue service over part of the Dover straits, following his announcement about the future reorganisation of the search and rescue service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: There are no plans to change the current well proven liaison arrangements between Dover coastguard and the Belgian authorities.

Under normal circumstances, the United Kingdom's air and sea search and rescue (SAR) resources will adequately meet the requirements of marine emergencies in United Kingdom waters.

In the event of a major incident in the Dover strait, under existing arrangements, the co-ordinating authorities of whatever nationality may call for the assistance of SAR assets from across national boundaries.

Train Safety

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of trains are equipped with *(a)* black box cab data recorders, *(b)* train radios and *(c)* automatic train protection devices.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not readily available in the format requested. Information is available as follows:

(a) Data recorders

All trains of type 319, 321, 322 and 456 had data recorders operational by April 1992. Class 442 trains are being equipped under a retro-fit programme due for completion in 1992-93. New trains are being delivered with data recorders, including class 159, 165 and 465 vehicles.

(b) Train Radios

Driver to base radio is fitted on 85 per cent. of locomotives (including all HST power units) and 56 per cent. of Pacer and Sprinter units. All electric multiple units working in the Strathclyde PTE area are fitted. NSE is reviewing how best to meet the BR board's requirements.

(c) ATP

20 per cent. of HST power units have been fitted with ATP. 33 per cent. of the class 165 trains to be used on the Chiltern lines have fully commissioned ATP, and work is underway on the remainder of these trains. The two pilot schemes are still being evaluated.

British Rail

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the oral answer by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 22 June, *Official Report*, column 12, what work British Rail has been awaiting from the European Commission prior to revising its conditions of carriage; and when he now expects them to be published.

Mr. Freeman: In revising its condition of carriage, British Rail needed to take account of the emerging proposals from the EC Commission for a directive on unfair terms in consumer contracts. Work on revising the conditions is, however, now nearing completion, and BR hopes to publish them in December.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Children

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the latest figures showing *(a)* the number of children living in families with an unemployed head and *(b)* the number of children living in families with a long-term unemployed head.

Mr. Burt: At the time of the May 1991 annual statistical inquiry, there were 638,000 children living in families headed by people registered as unemployed and claiming income support.

Figures for the number of children living in families with a long-term unemployed head are not available. The number of long-term cases of people registered as unemployed and claiming income support for themselves and for a child or children are given in the table.

May 1991 annual statistical inquiry
Registered unemployed income support claims involving children

Length of claim	*Number of cases*
1–2 years	175,900
2–3 years	63,300
Over 3 years	162,500

Note:

(a) The number of children in families headed by people claiming Unemployment Benefit (UB) is not available as UB does not pay an addition for a child dependent.

(b) The figures given are for children up to the age of 15.

Household Incomes

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, based on the households below average income statistics, he will publish figures which show the rise in real income for the top decile between 1979 and the latest available year, both before and after housing costs.

Mr. Burt: The real increase in income for the top decile, between 1979 and 1988-89 combined, was 44 per cent. before housing costs and 46 per cent. after housing costs. These figures relate to the United Kingdom and are based on income equivalised for household size and composition.

Mining Industry

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the range of likely liability on the expenditure of Her Majesty's Government for unemployment and social security payments for the numbers of coal miners to be made redundant under the recent proposals, on the assumption that the median period of unemployment for those concerned is six months and a year, respectively, or on other assumptions; and what formula he adopts for calculations of liability for redundancies in similar productive occupations.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on 21 October, at column *331*. For the same reasons, it is not possible to make estimates of redundancies in other occupations.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* families with children, *(b)* pensioner households and *(c)* other households are currently receiving housing benefit in Great Britain, identifying separately those also receiving income support, and those respectively occupying (i) council tenancies, (ii) housing association tenancies and (iii) other tenancies.

Mr. Burt: The available information, for May 1991, is set out in the table.

Thousands

	Housing benefit with income support	*Housing benefit only*	*Total*
Local Authority Tenants			
Families with children	657	147	804
Elderly householders	660	922	1,582
Others	347	212	559
Total	1,664	1,281	2,945

	Housing benefit with income support	*Housing benefit only*	*Total*
Private Tenants			
Families with children	179	40	218
Elderly householders	194	23	428
Others	301	137	438
Total	674	411	1,085

Notes:

(a) Families with children are defined as couples (both aged less than 60), with at least one dependant child; and single persons, aged less than 60, with at least one dependant child.

(b) Pensioner householders are defined as couples where claimant or partner is aged 60 or over; and single persons aged 60 or over. These have been termed "elderly".

(c) Other households are defined as couples (both aged less than 60), without children; and single persons aged less than 60, without children.

(d) Housing Association tenancies are included in the figures for private tenants.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will amend current severe disablement allowance regulations to permit young people on youth training programmes to requalify for SDA following the completion of the placement, if the individual is deemed to be unable to enter employment either due to his/her condition or experience of disability.

Mr. Scott: Special linking rules already exist to help young people who are incapable of work when their youth training programme finishes. Severe disablement allowance can be reinstated providing a fresh claim is made within eight weeks of the end of the course.

School Ancillary Staff

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will take the necessary steps to change existing regulations to allow school ancillary staff to claim unemployment benefit automatically as soon as they start the long summer period during which they are unable to work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: We have no plans to do so. To revise the existing regulations on "recognised and customary" holidays would be contrary to the main purpose of insurance against unemployment which is to insure against a risk, rather than a certainty, of unemployment.

Age Addition

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will make a statement outlining the Government's plans for the future of the age addition paid to retired people over the age of 80 years;

(2) what purpose the age addition paid to retired people over the age of 80 years is supposed to serve;

(3) if he will estimate the cost involved in administrating the age addition payment to retired people over the age of 80 years;

(4) if he will estimate the value of the 25p age addition payment at 1992 prices assuming it had increased in line with the RPI since it was introduced;

(5) what plans he has to increase the value of the age addition payment paid to retired people over the age of 80 years.

Miss Widdecombe: The 25p age addition paid to people who are over 80 was introduced in 1971, when the single person's pension was £6 a week, as a means of special help to the very elderly. No Government have increased the age addition since its introduction. Instead we have chosen to target resources on those pensioners with low incomes and have given extra help to poorer pensioners on income-related benefits in the sum of £700 million over and above normal upratings since 1989. There are no plans to increase the value of the 25p age addition.

Some 2·2 million people receive the age addition at an annual cost of £28·6 million. If it had been increased annually in line with prices since its introduction, it would now be worth £1·45 at an additional cost of £137 million. The 25p is added automatically to the pension on the first pay day after the pensioner's 80th birthday. There are, therefore no additional administration costs involved.

Maxwell Pensions Unit

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what plans he has to increase the level of funds available to the Maxwell pensions unit;

(2) how many applications for assistance have been received by the Maxwell pensions unit at the DSS; how many pensioners have received assistance from the unit to date; and how many have been refused;

(3) how much of the £2·5 million allocated to the Maxwell pensions unit remains undistributed; and what estimate can be made of the funds required to meet the pensions of existing pensioners and deferred pensioners in future.

Miss Widdecombe: Just over £1 million has been allocated by the Department's Maxwell pensions unit in grants to the eight Maxwell-linked pension schemes who have applied for assistance. These grants have enabled pensions to be paid to some 5,500 pensioners, deferred pensioners and ill health early retirers whose payments were at risk. Grants are made to pension scheme trustees and not to individual pensioners. It is not possible to project accurately future funding requirements as these are dependent on continuing work to rebuild pension schemes. We have no plans to increase the £1·5 million which remains in the emergency fund, and we are keeping the question of its further use under review.

Residential Homes

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will estimate the number and proportion of residents in residential homes who are denied pocket money for personal needs because it is subsumed in the cost of the weekly fees charged; and what plans he has to discuss these matters with the representatives of local authorities and bodies representing private owners of residential homes;

(2) if he will review the circumstances in which residents of homes are provided with pocket money for personal needs to ensure disposable income is available to them; and what plans he has to make future provision for pocket money for residents in homes;

(3) if he will set up a departmental inquiry into the extent to which residents of rest homes and nursing homes are being deprived of pocket money to meet basic care costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Personal allowances are intended to be used by residents for their needs as they see best. Some residents contract for charges higher than the income support limits and may use the personal expenses allowance to meet the shortfall. The numbers using their allowance in this way is not known.

Such matters are regularly discussed with representative bodies and we have no plans to set up an inquiry.

From April 1993, all residents placed in residential care or nursing homes by local authorities will retain an amount for personal expenses.

Maintenance Payments

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will consider waiving voluntary maintenance payments paid by parents who exercise long periods of access to but do not have custody of their children, while they are looking after the children for whom the maintenance payments are made.

Mr. Burt: A voluntary payment negotiated by the Department with the absent parent can be re-negotiated if the absent parent's circumstances change. If the absent parent feels that the amount of voluntary payment is too high because he has contact with the children for significant periods of time, he can tell the child support unit and it will consider this in negotiating a payment level with him.

The new child support system which comes into effect on 5 April 1993 has a clear rule to provide for cases of shared care. The maintenance payable will be reduced pro rata if the absent parent satisfies the condition that the child lives with him for a total of at least 104 nights a year.

Smoking

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the amount paid in national insurance and means-tested benefits to those rendered chronically sick, temporarily off work or long-term unemployed as a result of illness induced by smoking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available.

Income Support

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to review the financial position of parents on income support who have long periods of access to their children as laid down in custodial orders, but who are unable to secure any support from the parent with custody during periods of access.

Mr. Burt: We have no plans to review the current entitlement conditions in these circumstances. After three weeks, child benefit can be transferred from the parent who normally has custody of the child to the other parent and income support is payable as appropriate.

Disability Allowances

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to introduce an extra cost allowance for blind or partially sighted people.

Mr. Scott: Disability living allowance, introduced this April, provides help with the extra costs of disability. The benefit is awarded on the basis of the level of help needed, rather than the medical condition giving rise to that need. The new lower rates in particular provide benefit that was not available previously under mobility allowance or attendance allowance. We expect people with impaired sight to be amongst the chief beneficiaries of the new rates.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to change the criteria for eligibility for disability living allowance and disability working allowance to give blind and partially sighted people access to the higher rates of the new benefits.

Mr. Scott: Blind and partially sighted people who have care or mobility needs have equal access to disability living allowance as other disabled people, based on the level of help they need. Disability working allowance is paid according to the person's resources rather than at a set rate. We have no plans to change the eligibility criteria for either benefit.

Standing Charges

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the current cost of abolition of all standing charges for telephones, domestic electricity and gas bills for people over the state pension age for retirement and eligible for income support; and how the estimate was arrived at.

Mr. Burt: It is estimated that the total cost of abolishing gas and electricity standing charges for households where at least one person is over 60 and on income support, at 1992 levels of prices and incomes, would be approximately £150 million. The total cost of abolishing telephone rental charges for these households would be about £110 million at 1991-92 levels of prices.

Notes:

1. The information provided is based upon imprecise data and a series of assumptions about the level of standing charges and the numbers of households with gas, electricity and telephones.
2. The estimate also takes no account of behaviourial and disincentive effects.

Blind People (Benefits)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to improve levels of means-tested benefits available to blind or partially sighted people.

Mr. Burt: The income-related benefits currently have a number of features which raise the levels available to blind people. Registered blind people automatically qualify for the disability premium or higher pensioner premium in income support, housing benefit or community charge benefit on the basis of their blindness alone. A blind person who has the disability premium is able to earn up to £15 a week before their benefit is affected. In addition, where a blind person or their partner is responsible for rent or other housing costs no deductions are made in respect of any non-dependents living with them, as would otherwise be the case. These special rules do not apply to partially sighted people. They can, however, benefit from the help available to disabled people generally if they meet the standard conditions. We have no plans to change this policy.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will now conduct a survey to investigate whether new benefits replacing attendance allowance and invalidity allowance for blind people are succeeding in meeting the mobility needs of blind or partially sighted people of all ages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We continue to monitor carefully awards of disability living allowance-attendance allowance for people over 65 following the introduction of the new benefits in April.

Unemployment Benefit (Disqualification)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will review the maximum duration of unemployment benefit disqualification.

Mr. Burt: While the duration of unemployment benefit disqualification is kept under review, we have no plans to change the current maximum period of 26 weeks.

Income Support

Mrs. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing the numbers of people dependent on supplementary benefit/income support in each region of the United Kingdom; and what proportion of each region's population they made up in 1979, 1987, 1988 and the latest available period.

Mr. Burt: The latest available information for England, Scotland and Wales is in the table.

Number of supplementary benefit/income support claimants partners and dependants as a percentage of the population

	Number of claimants	*Number of partners*	*Number of dependants*	*Percentage of population receiving supplementary benefit*
1979				
England	2,396,000	472,000	784,000	8
Scotland	286,000	53,000	112,000	9
Wales	172,000	36,000	59,000	10
1987				
England	4,073,000	909,000	1,880,000	14
Scotland	535,000	102,000	225,000	17
Wales	287,000	63,000	131,000	17
1988				
England	3,594,000	696,000	1,830,000	13
Scotland	499,000	92,000	236,000	16
Wales	259,000	53,000	129,000	15
1991				
England	3,743,000	647,000	2,110,000	14
Scotland	487,000	69,000	249,000	See note 2
Wales	257,000	46,000	138,000	15

Notes:

1. *Source:* Supplementary Benefit/Income Support Annual Statistical Enquiries 1979, 1987, 1988, 1990, 1991.
2. Percentage cannot be derived because population figures have not yet been published by the Office of Population and Census Survey.
3. All figures rounded to the nearest thousand.
4. Population statistics for DSS regions are not available. Social Security information based on other definitions of United Kingdom regions also not available. The tables therefore focus on England, Scotland and Wales.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will publish a table showing by county the levels of unemployment in April and on 15 October.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

The latest available claimant unemployment data, released on 15 October, relate to the unemployment count date of 10 September.

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list by parliamentary constituency the number of people in employment, both as a total number and as a percentage of those registered as available for work broken down by gender and whether employment is part time or full time.

Mr. McLoughlin: The latest available information about employment in parliamentary constituencies is from the September 1989 census of employment and relates to employees in employment only, by gender and whether part or full time. Figures for the claimant unemployed by gender are available for the same date. This information can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were unemployed on 10 April; and what is the current figure.

Mr. McLoughlin: The April 1992 claimant unemployment figure relates to the position on the 9th of the month. On that date, on the consistent seasonally adjusted basis, there were 2,065,900 male and 629,400 female unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom. This compares with 2,175,200 and 668,100 respectively in September 1992.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the changes made since 1979 in calculating the number of people officially unemployed, including the date and estimated effect of each change.

Mr. McLoughlin: In October 1982, when registration at jobcentres became voluntary and could therefore no longer provide a meaningful measure of unemployment, the monthly unemployment statistics changed from a count of jobcentre registrants to a count of claimants at Employment Service local offices. Both counts, in common with all statistics based on administrative systems, have inevitably been subject to changes in coverage whenever there have been changes to the administrative procedures on which they are based. However, these changes have been taken into account in the consistent, seasonally adjusted series published by the Employment Department.

A list of the changes since 1979 affecting the coverage of both the former registrant series and the claimant count, together with an estimate of the numerical effect was published in an article in the December 1990 issue of *Employment Gazette*. A copy of this article is in the Library.

Multiple Unemployment

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information she has on the number of families who experience multiple unemployment.

Mr. McLoughlin: The labour force survey shows that, in spring 1992, the estimated number of families in Great Britain in which two or more people were unemployed (on the ILO definition) was 210,000. This represented 1·4 per cent. of all families in which there were at least two people aged 16 or over.

Wages

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give the average hourly wage of male manual workers adjusted for inflation, for *(a)* 1974, *(b)* 1979, *(c)* 1983, *(d)* 1987 and *(e)* 1990 and 1991, respectively.

Mr. McLoughlin: The average gross hourly earnings of full-time male manual workers, for each year requested, can be found in table 1 of part A of the "New Earnings Survey" report for that year. The data necessary to adjust these figures for inflation—that is retail prices index, all items—can be found in table 6.4 of the *Employment Gazette* for April 1992 and in table 26 of the annual supplement to *Economic Trends* for April of earlier years. Copies of all these publications are available in the Library.

Unemployment (Counselling)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unemployed received counselling through arrangements provided or paid for by her Department in the most recent 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. A. G. Johnson to Mr. Frank Dobson, dated 26 October 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, it is the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the Agency's Chief Executive to answer Parliamentary Questions about relevant operational matters. In his absence, I am replying to your question to the Secretary of State for Employment about counselling for Unemployed people.

Through our network of local offices we now provide a structured and coherent information and advisory service which intensifies as the duration of unemployment increases. We try to ensure that all unemployed people know about, and get access to, the employment and training opportunities that are available. This process begins with an interview with one of our client advisers when a person first becomes unemployed. A review takes place at thirteen weeks for those who have not found work. If people remain unemployed, interviews are provided at six months and regular intervals thereafter under the Restart programme. In addition clients can arrange to see an adviser at any time to discuss ways of getting back to work.

In the twelve month period ending 25 September 1992, our advisers conducted 8,170,691 counselling interviews. Of these 4,481,298 were with people making new claims to benefit, 646,540 were with people who had not found jobs after thirteen weeks out of work and 2,192,760 were under the Restart programme. The remaining 850,903 interviews were to follow up clients who were judged to need further advice to help them get back into work and with people who asked to discuss their employment prospects with an adviser.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the *Official Report*. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Job Interview Committees

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people placed in work through the job interview committee scheme are no longer in work.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. A. G. Johnson to Mr. Frank Dobson, dated 26 October 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, it is the responsibility of Mr. Mike Fogden, the Agency's Chief Executive to answer Parliamentary Question about relevant operational matters. In his absence, I am replying to your question to the Secretary of State for Employment about the Job Interview Guarantee (JIG) initiative.

You asked how many people placed in work through the job interview committee scheme are no longer in work. I assume the scheme that you are referring to is the Job Interview Guarantee (JIG) initiative.

We do not collect statistics to provide the information that you ask for. To do so would require expensive tracking mechanisms as a disproportionate cost. However, we did undertake a small scale survey of JIG participants towards the end of 1991. This showed that 64 per cent. of people placed in permanent employment were still in work at the time of the survey. The majority of these would have been in employment for at least 6 months.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Mining Areas

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many extra staff are to be taken on by the Employment Service in mining areas *(a)* before Christmas 1992 and *(b)* before 31 March 1993.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. A. G. Johnson to Mr. Frank Dobson, dated 26 October 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, it is the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the Agency's Chief Executive to answer parliamentary questions about relevant operational matters. In his absence, I am replying to your question to the Secretary of State for Employment about how many extra staff are to be taken on by the Employment Service in mining areas.

The Employment Service will of course play its part in assisting to alleviate the problems of the newly unemployed in the mining districts by offering a full range of services. These include help in finding new employment, counselling, guiding people to training courses, and ensuring that all due benefits are paid promptly and correctly.

However until such time as more positive information is available on where and when all the redundancies will fall I am unable to say how many extra staff will be deployed in the mining areas. I can nevertheless assure you that our regional Directors will make sufficient staff available to meet the immediate needs of the newly redundant miners.

As decided by the Administrative Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) whether the additional sum promised to training and enterprise councils in mining areas comes from the overall training and enterprise councils budget;

(2) what is the total additional sum promised to training and enterprise councils in areas affected by the recently announced pit closures.

Mr. McLoughlin: An additional £75 million has been made available in areas affected by potential colliery closures. The TECs concerned have been asked to co-ordinate action plans for new measures to alleviate the effects of closures. The net effect on TEC expenditure of this extra provision will depend on what is proposed in the action plans.

London Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what response she has made to the report prepared by Coopers and Lybrand for the London TECs on the degree of their underfunding.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has considered the case put forward in the report "London—a Capital Deficiency". Her conclusion is that this report is flawed in a number of important respects and fails to understand the basis of budget allocation for the TECs.

Specifically, the report gives a figure of £43·3 million as the 1992-93 youth training budget whereas the budget is in fact £61·3 million. London has 8·4 per cent. of the YT budget for England and Wales, not the 5·7 per cent. which the report puts forward.

Similarly, London has 14·4 per cent. of the total employment training budget, not the 13·3 per cent. claimed by the report.

Nonetheless, my right hon. Friend has asked her officials to meet TEC representatives to discuss how best they can tackle some of the labour market issues raised in this report.

Trades Union Congress

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State or Employment if she will list the occasions she has met representatives of the TUC, through British and European institutions, respectively.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met the general secretary and deputy general secretary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) on 9 June 1992.

As President of the Council of Social Affairs Ministers, she met representatives from the European Trades Union Confederation (ETUC) on 27 July 1992 to discuss the United Kingdom presidency of the European Community. The president and general secretary of the ETUC were also present at the opening session of the informal meeting of the EC Employment and Social Affairs Ministers on 12 October 1992.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I also met representatives of the ETUC on 15 September to discuss priorities for the United Kingdom presidency.

I also met the General Secretary of the TUC at the International Labour Organisation Conference in June 1992, and I have also had meetings with individual trade union leaders over recent months.

Union Subscriptions

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment is she will list the cases known to her Department of employers who deducted union subscriptions from the wages of their employees without their prior consent.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department does not keep records on this matter. However, as the Green Paper "Industrial Relations in the 1990s" (Cm 1602) pointed out, at present the payment of union subscriptions through the check-off may become part of an employee's contract of employment simply by virtue of an agreement made between the union and the employer; and there have been allegations that some employees who are not union members have nonetheless had union subscriptions deducted from their pay by check-off.

My right hon. and learned Friend the previous Secretary of State announced in January of this year that legislation would be introduced to ensure that the deduction of union subscriptions from an employee's pay would be unlawful without the written authority of the employee.

Public Holidays

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the public holidays in each country in the European Community including the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There is no standard definition of a public holiday for European Community countries. The table following gives United Kingdom bank holidays for 1992.

Bank holidays in the United Kingdom 1992

	Date
New Year's Day	1 January
Bank Holiday (Scotland)	2 January
St. Patrick's Day (Northern Ireland)	17 March
Good Friday	17 April
Easter Monday (except Scotland)	20 April
May Day Bank Holiday	4 May
Spring Bank Holiday	25 May
Battle of the Boyne (Northern Ireland)	13 July
Summer Bank Holiday (Scotland)	3 August
Summer Bank Holiday (except Scotland)	31 August
Christmas Day	25 December
Boxing Day	26 December
Bank Holiday	28 December

Labour Statistics

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the current number of job vacancies in the travel-to-work areas which include the coal mines which British Coal has announced will close; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Pursuant to my answer of 20 October 1992, columns 280-81, the chief executive of the Employment Service has written further to the hon. Member.

Letter from Mr. M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Max Madden, dated 26 October 1992.

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the number of current job vacancies within the travel to work areas for the coal mines which British Coal has announced will close. This is something which falls within the responsibilities she has delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Unfortunately, my reply of 20 October contained an error in the table. The Cotgrave and Claverton collieries in the Nottingham travel to work area should have read 1,174 unfilled vacancies on 2nd October. The following reply now contains the correct information.

I attach a table showing the number of vacancies unfilled at Jobcentres on 2nd October 1992, the last statistical count date, for each of the relevant travel to work areas. All of the travel to work areas are included as requested although following the statement by the President of the Board of Trade on 19th October only 8 of these areas have a colliery now designated for closure after the statutory consultation period has been completed.

It is not possible to provide information on the total number of job vacancies available in the labour market but it is estimated that about one third of all vacancies are notified to Jobcentres.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Colliery	*Travel to work area*	*Number of unfilled vacancies at local Jobcentres on 2 October 1992*
Easington Vane Tempest	**Durham**	**313**
Wearmouth	**Sunderland**	**603**
Westoe	**South Tyneside**	**146**
Parkside	**Wigan and St. Helens**	**742**
Prince of Wales Sharlston Frickley	**Wakefield and Dewsbury**	**705**
Rossington Bentley Hatfield/Thorne Markham Main Houghton Main Grimethorpe	**Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Mexborough**	**879**
Maltby	**Rotherham and Mexborough**	
Kiveton	**Sheffield**	**1,190**
Silverhill Bevercotes Bilsthorpe Clipstone Rufford	**Worksop, Alfreton and Ashfield, Retford, Mansfield**	**551**
Cotgrave Calverton	**Nottingham**	**1,174**
Bolsover Markham Shirebrook	**Chesterfield**	**352**
Trentham Silverdale	**Stoke**	**571**
Betws Drift	**Llanelli**	**351**
Point of Ayr	**Shotton, Flint and Rhyl**	**574**
Taff Merthyr	**Merthyr and Rhymney**	**452**

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Livestock Auctioneers

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will review the implication of the administrative and financial practice of livestock auctioneers to hold in trust any moneys from livestock sales for the farmers whose animals had been sold in markets, and the effect of the insolvency of livestock auctioneers upon this practice.

Mr. Curry: No.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to compensate farmers whose money for livestock sales at market had been taken in trust by livestock auctioneers facing insolvency and invested in bank accounts which were overdrawn prior to the completion of the transaction at auction.

Mr. Curry: No.

Potatoes

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps in the EC to ensure that the new potato régime will not adversely affect current area controls and direct intervention systems utilised in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: There is as yet no Commission proposal for a potato régime. We wish to see what the Commission proposes before taking any decisions about the future of the potato marketing scheme in Great Britain. The Government's objective under any régime will be to ensure that our growers can supply what the market needs and operate on equal terms with growers elsewhere, and in particular that the processing sector should be able to find adequate sources of potatoes in Britain.

Rabies

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will review the holding period powers of local authorities in relation to dogs and the minimum incubation period of rabies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Under the Rabies (Importation of Dogs, Cats and other Mammals) Order 1974 local authorities are given the power to seize dogs where there is reason to suspect that the dog may have been landed in contravention of the order. Animals seized may be immediately exported or detained in quarantine for six months. However, if exportation is chosen and there has been a biting or scratching incident the local authority must detain the animal for 15 days observation: an animal may become infective shortly before the disease manifests itself clinically, and it is important to establish whether there is any possibility that the rabies virus may have been introduced into Great Britain.

Inspection Services

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his Department will carry out a study of the cost and staffing implications of the timing of his proposals for red and poultry meat inspection services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: In March this year the Government announced their intention to transfer the responsibility for meat hygiene inspection and enforcement from local authorities to a new national meat hygiene service, following a detailed independent study which looked at the financial, management, staffing and other aspects of various options. The Government will work closely with the local authorities to ensure that the new arrangements, which will be dependent on the availability of parliamentary time for the necessary primary legislation, are introduced as smoothly and cost-effectively as possible.

Agricultural Employment

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has of the number of people working in industries allied to agriculture for the most recent five-year period for which figures are available.

Mr. Curry: I regret that the information requested is not available. Details of the number of persons employed in each primary industrial group are published monthly in the *Employment Gazette*.

Set-aside

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has of the number of on-farm jobs that will be lost from agriculture as a result of the introduction of the 15 per cent. EC set-aside scheme.

Mr. Curry: The impact on farm labour of the new set-aside arrangements will depend on a range of factors, including the extent to which set-aside land is used to produce crops for non-food purposes.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the number of jobs in industries allied to agriculture that will be lost as a result of the introduction of the 15 per cent. EC set-aside rule.

Mr. Curry: It is not possible at this stage to make any realistic assessment of the likely impact of the new set-aside arrangements on industries allied to agriculture. However, we shall keep the position under careful review.

Farm Support

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with the representatives of companies and businesses allied to agriculture about the prospects for those businesses following reduction in farm support via the CAP; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Department is in regular contact with the representatives of companies and businesses allied to agriculture to discuss issues of interest to the industry including CAP reform.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list for the last three years for which figures are available the total amount of subsidy paid by EC or United Kingdom budgets for each category of livestock and arable crop eligible for subsidy within the United Kingdom, showing the actual amount in cash paid to producers in each case.

Mr. Curry: Table 9·1 of "Agriculture in the United Kingdom: 1991", a copy of which is available in the Library, gives details of public expenditure under the CAP and on national grants and subsidies. The main livestock and arable aid payments are in section I and IV of the table. A breakdown of payments between producers and other recipients is not available.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the total cost of the administration, monitoring and enforcement costs of the United Kingdom and EC departments responsible for paying farm subsidies over the last three years, showing each figure as a percentage of the total subsidies and a percentage of the subsidies actually received by producers.

Mr. Curry: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Energy-producing Crops

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to provide schemes to grow crops that can produce energy.

Mr. Curry: Under the new EC arable area payments scheme which comes into operation this year, growers will be able to claim area or set-aside payments on land used to produce eligible crops for a range of non-food uses, including biofuels and crops for direct combustion.

Short rotation coppice is eligible for establishment grants under the woodland grant scheme, which is operated by the forestry authority. Grants are also available under the farm and conservation grant scheme to help farmers meet the cost of straw and coppiced wood burning boilers and furnaces for their farms.

Animal Exports

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimates have been made of the financial cost to the livestock producing industry of reducing the maximum permitted transport time to eight hours.

Mr. Soames: I am not aware of any such estimates. British legislation requires livestock in transport to be offered food and water at intervals not exceeding 15 hours. These arrangements have served us well. In EC discussions we shall be seeking to persuade the Community to adopt rules which reflect our own high standards.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he is having with the groups involved in the consequences of transportation of live animals.

Mr. Soames: We have regular discussions with a wide range of interested bodies about the transportation of live animals.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what steps he is taking to ensure adequate inspection, lairage and rest for animals in transit;

(2) if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's position on the transportation of live animals within the EC, indicating where the United Kingdom Government's position is different from the current EC directive.

Mr. Soames: The Export of Animals (Protection) Order 1981 provides for inspection and rest, at an approved portal lairage, for food animals exported from Britain. This order also implements the current EC directive on the protection of animals during international transport. These arrangements are due to be superseded by a new directive which needs to be supplemented by additional rules on which Commission proposals are awaited.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the number of live animals exported from the United Kingdom to the EC over the last five years for each type of livestock transported.

Mr. Soames: The number of live animals that have been exported from the United Kingdom to other member states of the EC over the last five years can be found in the annual volumes of the "Overseas Trade Statistics for the United Kingdom", copies of which are in the House of Commons Library. Details of their classification within SITC 00 can be found in the "Guide to the Classification for Overseas Trade Statistics", which is also in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will estimate how long it would take to make the necessary changes to allow all livestock for slaughter to be slaughtered within the United Kingdom to prevent any animals being exported for slaughter from the United Kingdom to fellow EC countries;

(2) what steps he is taking to increase the proportion of animals slaughtered within the United Kingdom prior to export as opposed to being transported live to other EC countries for slaughter.

Mr. Soames: It would not be possible, under the treaty of Rome, to impose a general prohibition on the export of livestock.

The capacity of the United Kingdom slaughtering industry is a matter for commercial judgment.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps his Department takes to ensure that health, hygiene and veterinary standards are being maintained on an equal basis throughout the EC.

Mr. Soames: It is already standard practice for EC animal health and welfare legislation to provide for on-the-spot inspections by Commission veterinary experts to ensure the uniform application of Community rules. The United Kingdom Government welcome the continued development of the Commission inspection role to promote this objective.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the number of live animals exported from Scotland to the EC over the last five years for each type of livestock.

Mr. Soames: There are no official statistics dealing with purely Scottish trade of live animals. The overseas trade statistics from Her Majesty's Customs and Excise are available only on a United Kingdom basis.

DEFENCE

Air Crash, Chivenor

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement in respect of the incident to an RAF Hawk jet trainer which crashed at RAF Chivenor in September; and if he will send to the hon. Member a copy of his Department's military aircraft accident summary relating to this incident when it is published.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The accident in question took place on 30 September. The Hawk aircraft, carrying two qualified pilots, crashed on the runway at RAF Chivenor while the aircrew were conducting a simulated engine failure after take-off. Tragically, one of the pilots was injured and later died in hospital. The other ejected safely. An RAF board of inquiry has been convened. My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will forward a copy of the military aircraft accident summary to the hon. Member as soon as it is available.

Z-Berths

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual cost to his Department for the upkeep of Z-berths for emergency use by nuclear powered submarines at United Kingdom ports.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Z-berths may be established within particular ports, at mooring buoys or anchorages which have been assessed as suitable for short operations or recreational visits by nuclear powered submarines. The berths in question are not exclusively for the use of nuclear powered submarines. The cost of their maintenance as z-berths relates mainly to periodic surveys and liaison with the relevant local authorities to ensure the continuing suitability of the berths; cost figures are not held centrally.

European Union

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what contribution his Department made to the declaration on Western European Union included in the annexes on the treaty of European Union (Cm. 1934);

(2) what contribution his Department made to the drafting of the title V, articles JI to JII of the treaty of European Union, (Cm. 1934).

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department was fully consulted in the preparation of both.

Low Flying

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent complaints his Department has received from British Nuclear Fuels plc over breaches of the low-flying exclusion zones around their nuclear plants.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Since January 1991 my Department has received four such complaints, one of which was subsequently withdrawn.

WE177 Warheads

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the expected timetable for dismantling of WE177 warheads now declared to be surplus to requirements.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The weapons in question will be dismantled as quickly as possible, consistent with the demands of security and safety.

Vulcan XH558

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what have been the most recent annual running costs to his Department of the RAF Vulcan XH558; on how many occasions it has been flown on public display in the last full year; what estimate he has made of the cost of servicing the aircraft to enable it to continue flying; if he has any plans to facilitate the transfer of the RAF Vulcan XH558 aircraft to a public collection; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the state of sale of the Vulcan XH558.

Mr. Aitken: Annual running costs for Vulcan XH558 will amount to some £250,000 in financial year 1992-93. The servicing and modification required for the aircraft to continue for a further display season after 1992 would cost at least £2·5 million. The Vulcan performed 30 displays and five flypasts during the 1992 display season. A number of expressions of interest have been received from potential buyers with a view to preserving the aircraft for the future, and I hope that these might result in the aircraft being transferred to a public collection.

Recruitment

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the costs of recruitment in each of the armed forces in each of the last five years; how savings have been made in the costs of recruitment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will write to the hon. Member.

Armed Forces (Reviews)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the reviews of various aspects of the role of the armed forces which are *(a)* being reviewed and *(b)* have had their reviews completed in the last three years giving the dates by which they are more likely to be completed in each case.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Our plans for a major restructuring of the armed forces were set out in detail in both the 1991 Statement on the Defence Estimates, "Britain's Defence for the 90s" (Cm. 1559-I) and "Britain's Army for the 90s" (Cm. 1595). These were updated in the 1992 Statement (Cm. 1981). We will continue to keep these plans under constant review.

Agricultural Produce

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the agricultural produce which is grown on land owned or leased by his department giving the amounts produced in 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Records are not maintained of the agricultural produce grown on land owned or leased by my Department.

Munitions (Disposal)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement about the alternative methods and locations that he will introduce for the disposal of munitions;

(2) if he will list the regulations that control the dumping of munitions *(a)* on land and *(b)* in the sea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence does not deposit redundant munitions, explosive waste or residues in land. Land based disposal methods such as detonation and open burning are conducted in accordance with departmental regulations which reflect the requirement of both the Explosives Act 1875 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The provisions of the London dumping convention apply to the dumping of waste at sea world wide and those of the Oslo convention regulate this activity in the north east Atlantic. The Ministry of defence has undertaken its sea dumping programmes in a manner consistent with the requirements of both these conventions but has no further plans to dispose of redundant munitions or explosives in this way. In the future, such material will be disposed of on land at suitable MOD sites where this is safe and environmentally acceptable and under contract by industry. The Ministry of Defence plans, also, to construct a purpose-built ammunition disposal facility.

Surplus Land and Buildings

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the procedure adopted by his Ministry for the sale of surplus land and buildings including the method of binding potential purchasers, and any targets that might be set as an annual basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The MOD's general policy is to sell surplus land and buildings for the highest return for the taxpayer and the usual procedure is to sell by competitive tender. Agents are engaged to place advertisements seeking tenders and purchasers are normally expected to provide a non-returnable 10 per cent. deposit when a sale is agreed.

Special provisions apply however to the sale of housing, namely, the discounted sale of surplus married quarters and civilian houses to service personnel and sitting tenants respectively and also the bulk sale of surplus married quarters to housing associations at a discount in return for nomination rights for service personnel leaving the services over the next few years.

No formal targets are set for disposals though assumptions have, of course, to be made for the purpose of the public expenditure survey, and the long-term costings process.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give *(a)* the amount of money realised to his Ministry from the sale of surplus land and *(b)* the valuation of that land in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In each of the last five financial years the following receipts have been realised from the sale of surplus land and buildings:

Year	£ million
1987-88	76·6
1988-89	15·0
1989-90	71·2
1990-91	80·6
1991-92	102·3

The amount of money realised represents the market value of the property sold, with the exception that some service married quarters and civilian houses have been sold at a discount in line with departmental policy.

Privatisation and Agencies

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the parts of his Ministry that have been *(a)* made into executive agencies, *(b)* privatised, giving the dates in each case, and *(c)* the parts of his Ministry he intends to privatise or make into executive agencies, giving the estimated dates in each case.

Mr. Aitken: Four executive agencies have been established:

Meteorological Office—1 April 1990
Defence Research Agency—1 April 1991
Duke of York's Royal Military School—1 April 1992
Queen Victoria School—1 April 1992

We have also created 10 defence support agencies:

Hydrographic Office—1 April 1990
Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment—1 April 1991
Defence Accounts—1 April 1991
RAF Maintenance Group—1 April 1991
Military Survey—1 April 1991
Service Children's Schools (North West Europe)—1 April 1991
Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation—1 April 1992
Defence Analytical Services Agency—1 July 1992
Defence Postal and Courier Service—1 July 1992
Defence Operational Analysis Centre—1 July 1992

Both executive agencies and defence support agencies are run wholly on next steps lines.

The only parts of the Ministry which have been privatised are the Royal Ordnance factories on 2 January 1985.

There are no other parts of the Ministry which it is currently intended to privatise, although industry is being invited to express interest in purchasing the Royal Navy dockyards at Rosyth and Devonport.

Current candidates for agency status within MOD include the Ministry of Defence police, central services, the test and evaluation organisation, human factors research, some communications systems and elements of the logistic support and training organisations of the services. Looking ahead, we aim to identify all potential agency candidates by the end of next year. Areas under study include the balance of service logistics and training functions and the wider defence support area.

D Notices

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about his review of the D notice system including the scope of his review, the period of time it will take and the organisations that will be consulted.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The management of the D notice system is the responsibility of the defence press and broadcasting committee. I understand that the committee, which is composed of representatives of Government Departments and of the press and broadcasting media, decided at a recent meeting to enlarge its annual review of the 'D' notices. It will consider the purpose, scope and operation of the system in the light of the changed international scene and of the Government's commitment to greater openness. The committee intends to complete this work by the spring of 1993 and is inviting those who wish to do so to contribute to its secretary by the end of the year.

Army Board of Inquiry

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the rules covering the Army Board of Inquiry's reports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Service boards of inquiry are internal inquiries held in private, to establish the facts of the matter under investigation and where appropriate to make recommendations to avoid a recurrence. The rules governing Army boards of inquiry and their reports are set out in the Board of Inquiry (Army) Rules 1956 (SI 630/1956). Related administrative instructions are included in annex A to chapter 5 of the Queen's Regulations for the Army. Both publications are available in the Library of the House.

The distribution of the reports of service boards of inquiry is normally limited to those service or Ministry authorities whose function and responsibilities require them to see the findings of the inquiry. My Department has discretion to release to others on an exceptional basis.

Helicopters

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the number of *(a)* EH101, *(b)* Lynx, *(c)* Sea King and *(d)* NH90 helicopters that have been ordered since 9 April 1987, giving the date the order was placed and the delivery or expected delivery date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Fourty-four EH101 anti-submarine warfare helicopters were ordered in 1991 for delivery phased over 1996-2001. Sixteen Lynx helicopters were ordered in 1988 and were delivered between 1990 and 1992. Seven Sea King helicopters were ordered in 1987 and delivered between 1989 and 1990. Negotiations for the procurement of six Sea King helicopters announced by my predecessor on 19 February this year (*Official Report*, column 332) are almost complete. No NH90 helicopters have been ordered. The former Secretary of State for Defence explained on 9 April 1987 (*Official Report*, col. 470) that we were no longer participating in the NH90 programme.

Search and Rescue

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his announcement about the future of the search and rescue forces on 21 October, what steps he is taking to ensure that the standards for rescue at sea as set by the United Kingdom search and rescue committee will not be breached; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The future RAF search and rescue (SAR) helicopter force will make virtually the same contribution as now to meeting the helicopter coverage group criteria for SAR helicopter coverage around the United Kingdom for civil marine and aviation purposes. The rationale for and implications of the changes in the force are set out in the open Government document "The Future Provision of Royal Air Force Search and Rescue Helicopters", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the bases where he expects to deploy the six Sea King HAR 3 helicopters for the search and rescue service, which were ordered in 1991-92 with the in-service date of 1996; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the open government document "The Future Provision of Royal Air Force Search and Rescue Helicopters", a copy of which I have placed in the Library of the House.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the organisations with whom he consulted about the review of the search and rescue service and the subsequent decisions announced by him on 21 October.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The organisations consulted were the Government Departments with a functional or regional interest in search and rescue matters: the Department of Transport and Home Office, the Welsh, Scottish, Northern Ireland and Foreign and Commonwealth Offices, and the Treasury.

European Fighter Aircraft

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place a copy of the industrial study for the European fighter aircraft, commissioned by Eurofighter, in the Library.

Mr. Aitken: I regret that this is not possible. The report the hon. Member requests is a NATO classified document. I have however placed in the Library a copy of an unclassified synopsis produced by British Aerospace.

Dismounted Public Duties

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who were the members of the working party who advised him on the future of dismounted public duties in London.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Membership of the interdepartmental public duties working group was drawn from the Ministry of Defence, the Home Office, the Department of the Environment, the Royal Household, the Metropolitan police, the Ministry of Defence Police, the Historic Royal Palaces Agency and the Tower of London.

Household Cavalry

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes he proposes to mounted ceremonial duties by the Household Cavalry.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Energy Policy

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's energy policy.

Mr. Eggar: It is the Government's energy policy to achieve, through promoting competition and developing competitive markets, secure energy supplies at the lowest possible prices, diversity of supply and in decision making; meeting the customers' needs with maximum efficiency; and maximising the economic exploitation of the United Kingdom's energy resources, while at the same time meeting the growing requirements of environmental policy.

EC Competition Commissioner

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent discussions he has had with the European Commissioner for competition on *(a)* energy pricing policy in the United Kingdom and *(b)* the United Kingdom semi-conductor manufacturing industry.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend has had no recent discussions with the European Commissioner for competition on either United Kingdom energy pricing policy or the United Kingdom semi-conductor manufacturing industry.

Mining Industry

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade in what circumstances Her Majesty's Government have the right to pay subsidies to British Coal without first seeking the approval of the European Commission.

Mr. Eggar: Under decision 2064/86/ECSC, all state aids by member states to their coal industries must be approved by the European Commission.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what advice has been given by the European Commission on its policy relating to future requests from the member states of the EC on subsidies to coal mining; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The agreed policy under which the Commission may give authorisation for state aids to member states' coal industries is set out in current decision —2064/86/ECSC. This decision stipulates that such aid must help to achieve one or more of the following objectives:

Improvement of competitivity of the coal industry, which contributes to assure a better security of supply.

Creating new capacities provided that they are economically viable.

Solving the social and regional problems related to developments in the coal industry.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what public expenditure will be involved in the measures required to safely seal and to protect against future aquifer contamination the 31 coal mines the closure of which has been recently announced.

Mr. Eggar: The total level of expenditure involved will depend on the decisions eventually taken on the future of these pits. The expenditure at any particular pit that is closed depends on the geological circumstances.

Fuel Cells

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will institute a study of legislation in the state of California relating to zero pollution emissions, and the use of fuel cells in hydrogen.

Mr. Eggar: My Department has already undertaken a number of studies on fuel cells and I refer the hon. Member to my answers to his other questions on 13 July at column *508*. On the matter of Californian state emissions regulations, these are well documented in technical publications and are available to the public.

Property Misdescriptions

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the progress which has been made in implementing the Specified Offences Order under the terms of the Property Misdescriptions Act 1991.

Mr. Leigh: My Department circulated a draft Specified Offences (No. 2) (Amendment) Order, to be made under the Estate Agents Act 1979, for consultation last December. We intend that implementation should coincide with that of the proposed Property Misdescriptions (Specified Matters) Order, which my hon. and noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Consumer Affairs and Small Firms intends to lay before Parliament as soon as possible.

Electricity

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what action is currently being taken by the European Commission in order to ensure a free and fair market in electricity throughout the European Community;

(2) what action he is taking to ensure that other European Community electricity generating companies do not benefit from state subsidies or cross subsidies.

Mr. Eggar: The European Commission has brought forward proposals designed to open up markets in electricity and natural gas throughout the Community. Discussion on the proposals is continuing. They provide for greater transparency in the operation of EC electricity utilities and should eliminate any state subsidies or cross subsidies from which such utilities or their customers may currently benefit.

Parcelforce

Mr. Allen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress he has made since his statement to the House on the future of Parcelforce.

Mr. Heseltine: Since my announcement to the House on 15 July 1992, my Department has been working with the Post Office and our advisers to consider a range of issues, including the timing and method of sale. I have received several expressions of interest in Parcelforce and look forward to its transfer to that private sector as soon as possible.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to publish the outcome of his review of the assisted areas map; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The public consultation paper on the assisted areas map review issued in June stated that the Government's aim was to implement a revised map early in 1993, following the necessary clearance with the European Commission. This remains our intention.

Uranium Mining, Namibia

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has received on the findings of the special safety monitoring commission sent to inspect the Rio Tinto Zinc Rossing uranium mine in Namibia in September to evaluate the health effects of mining uranium exported to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: The Government of Namibia has made a report in the form of a press report on this International Atomic Energy Agency mission. A copy of the press release has been placed in the Library of the House.

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will publish the sixth annual plutonium production and storage figures.

Mr. Eggar: The annual plutonium figures are being compiled and the information will be published shortly.

Commonwealth of Independent States

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his recent visit to the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Mr. Heseltine: I visited Azerbaijan and Russia from 27 to 30 September, leading a team of 13 senior business men. In Azerbaijan I had high-level meetings with President Elchibey and his Government, supported BP's recent success in securing exclusive negotiating rights for the exploration and development of two potentially very large oilfields under the South Caspian sea, signed a joint declaration on economic co-operation and helped to pave the way for other companies to win further business.

In Russia, I met Vice-President Rutskoi, acting Prime Minister Gaidar and a number of other Ministers, particularly deputy Prime Minister Shokhin with whom I held the first meeting of a new steering committee on trade and investment. I signed the terms of reference of this committee and a joint declaration on economic co-operation. I discussed the question of appropriate guarantees and priorities for the Export Credit Guarantees Department cover which the Prime Minister recently announced that we would be making available to Russia.

Nuclear energy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the annual United Kingdom contribution since 1979 to *(a)* the International Atomic Energy Agency, *(b)* the nuclear energy agency of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and

Development, *(c)* the European Atomic Energy Community and *(d)* the joint research centres of the European Community's nuclear research programme, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the benefits that have accrued from these respective contributions.

Mr. Eggar: Details of the United Kingdom's contributions to the International Atomic Energy Agency and the nuclear energy agency of the OECD are published annually in the supply estimates, currently at class V, vote 2, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. For contributions prior to 1987-88 reference should be made to written answer of 16 May 1988 at column *300*.

The Community budget is published annually in the Official Journal of the European Communities, also held in the Library of the House. The United Kingdom's contributions to the European Atomic Energy Community and to the nuclear programmes of the joint research centres of the European Communities form part of the single United Kingdom contribution to the European community's budget made under article 207 of the treaty of Rome. National contributions to individual programmes are not identified separately.

These contributions have been obligatory since the United Kingdom's accession to the respective organisations. Over the years there have been many benefits from them, not least the worldwide effort in the field of non-proliferation and nuclear safeguards, and work on radiation protection and public health.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the annual United Kingdom contribution to the European fusion nuclear energy research programme since its inception; and what contribution Her Majesty's Government intend to make to future fusion programmes including *(a)* the Joint European TORUS and *(b)* the next European TORUS.

Mr. Eggar: 80 per cent. of funding for the joint European TORUS—JET—project is provided by the European Atomic Energy Community—Euratom—through the Community budget. Member states contribute to the Community budget as a whole, not individual elements. The United Kingdom's gross contribution before abatement is around 16 per cent. of the total. Information on the Community's annual expenditure on fusion research, including its contribution to JET, is contained in chapter B6-55 of the "General Budget of the European Communities', published in the Official Journal of the European Communities—OJ L 26 of 3-2-92—a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

A further 10 per cent. of the funding is shared out between the members of the JET joint undertaking, including the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, whose share of this component is around 1 per cent. of the total. In addition, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority meets the remaining 10 per cent. of the funding, in recognition of the United Kingdom's status as host nation.

In 1991-92 the United Kingdom's total contribution in respect of these two elements was around £8 million.

The United Kingdom contributes directly to the Euratom fusion programme via the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's "Contract of Association" with Euratom. This amalgamates the fusion R and D programme undertaken at Culham laboratory with the wider programme undertaken by Euratom fusion research laboratories as a whole. The annual cost of this work is also around £8 million.

Decisions on future funding of the Community's fusion programme, and hence on the funding of JET and the next European TORUS, are a matter for the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Llewellyn Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table of annual investment made in each year since 1979 by his Department and the Department of Energy in *(a)* nuclear reactor research, *(b)* nuclear waste research, *(c)* nuclear decommissioning research, *(d)* nuclear fuel research, *(e)* radiation protection research, *(f)* gas gathering and distribution research, *(g)* gas fired power plant research, *(h)* clean coal burn research, *(i)* renewable energy research and *(j)* energy efficiency and conservation research.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is given in the table, to the extent that it is readily available within the DTI. Prior to 1986, nuclear programmes were funded by a block grant to the Atomic Energy Authority, which was responsible for their detailed content; a breakdown along the lines requested is thus not available in the Department. Energy efficiency and conservation R and D is now a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Year	*Nuclear Reactor Research*	*Nuclear Waste Research*	*Nuclear Decommissioning Research*	*Radiation Protection Research*	*Clean Coal Burn Research*	*Renewable Energy Research*
1979-80	—	—	—	—	1·8	8·2
1980-81	—	—	—	—	2·7	11·3
1981-82	—	—	—	—	4·9	15·3
1982-83	—	—	—	—	3·4	12·7
1983-84	—	—	—	—	3·4	11·9
1984-85	—	—	—	—	0·9	14·9
1985-86	—	—	—	—	0·8	13·6
1986-87	114·6	—	—	—	1·9	12·5
1987-88	93·1	3·3	—	0·3	1·4	16·1
1988-89	130·5	2·8	—	0·6	0·9	16·3
1989-90	119·3	4·7	—	0·6	1·7	17·9
1990-91	85·0	—	5·8	0·6	11·4	20·8
1991-92	60·3	—	7·2	0·5	4·7	24·6

All figures are in £M in money terms.
Nuclear fuel research is not separately identified.
Nuclear Waste Management programme is subsumed within decommissioning research after 1990.
There was no expenditure on gas gathering and distribution research or on gas fired power plant research during the period.

1981-82 to 1988-89 non-nuclear figures are taken from the "Annual Review of Government-funded R & D", and relate essentially to Frascati R 2 D, without including technology transfer and dissemination expenditure.

Figures from 1989-90 to date are final outturn, and do include technology transfer and dissemination expenditure.

Trentham Colliery

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of all existing and proposed development plans at other collieries which it is intended will be classified under expenditure at Trentham colliery.

Mr. Eggar: The issues which the hon. Member raises are matters for British Coal.

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) pursuant to his answer of 19 October, *Official Report*, column 221, if he will give details of the profits lost to the Trentham complex arising from the decision made by British Coal to cancel development work from September 1992; in respect of which coal faces orders have been given to stop production; and if he will give details of the subsequent profit loss in each case;

(2) pursuant to his statement of 19 October, if he will give details of all coal reserves left at Trentham colliery, north Staffordshire;

(3) pursuant to his statement of 19 October, what was British Coal's estimate of the anticipated tonnage for 1992-93 at the Trentham complex; and what is his estimate of the effect on this original target of the postponement of committed developments;

(4) pursuant to his statement of 19 October, if he will give details of the development costs of introducing future workings at Trentham colliery including the two major roadway drivages into new seams;

(5) pursuant to his statement of 19 October, if he will give details for 1990-91 and 1991-92 of capital investment at Trentham colliery designed to incorporate management administration costs incurred as a result of pit closures elsewhere;

(6) pursuant to his statement of 19 October, if he will give details of the profits earned by Trentham colliery for 1990-91 and the projected loss budgeted for the period 1 April to 20 September in the current year;

(7) what information he has on British Coal's plans for future developments to introduce pillar and stall work at Trentham colliery.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 22 October 1992]:* In my statement on 19 October, I said that we had concluded that, for the time being, British Coal should be allowed to proceed with the closure of only 10 pits—including Trentham—which it had told me were currently making a loss and had no prospect of viability in the foreseeable future.

The issues which the hon. Member raises are matters for British Coal.

The hon. Member may wish to pursue this issue in the context of the statutory consultation procedure.

ITER Programme

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the three engineering design teams, and their location, which have been agreed under the future ITER programme; and if he will list the number of staff, and the total project cost of the JET at Culham, projected for 1992-93, and established for the three preceding years.

Mr. Eggar: The plasma vessel work for ITER—international thermonuclear experimental reactor—will be undertaken by the engineering design team in Garching, in Germany. Other plant engineering work will be undertaken by the team in Naka, in Japan. The design integration team will be based in San Diego, USA.

JET—joint European torus—is a Community project. Information on its staffing and funding is available from the annual reports of the JET joint undertaking, which are held in the House of Commons Library.

Euratom

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress has been made since 28 November 1991 in implementing European Community Directive 89/618/Euratom in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have been asked to reply.

Following public consultation by the Health and Safety Commission which ended on 28 February 1992, final proposals for regulations implementing European Community directive 89/618/Euratom were approved by the HSC on 7 July. These proposals were then communicated to the European Commission, as required by article 33 of the Euratom treaty. The European Commission recommendations on these proposals have now been received and arrangements are in hand for making the implementing regulations and laying them before Parliament.

Electricity Costs

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the average cost of electricity delivered to *(a)* industrial consumers, *(b)* service sector consumers and *(c)* domestic consumers in each of the member states of the European Community calculated in (i) ecus, (ii) pounds and (iii) currencies of each respective country.

Mr. Eggar: The average prices of electricity in 1991 to industrial consumers combined, in the member states of the European Community are set out in the tables. Prices of electricity to the domestic and commercial sectors are not available separately. 1991 prices for electricity in Greece, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Spain are not available. All prices in the tables include taxes, where applicable, including VAT to the domestic/commercial market where it is not refundable.

	£ per kwh	*ECU per kwh*	*National currencies per kwh*	
Industry				
Belgium	0·0346	0·0493	2·0802	Francs
Denmark	0·0369	0·0527	0·4165	Crowns
France	0·0306	0·0435	0·3036	Francs
Germany	0·0499	0·0709	0·1455	Deutschmarks
Ireland	0·0374	0·0533	0·0409	Irish pounds

	£ per kwh	*ECU per kwh*	*National currencies per kwh*	
Italy	0·0578	0·0847	129·9000	Lira
Portugal	0·0726	0·1036	18·5090	Escudos
United Kingdom	0·0405	0·0578	0·0405	Pounds
Domestic/commercial sector				
Belgium	0·0941	0·1340	5·6563	Francs
Denmark	0·0981	0·1397	1·1050	Crowns
France	0·0805	0·1147	0·7999	Francs
Germany	0·0902	0·1288	0·2642	Deutschmarks
Ireland	0·0748	0·1068	0·0820	Irish pounds
Italy	0·0981	0·1397	214·2000	Lira
Portugal	0·0924	0·1314	23·4700	Escudos
United Kingdom	0·0680	0·0970	0·0680	Pounds

Source: International Energy Agency: Energy Prices and Taxes.

Gas Prices

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last discussed gas prices with the director of the Office of Gas Regulation; and what decisions were taken.

Mr. Eggar: I meet the Director General of Gas Supply from time to time. Decisions on gas tariffs are a matter for him.

Perfume Companies

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will refer to the Director of the Office of Fair Trading the actions of perfume companies in relation to discounting by Superdrug.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Director General of Fair Trading is already investigating complaints about restrictions on the distribution of perfumes.

Nuclear Plant

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what would be the saving to the Exchequer of mothballing every nuclear power station.

Mr. Eggar: There would in fact be significant net costs to the Exchequer if Nuclear Electric's stations were closed or mothballed. The substantial loss of revenue from electricity sales and, in the case of closure, the bringing forward of expenditure on decommissioning, reprocessing and waste disposal, together with redundancy costs, would far outweigh any savings in operating costs.

Coal Imports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the addition to the landed cost, in terms of pounds per tonne of transporting imported coal to power stations compared to the cost of transporting British coal.

Mr. Eggar: This is a commercial matter for the companies involved.

Electricity Generation

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish figures showing the percentage of electricity which is produced from renewable sources in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: The electricity produced from renewable sources of energy in the United Kingdom in 1991 was equivalent to 2 per cent. of total electricity generated in that year.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will, at 1992 or other price datum, give the comparable capital cost and full fuel costs, respectively, for production of one kilowatt hour of electricity from the most efficient power stations now available, using atomic, coal and gas fuel, respectively.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish his latest comparative list of the range of costs per kilowatt of generating electricity from *(a)* coal, *(b)* nuclear, *(c)* hydroelectric and *(d)* gas sources.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 October 1992]*: The comparable capital and full fuel costs per kilowatt hour of power stations using different fuels depends significantly upon the contractual terms of fuel purchase, and the contractual terms under which the power station is to be constructed and operated. These are commercial matters for the companies concerned. As far as electricity is concerned, it is up to the Director General of Electricity Supply to ensure that the regional electricity companies comply with their economic purchasing obligations. My Department will be assessing the evidence available on comparative costs as part of the Government's review.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much subsidy was given to support nuclear power in Britain in 1981 and 1991; and what were the comparable figures for the coal industry.

Mr. Eggar: No Government subsidies have been paid to Nuclear Electric plc or British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. Both these companies have since April 1990, been recipients of the fossil fuel levy paid by electricity suppliers. In 1991-92 the amount of money raised through the levy was £1,324 million, about 1 per cent. of which went to renewable generators in England and Wales. Nuclear Electric was a net lender to the Exchequer of £84 million in 1991-92.

The Government have been the customer for research and development and other programmes undertaken by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and has funded those programmes and their consequences.

Responsibility for Scottish Nuclear Limited rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

In 1981-82 and 1991-92 the Government made available to the coal industry financial assistance of

£623 million and £585 million respectively. This is made up of deficit grant, operating grant—1981-82 only—social and restructuring grant and payments under the redundant mineworkers payments scheme.

Cashmere

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the negotiations being held between EC officials and the Republic of China regarding the bilateral agreement covering cashmere and fine animal hair imports into the EC; and what restitution is to be offered in compensation for recent overshipment of cashmere garments to EC markets.

Mr. Needham: The European Community has only just opened negotiations with China on renewal of the bilateral agreement on textiles and clothing. The Commission, prompted by the United Kingdom, is taking a resolute line on the future level of cashmere imports and on compensation for past overshipments. It is too early to forecast the outcome on those points.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the current state of negotiations seeking to roll over the multi-fibre arrangements terms pending a successful conclusion of the GATT Uruguay round; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: On 6 October the Foreign Affairs Council agreed a mandate for the European Commission to open negotiations with signatories to the multi-fibre arrangement with a view to extending the MFA, as an interim measure, until such time as the GATT Uruguay round agreement on trade in textiles and clothing is ready to implement. The aim is to conclude bilateral negotiations with individual supplier countries by the end of this year.

Mr. Madden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he proposes to announce an extension of the multi-fibre arrangement, on existing terms, by the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 22 October 1992]:* On 6 October the Foreign Affairs Council agreed a mandate for the Commission to open negotiations with certain third countries with a view to securing an agreement for an extension of the multi-fibre arrangement. Bilateral negotiations with individual supplier countries have begun and the Commission hopes to conclude these by the end of this year.

European Funding

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what criteria will be used by the United Kingdom Government in recommending regions within the United Kingdom for consideration for directive *5(b)* status within the review next year of the European regional development fund and the European social fund.

Mr. Sainsbury: Until the European Commission's proposals for the review of Community structural fund regulations are received, and the Council has considered them, it would be premature to anticipate which criteria will apply.

EC Industrial Funds

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) when he expects the draft regulations relating to EC industrial funds to be published; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how far he expects negotiations on reform of the EC industrial funds to proceed during the United Kingdom's EC presidency.

Mr. Sainsbury: I do not expect to receive the European Commission's proposals for revised structural funds regulations until after the Edinburgh European Council on 11 and 12 December. It is therefore unlikely that substantive negotiations on them will begin during the United Kingdom presidency.

Technical Innovation

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the Segal Quince Wicksteed report on technical innovation, to which he referred in his letter to the hon. Member for Linlithgow of 29 July.

Mr. Leigh: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given on 19 October 1992, at columns *233-34*.

Energy Review

Mr. Lester: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a further statement on his plans for the energy review announced on 21 October.

Mr. Heseltine: As I announced to the House on 21 October, I have put in hand a full and wide-ranging review of the prospects for the 21 pits proposed for closure by British Coal but not subject to the statutory consultation currently being undertaken by British Coal. This review will consider views and evidence on the future of each of the pits in question, in the context of the Government's energy policy, including the consequences of that policy for British Coal and the employment for the industry.

It will decide whether the case for closure at each of the pits in question has been fully made and whether it is sensible to mothball some of these pits. It will consider whether the market prospects for coal have been correctly assessed and, in consultation with the Director General of Electricity Supply, whether any company is abusing its position in the market place. It will look at the level of coal stocks, both at the pithead and the power stations, and whether plans to run them down are sensibly phased.

It will consider the consequences of the switch to gas in power generation and the relative costs of gas and coal-fired generation. It will look into the latest estimates of likely reserves of gas and draw conclusions. It will consider the present scale of gas-generated power stations in production, being built and in the planning process. In this connection, it will review the use of my consent powers under the Electricity Act 1989.

The review will consider the implications of the statutory obligation on electricity suppliers to purchase non-fossil power, including that from nuclear sources.

The review will explore the opportunities for the private sector in the production of coal. It will consider the existing and anticipated level of imports and the wider economic implications of this.

The review will give due regard to Scottish and Welsh interests and will also give consideration to the particular needs of Northern Ireland.

Consultation will take place with all the principal providers and consumers of energy, the trade unions and other interested parties. I have already announced that I have invited Boyds, an international mining consultancy to report to me on the viability of the 21 pits. I also intend to appoint consultants to report on the prospects for British Coal, including any alternative markets that may exist for coal and to comment generally on the competitiveness of British Coal as an organisation. I may wish to commission further independent studies.

My intention is to publish all evidence and the findings of the review to the fullest extent possible except where information has been provided in confidence and is commercially sensitive. I shall be discussing with the Trade and Industry Select Committee the means by which such confidential information might be made available to it.

Early in the new year, I shall publish a White Paper setting out the results of the review in the context of the government's energy policy, and making clear the consequences of that policy for British Coal, the implications for individual pits and the employment prospects for the industry. Before then the Select Committee will have a full opportunity to consider all the issues as it thinks fit. I shall present the conclusions and the Government's future decisions to the House, which will have an opportunity to debate the issues fully.

In order that I can give due weight to all the views expressed, I am asking those who wish to provide evidence to the review to do so as soon as possible and in any event not later than 1 December 1992. Evidence should be sent to Dr. J. M. Bird, Department of Trade and Industry, Room 3.4.4., 1 Palace street, London SW1E 5HE, making clear whether the evidence may be published.

Research, Development and Innovation

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the European Council decision to establish a programme for the collection of Community statistics on research, development and innovation has yet been made; and what further action is proposed during the British presidency.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

No decision has yet been made. Discussions are currently proceeding in the relevant Council working party.

Point of Ayr Colliery

Mr. Hanson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will visit the Point of Ayr colliery to meet management and unions.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 23 October 1992]:* I have no plans to do so.

Coal Industry

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the estimated loss in the balance of payments, and increased public expenditure consequent on the reduction in the output of, and employment directly in, the coal mining industry, and indirectly on the associated suppliers of equipment and services.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 22 October 1992]:* The level of contraction of the coal industry and the implications for the balance of payments and public expenditure, if any, would depend upon decisions reached in the light of the review announced by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Industrial Strategy

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the criteria by which he will evaluate the success of his industrial strategy.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 23 October 1992]:* The key criterion I will use is the extent to which, over the long term, the demands of customers, both at home and abroad, for goods and services are met by United Kingdom firms.

Coal Exports

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has on research undertaken by British Coal to secure markets for British coal in Europe.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 22 October 1992]:* This is a matter for British Coal.

SCOTLAND

Dounreay

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has regarding radioactive leakage from the corroded low-level nuclear waste drums at pits numbers three and four at the nuclear power development establishment at Dounreay.

Sir Hector Monro: Routine site monitoring carried out in the vicinity of tips three and four has confirmed that the drums stored above these filled tips have not resulted in any increased levels of radioactivity either in the atmosphere or in the ground water pumped from the pits.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what report he has received from AEA Technology or Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate on the environmental pollution consequences of the fire at the intermediate-level waste silo at Dounreay in July.

Sir Hector Monro: My Department was informed by AEA Technology on 22 July 1992 that a small fire had taken place in the intermediate level waste silo at Dounreay on the evening of 21 July 1992 and that some smoke had been released to the atmosphere. Radioactive material was not released and there were therefore no environmental consequences.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the cost of decommissioning all of the radioactivity-contaminated buildings at AEA Technology's Dounreay nuclear plant; and what level of funding his Department will provide for the decommissioning work.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

I am replying in view of my responsibility for matters relating to AEA Technology.

The current estimate of the cost of decommissioning the nuclear facilities at Dounreay and dealing with the associated wastes is around £1-2 billion (in 1992 prices and in undiscounted terms). As most of the expenditure lies well in the future, actual costs will remain very uncertain until nearer the time when individual projects are developed and costed in detail.

My Department will meet the costs of all decommissioning and waste management liabilities arising from work done at the site before AEA Technology was established as a trading fund in 1986. It will also meet the costs of all such liabilities arising from its own programmes (and those of the former Department of Energy) since 1986.

Undergraduates

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many new undergraduates have been enrolled at each university, other than former polytechnics, in Scotland for the academic year 1992-93; and how many of them are from Scotland, England, Northern Ireland, Wales, Republic of Ireland and other European Community countries.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Final figures for undergraduate enrolments at Scottish universities for the academic year 1992-93 will not be available until early next year. I shall reply to the hon. Member at that time.

Electoral Arrangements

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will estimate the cost of the second statutory review of electoral arrangements for the districts of Roxburghshire and Berwickshire; and to what use the fruits of the review will be put;

(2) if he will make a statement on the reasons for the decision to proceed with the second statutory review of electoral district boundaries in Roxburghshire and Berwickshire;

(3) what use is to be made of the Local Government Boundary Commission reports following the second statutory review of electoral arrangements in Roxburgh and Berwickshire in the light of the Government proposals to reform local government in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland has a statutory responsibility under section 16 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to undertake regular reviews of electoral arrangements of local government areas in Scotland. In the case of Roxburgh district and Berwickshire district this must be completed before local government restructuring will be implemented. It is imperative that local electoral arrangements are kept up-to-date and reflect changing local circumstances. Whatever structure of local government is adopted following the Government's present review, it is likely that the district ward boundaries will be of assistance in devising the electoral divisions in the new authorities. It is therefore sensible on all counts that the reviews should proceed.

It is not possible to estimate the costs of the review in Roxburgh and Berwickshire districts separately from the reviews which are taking place simultaneously in other parts of the country.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now cancel the second statutory review of electoral arrangements for Roxburgh and Berwickshire districts.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No.

Recycling

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial assistance already exists to enable local authorities in Scotland to set up recycling schemes.

Sir Hector Monro: There are no schemes for Government financial assistance in Scotland specifically for local authority recycling projects. However, the Government, through exchequer grant, finance the majority of local authority revenue expenditure. Capital expenditure for local authority recycling activities is not identified separately within overall capital expenditure allocations. It is for the authorities to determine expenditure priorities within their overall allocations. Authorities planning to set up recycling schemes should identify such expenditure in their financial plans, and such projects are given priority in determining allocations.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of the proportion of household waste which is currently recycled in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The percentage of household waste which is recycled in Scotland was estimated at about 2 per cent. in 1990, the latest year for which figures are available.

Beer

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many complaints have been made to procurators fiscal or the Crown Office in the past two years in respect of allegations of short measures of beer poured by publicans.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not collected centrally.

Prisons Estate

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made with the review of the prisons estate; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Over the past three years a thorough appraisal of the prisons estate in Scotland has been undertaken, in order to establish and prioritise the range of improvements and upgrading work required to provide modern accommodation and facilities for prisoners and staff alike. A programme for implementation will be determined in the light of the outcome of the 1992 public expenditure survey.

Private Medical Insurance

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what authorisation he has given to NHS hospitals currently directly managed by health boards in Scotland and to national health trusts in Scotland to enter into contracts or arrangements with private medical insurance companies.

Mr. Stewart: None.

Prime Health Limited

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish details of the contract and arrangements between Aberdeen Royal hospital NHS trust and Prime Health Ltd;

(2) if he will publish details of contracts and arrangements between Woodend hospital, Aberdeen and Prime Health Ltd;

(3) if he will publish details of the contracts and arrangements between Woodend hospital, Aberdeen and SAGA Services Ltd;

(4) if he will publish details of the contracts and arrangements between Aberdeen Royal hospital NHS trust and SAGA Services Ltd.

Mr. Stewart: No such contracts or arrangements exist.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the latest estimates by the Registrar-General of Populations of those aged 17 years and over, plus 63 per cent. of those aged 16 years, for each district council area and parliamentary constituency, together in each case with the equivalent year's electoral registration figures.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is given in the tables. For clarity of presentation, the first table includes regions and islands areas and the whole of Scotland. The population figures in table A are the Registrar General's provisional census based 1991 mid-year estimates. Those in table B involve additionally a certain degree of approximation and should therefore be treated with caution.

Table A: Local Government Areas

Local government area	*Estimate of population aged 17 and over plus 63 per cent. of 16 year olds (as at 30 June 1991[1])*	*Parliamentary electors on the 1992 electoral registers (qualifying date 10 October 1991)*
Scotland	4,052,549	3,929,064
Borders region	83,995	83,908
Berwickshire	15,322	15,402
Ettrick & Lauderdale	27,748	27,547
Roxburgh	28,673	28,599
Tweedale	12,253	12,360
Central region	216,646	211,273
Clackmannan	37,835	36,796
Falkirk	114,054	110,698
Stirling	64,767	63,779
Dumfries & Galloway region	118,235	116,750
Ammandale & Eskdale	29,743	29,421
Nithsdale	45,529	44,624
Stewartry	19,033	18,990
Wigtown	23,932	23,715
Fife region	273,614	264,644
Dunfermline	100,116	96,177
Kirkcaldy	116,700	114,223
North East Fife	56,797	54,244
Grampian region	407,600	397,745
Aberdeen City	175,619	170,178
Banff & Buchan	66,501	65,631
Gordon	58,537	58,006
Kincardine & Deeside	41,168	39,986
Moray	65,875	63,944
Highland region	159,427	157,449
Badenoch & Strathspey	8,858	9,130
Caithness	20,751	20,629
Inverness	49,250	48,042
Lochaber	14,984	14,817
Nairn	8,362	8,372
Ross & Cromarty	37,561	36,778
Skye & Lochalsh	9,158	9,137
Sutherland	10,503	10,544
Lothian region	607,777	591,233
East Lothian	68,320	67,581
Edinburgh City	363,756	351,327
Midlothian	62,632	61,189
West Lothian	113,069	111,136
Strathclyde region	1,815,739	1,745,684
Argyll & Bute	51,713	48,436
Bearsden & Milngavie	32,204	31,626
Clydebank	36,589	35,239
Clydesdale	45,616	44,379
Cumbernauld & Kilsyth	48,754	47,155
Cumnock & Doon Valley	33,684	33,246
Cunninghame	108,374	105,235
Dumbarton	60,882	57,894
East Kilbride	66,547	64,824
Eastwood	47,441	46,745
Glasgow City	553,151	523,259
Hamilton	83,365	80,652
Inverclyde	72,154	70,761
Kilmarnock & Loudoun	64,195	62,777
Kyle & Carrick	90,918	89,062
Monklands	80,519	77,699
Motherwell	113,247	108,617
Renfrew	159,135	153,818
Strathkelvin	67,251	64,260
Tayside region	314,138	305,526
Angus	75,172	73,376
Dundee City	138,949	134,858
Perth & Kinross	100,017	97,292
Orkney Islands area	15,297	15,404
Shetland Islands area	17,097	16,433
Western Isles Islands area	22,984	23,015

[1] Provisional

Table B: Parliamentary Constituencies

Parliamentary constituency	*Estimate of population aged 17 and over plus 63 per cent. of 16 year olds (as at 30 June 1991[1])*	*Parliamentary electors on the 1992 electoral registers (qualifying date 10 October 1991)*
Aberdeen North	62,500	60,623
Aberdeen South	61,100	59,230
Angus East	65,300	63,637
Argyll & Bute	51,700	48,436
Ayr	67,700	66,284

Parliamentary constituency	*Estimate of population aged 17 and over plus 63 per cent. of 16 year olds (as at 30 June 1991[1])*	*Parliamentary electors on the 1992 electoral registers (qualifying date 10 October 1991)*
Banff & Buchan	66,500	65,631
Caithness & Sutherland	31,300	31,173
Carrick, Cumnock & Doon Valley	56,900	56,024
Central Fife	57,700	56,495
Clackmannan	50,800	49,441
Clydebank & Milngavie	49,400	47,773
Clydesdale	64,500	62,684
Cumbernauld & Kilsyth	48,800	47,155
Cunninghame North	57,100	55,490
Cunninghame South	51,200	49,745
Dumbarton	60,900	57,894
Dumfries	62,800	61,773
Dundee East	61,100	59,328
Dundee West	62,200	60,386
Dunfermline East	52,400	50,452
Dunfermline West	53,400	51,310
East Kilbride	66,500	64,824
East Lothian	68,300	67,588
Eastwood	65,900	64,560
Edinburgh Central	58,800	56,839
Edinburgh East	47,800	46,157
Edinburgh Leith	59,100	57,073
Edinburgh Pentlands	58,400	56,433
Edinburgh South	64,200	61,999
Edinburgh West	61,800	59,702
Falkirk East	54,000	52,387
Falkirk West	52,200	50,631
Galloway & Upper Nithsdale	55,500	54,977
Glasgow Cathcart	47,700	45,149
Glasgow Central	51,100	48,383
Glasgow Garscadden	44,100	41,675
Glasgow Govan	48,800	46,199
Glasgow Hillhead	60,900	57,586
Glasgow Maryhill	51,600	48,791
Glasgow Pollok	49,300	46,655
Glasgow Provan	39,100	36,986
Glasgow Rutherglen	56,400	53,325
Glasgow Shettleston	55,400	52,381
Glasgow Springburn	48,900	46,216
Gordon	82,400	81,097
Greenock & Port Glasgow	53,700	52,661
Hamilton	64,400	62,347
Inverness, Nairn & Lochaber	71,000	70,164
Kilmarnock & Loudoun	64,200	62,777
Kincardine & Deeside	69,300	67,216
Kirkcaldy	53,300	52,191
Linlithgow	63,200	61,979
Livingston	63,300	62,122
Midlothian	62,600	61,178
Monklands East	50,800	49,059
Monklands West	52,000	49,935
Moray	65,900	63,944
Motherwell North	60,600	58,106
Motherwell South	52,800	50,674
North East Fife	56,700	54,196
North Tayside	57,900	56,353
Orkney & Shetland	32,400	31,837
Paisley North	48,500	46,867
Paisley South	50,100	48,385
Perth & Kinross	67,700	65,826
Renfrew West & Inverclyde	60,700	58,897
Ross, Cromarty & Skye	57,200	56,112
Roxburgh & Berwickshire	44,000	44,001
Stirling	59,700	58,814
Strathkelvin & Bearsden	64,300	61,924
Tweeddale, Ettrick & Lauderdale	40,000	39,907
Western Isles	23,000	23,015

[1] Provisional

Offensive Weapons

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to introduce legislation relating to the carrying and possession of knives and similar offensive weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government are committed to changing the law to make it more difficult to carry knives. We shall bring forward specific proposals as soon as we have worked up the details and secured a suitable legislative opportunity.

Consultants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the names of the consultants commissioned to inquire into *(a)* the privatisation of the Scottish bus group, *(b)* the Skye bridge and *(c)* options for the future of Scottish Water; and if he will give the expenditure for each.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 22 October 1992]*: Expenditure incurred by the Scottish Office on consultancy work in connection with the projects in question is as follows:

	£ (excluding VAT)
Scottish Bus Group	
Quayle Munro (financial advice)	408,690
Bell-Ingram (property advice) (to date)	19,403
Government Actuary (pensions advice)	6,158
Skye Crossing	
JMP Consultants (engineering advice)	554,574
Quayle Munro (financial advice)	107,614
Chartered West LB (financial advice)	38,724

	£ (excluding VAT)
The Ash Partnership (environmental advice)	42,650
Scottish Water and Sewerage Services	
Quayle Munro (advice on options for future structure of services)	50,000

Housing Statistics

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total number of starts and completions for *(a)* new houses, *(b)* private houses, *(c)* local authority, *(d)* housing associations and *(e)* new towns for each of the years 1979-80 to 1991-92 inclusive.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 October 1992]:* The information requested is set out in the table:

New dwellings started and completed in Scotland for the period 1979-80 to 1991-92

Financial year	Agency									
	Started					Completed				
	Private sector	Local authority	Housing associations	New town	Total	Private sector	Local authority	Housing associations	New town	Total
1979-80	15,226	4,578	1,019	1,104	21,927	15,272	4,818	740	2,081	22,911
1980-81	9,586	2,694	1,335	1,247	14,862	11,730	5,199	1,286	1,217	19,432
1981-82	11,422	2,030	1,192	552	15,196	11,018	3,141	1,617	1,408	17,184
1982-83	12,794	2,372	2,368	602	18,216	11,990	2,222	1,133	678	16,023
1983-84	15,374	2,175	991	158	18,698	13,346	2,470	1,597	564	17,977
1984-85	14,192	1,705	1,449	144	17,490	14,158	2,024	1,764	261	18,207
1985-86	14,300	1,672	1,403	139	17,514	14,364	1,880	1,091	141	17,476
1986-87	14,301	1,867	1,575	288	18,031	14,601	1,678	1,347	150	17,776
1987-88	13,520	1,988	1,991	374	17,873	14,174	2,021	1,281	183	17,659
1988-89	15,576	1,078	2,414	589	19,657	14,646	1,818	1,512	224	18,200
1989-90	18,416	1,143	2,698	722	22,979	16,884	1,243	1,357	612	20,096
1990-91	[1]17,154	[2]757	3,260	[2]451	21,622	[1]15,406	[2]953	1,866	[2]631	18,856
1991-92	[1]15,267	[2]683	2,390	[2]333	18,673	[1]16,002	[2]1,003	1,487	[2]465	18,957

[1] Includes estimates for outstanding returns.

[2] Returns are outstanding.

Fife Child Care Inquiry

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the report of the Fife child care inquiry will be published.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 23 October 1992]:* I plan to seek the approval of the House to publish sheriff Kearney's report very shortly.

Right-to-buy Scheme

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total amount of income received from the sale of *(a)* local authority houses and *(b)* new towns houses in each of the years since the inception of the right-to-buy scheme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 October 1992]:* The information requested is shown in the table as follows:

£ million

	Income received from the sale of:	
	Local authority houses	New towns houses
1980-81	19·9	12·1
1981-82	62·7	16·5
1982-83	102·3	16·0
1983-84	123·2	22·0
1984-85	119·2	20·4
1985-86	105·6	17·1
1986-87	120·0	21·2
1987-88	168·8	28·1
1988-89	243·5	30·7
1989-90	308·7	45·6
1990-91	258·3	45·2
1991-92	[1]247·3	32·5

[1] Provisional outturn.

Euratom Treaty

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on plans by the European Commission to inspect the radiation monitoring arrangements at Dournreay under the article 35 provisions of the Euratom treaty.

Sir Hector Monro: Agreement has been reached with the European Commission on the procedures to be followed in the United Kingdom for verifications under article 35 of the Euratom treaty of the operation and efficiency of environmental monitoring facilities for radioactivity. We have not yet received a formal request from the Commission for such a verification visit in respect of Dounreay or elsewhere.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 27 October 1992

TRANSPORT

Agricultural Vehicles

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the number of road traffic accidents involving agricultural vehicles between the hours of sunset and sunrise in each of the past five years.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: During 1991, there were 92 reported injury road accidents during the hours of darkness involving vehicles whose body type could be identified from registration details as being an agricultural machine. During 1990, there were 100 such accidents. Comparable data for earlier years are not available.

Computer Projects

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table setting out for the period since 9 April *(a)* each tender issued by his Department for projects requiring the supply of (i) computer hardware and (ii) computer software, *(b)* a description of the services required, *(c)* the number of companies that were invited to tender, *(d)* the number of companies that submitted a bid without prior invitation by his Department, *(e)* which company was awarded the contract, *(f)* the value of each contract and *(g)* the length of period over which the contract will run.

Mr. Norris: This information is not held centrally and could only be given at disproportionate cost.

Car Model Tests

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, as part of his quality service objectives, he will require the publication of the findings of each new car model test commissioned since 1988 using public money.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: All mass-produced new cars have to be type-approval tested against a range of standards before they can be registered. Although testing is supervised by the Vehicle Certification Agency, it is paid for by manufacturers, which are at liberty to make test results available voluntarily if they wish. Our principal concern is to confirm that type-approved vehicles meet key safety standards, rather than to record the extent by which they exceed those standards.

We are nevertheless currently considering whether basic data about exhaust and noise emissions could be made available in future. Precise figures are recorded for these aspects of type-approval testing, and it may be possible to publish information like the official list on car fuel consumption, which has been published twice a year since 1983. Such a list may have to be compiled on an EC-wide basis as much type-approval testing of United Kingdom registered cars is undertaken elsewhere in the Community.

Trunk Roads

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions his Department has recently directed local planning authorities to refuse planning permission for the creation of access to side roads from trunk roads.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 23 October 1992]:* Ninety-seven since 1 April 1992.

ENVIRONMENT

Toxic Waste

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will put an end to the export of toxic wastes to third world countries by ensuring a complete EC ban on the export of all forms of toxic waste;

(2) if he will ensure that the right to ban toxic waste trade is enshrined in new EC regulations;

(3) if he will set a date for an end to the import and export of toxic waste into and out of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 26 October 1992]:* The EC waste shipments regulation was agreed at the meeting of the Council of Environment Ministers on 20 October, chaired by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. I represented the United Kingdom.

The regulation will enable member states to ban imports for final disposal from other member states unless they produce hazardous waste in such a small quantity that it would be uneconomic to provide new specialised disposal facilities. Imports for disposal will also be permitted from developing countries which do not have and cannot acquire the technical capacity and necessary facilities in order to dispose of waste in an environmentally sound manner.

Exports for disposal will only be permitted to European Free Trade Association countries which are parties to the Basel convention.

Movements of waste for recovery, which provide valuable substitutes for raw materials, will continue between Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries, subject to the environmental controls set out in an OECD decision. There will be strict controls on exports of hazardous wastes for recovery outside the OECD area. Exports will have to accord with the environmental safeguards included in the Basel convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal. Exports will be prohibited where a third country refuses to accept them or if the exporting member state has reason to believe that the waste will not be managed on arrival in an environmentally sound way.

The regulation is likely to come into operation in 1994.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy at the meeting under his presidency on 20 October to *(a)* ensure that the clause which will allow EC member states to bar waste imports is inserted into the final regulations, *(b)* set a date for an end to the import and export of toxic wastes and *(c)* ensure that the regulation will stop the export of all toxic wastes to non-Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave earlier today.

Water Industry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the additional cost to the water industry in meeting European Community legislation on drinking and bathing water standards since 1980.

Mr. Maclean: There are no separate records for the whole period. However, of the £30 billion programme of improvements for the decade beginning in 1989, £12·1 billion is for water treatment and supply. This includes investment to meet our national requirements for drinking water which takes account of EC directives. The £30 billion also includes a £2 billion programme to meet EC standards for bathing waters.

Radiation Monitoring

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to invite in European Commission inspectors to evaluate radiation monitoring standards under article 35 of the Euratom treaty, at British Nuclear Fuels plants at Sellafield, Springfields, Capenhurst and Chapelcross.

Mr. Maclean: United Kingdom officials have agreed with officials of the European Commission the procedures to be followed in carrying out under article 35 of the Euratom treaty verifications of the operation and efficiency of environmental monitoring facilities in the United Kingdom. It is for the Commission to indicate in which areas it would like to undertake such a verification visit. The United Kingdom has not yet received a formal request from the Commission in respect of any specific area.

"The UK Environment"

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many copies of his Department's publication entitled "The UK Environment" have been published; and what steps have been taken to promote its widespread distribution.

Mr. Maclean: Her Majesty's Stationery Office published "The UK Environment" on 14 October on behalf of the Department of the Environment. The initial print run was 4,500 copies. A press notice went to all correspondents dealing with environment, water, pollution, education and the House of Commons in the national media. The report will feature in HMSO's catalogues and bibliographic listings and in a mailing to educational establishments scheduled for November. Copies are available by mail order directly from HMSO books, as well as from HMSO bookshops and HMSO agents both in the United Kingdom and overseas and the general book trade.

Pollution, Newham

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action is being taken by his Department to measure the extent of atmospheric pollution in the London borough of Newham; and what information is available on it.

Mr. Maclean: Continuously operated sulphur dioxide, SO_2, and smoke monitoring was carried out at 383 Stratford high street, Newham between 1963 and 1988. The data for the past eight years of operation are given. The data were discontinued thereafter because the values recorded were consistently well below the air quality limit values for SO_2 and smoke prescribed in EC directive 80/779/EEC.

	Smoke		*SO_2*	
Year commencing	*Median*	*98th percentile*	*Median*	*98th percentile*
April 1980	20 (29 per cent.)	104 (49 per cent.)	52 (43 per cent.)	163 (47 per cent.)
April 1981	23 (34 per cent.)	86 (40 per cent.)	57 (48 per cent.)	195 (56 per cent.)
April 1982	9 (13 per cent.)	43 (20 per cent.)	65 (54 per cent.)	141 (40 per cent.)
April 1983	8 (12 per cent.)	58 (27 per cent.)	50 (42 per cent.)	180 (51 per cent.)
April 1984	15 (22 per cent.)	38 (18 per cent.)	44 (37 per cent.)	140 (40 per cent.)
April 1985	16 (24 per cent.)	57 (27 per cent.)	55 (46 per cent.)	125 (36 per cent.)
April 1986	13 (19 per cent.)	44 (21 per cent.)	50 (42 per cent.)	110 (31 per cent.)
April 1987	18 (26 per cent.)	73 (34 per cent.)	46 (38 per cent.)	94 (27 per cent.)

Note: All values are in micrograms per cubic metre and the smoke concentrations are to the British standard calibration. The percentages in brackets relate to the relevant EC directive limit value.

In 1986, diffusion tube measurements of nitrogen dioxide at the Stratford site gave an average concentration of 32·2ppb—parts per billion—for the period July to December. The average for the whole of Greater London for the same period was 27ppb. When the study was repeated in 1991, only two months of data were obtained for this site, and the average concentration for this limited period was found to be 35ppb.

The London borough of Newham has agreed to participate in a new long-term study of nitrogen dioxide, using diffusion tube samplers, currently being organised by the Department in conjunction with local authorities. Four measurement sites will be established in the borough in January 1993 as part of this survey.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of state for the Environment what recent initiatives he has taken to improve public education on energy saving and energy efficiency.

Mr. Maclean: The Government seek to promote the teaching of energy efficiency in primary and secondary schools through its involvement with CREATE—the Centre for Research, Education and Training in Energy—and is discussing with CREATE a number of new projects and improved funding arrangements.

As part of its "Helping the Earth Begins at Home" Campaign, the Government are developing an education strategy to encourage school children and teachers to understand the link between the efficient use of energy, CO_2 emissions and global warming.

Sellafield

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent objections he has received over the environmental implications of the operation of the new thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

Mr. Maclean: My Department has received a number of representations from members of the public objecting to the proposals for discharges of radioactive waste resulting from the proposals to operate the new thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield. I understand that the chief inspector of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will shortly be consulting on the revised draft authorisations for the discharge of radioactive waste from Sellafield.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has regarding progress made by UK Nirex in locating a site to dispose of low and intermediate-level radioactive wastes.

Mr. Maclean: UK Nirex is continuing to carry out site investigation studies in the Sellafield area. The company announced its intention to construct a rock characterisation facility at Sellafield as part of these studies, and issued a consultation document setting out these proposals on 21 October.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how his Department participated in the special scientific programme on radioactive waste held at the International Atomic Energy Agency's annual general conference on 22 September.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 26 October 1992]:* No Department of the Environment officials attended the meeting on 22 September. However, some officials from the Health and Safety Executive did do so.

Housing Associations

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the affordability of new housing association homes to households on low incomes if current presumptions continue to prevail; and if he will make a statement on what action the Government intend to take.

Mr. Baldry: Grant rates for housing associations are proposed by the Housing Corporation and approved by the Secretary of State in the light of all relevant factors, including outturn rents on completed schemes. We are currently considering the rates of housing association grant for 1993-94. Outturn rent levels are for associations to determine. The Government do not publish the underlying factors and assumptions implicit in the grant rate model, nor any general definition of affordability, since they do not wish to imply a view as to what constitutes an affordable rent in any particular case.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what change he expects to make in housing association grant rates for housing association developments, and what will be the average housing association grant rate in 1993-94;

(2) what percentage change he expects to make in the total cost indicator levels applicable to housing association developments in 1993-94;

(3) when he expects to announce his decision on total cost indicator and grant rates for housing association development schemes in 1993-94.

Mr. Baldry: Final decisions on grant rates and total cost indicators are not yet available but will be communicated to associations as soon as they are announced.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 16 July, *Official Report*, column *1044*, whether his Department has received any further evidence from the Housing Corporation on the affordability of new homes provided by housing associations; and if he will place in the Library reports of the main findings and supporting research which the Housing Corporation has made available to his Department in the past six months.

Mr. Baldry: The Housing Corporation has made available to the Department some of the results of its continuous monitoring of rents set for new housing association tenants. Information on these rents, contained in the National Federation of Housing Associations' continuous recording—CORE—quarterly bulletins, is already in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the output of *(a)* newly built and *(b)* rehabilitated housing associations homes in England, over the years 1975 to 1991, and his estimates of their expected output in 1992, 1993 and 1994.

Mr. Baldry: Estimates of housebuilding completions, and of renovations of dwellings, by housing associations in England are shown in tables 6.1(a) and 7.1 respectively of the annual publication "Housing and Construction Statistics". Figures for the years 1981 to 1991 will shortly be published in the 1981 to 1991 edition, and those for earlier years are shown in previous editions: viz for 1980 in the 1980 to 1990 edition, for 1979 in the 1979 to 1989 edition, etcetera. Copies of these publications are in the Library.

The Department does not prepare forecasts of housebuilding completions, nor of conversions and renovations.

Housing Management Services

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* tenants and *(b)* organisations representative of tenants were consulted by (i) his Department and (ii) the consultants engaged by his Department in the course of preparing the proposals for the extension of compulsory competitive tendering by housing management services, as outlined in his Department's White Paper, "Competing for Quality".

Mr. Baldry: None. Tenants and tenants' organisations were given the opportunity to consider and respond to the consultation paper. Over 100 tenants organisations have responded.

Energy Conservation

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for the continuation and development of the Green House programme to promote energy conservation in local authority housing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: An announcement on this will be made shortly.

Council House Building

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the number of new council homes which will be *(a)* started and *(b)* completed in 1992, 1993 and 1994.

Mr. Baldry: The Department does not prepare forecasts of housebuilding activity. Estimates of actual housebuilding starts and completions by local authorities are published in the annual and quarterly versions of "Housing and Construction Statistics". Copies of these publications are in the Library.

UNCED Agenda 21

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 17 June, *Official Report*, column 562, to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), if he will deposit two copies of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development Agenda 21 provisional document in the Library, pending the availability of official copies.

Mr. Maclean: Two copies of the provisional Agenda 21 document were deposited in the Library in July.

Water Meters

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to ensure that where a house is sold or let with a water meter installed, the purchaser or tenant is informed of this fact at the time of the purchase or letting.

Mr. Baldry: We have no intention of doing so. It is for the prospective purchaser or tenant to make the appropriate inquiries.

Waste

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what decisions on waste reduction and packaging have been taken in recent meetings of the Environment Council.

Mr. Maclean: Waste reduction and packaging have not been on the agenda for recent meetings of the Environment Council.

Government Premises

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how long former Department of Trade and Industry premises in Victoria street have been empty; how long he expects them to remain unoccupied; what proposals he has for the future use of these premises; and what is the weekly cost of keeping the premises unoccupied, including maintenance, insurance and security liabilities.

Mr. Baldry: The property was vacated in September 1991 because it needed major works to render it suitable for continued occupation. Some time beforehand, negotiations were opened with the landlords to agree to a package whereby the property would be refurbished at their expense and the Secretary of State would enter into a new lease at a modern rent.

With the dramatic downturn in the property market, the landlords were reluctant to commit themselves to substantial capital expenditure while rents continued to fall. However, significant progress has been made and subject to finalisation of the negotiations a 24-month contract period will deliver the building fully refurbished and ready for occupation. It is intended that the building will be re-occupied by a Government Department or Departments.

We are still contractually liable, under the terms of a long lease, for rent plus costs for insurance, maintenance and security of £40,000, but this will be reduced to £12,000 when the building contract commences shortly.

Auto Emissions 2000

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how his Department was represented at the Auto Emissions 2000 conference in Brussels organised by the European Commission on 20 and 21 September; and if he will deposit in the Library the papers prepared and presented to the conference.

Mr. Maclean: My Department was represented at this conference. I am arranging for a set of the papers to be placed in the Library.

Earth Summit

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the statement for climate change at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development will be submitted for ratification within the United Kingdom Parliament.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom was party to the Munich summit communique of July 1992 which urged other countries to join the Group of Seven countries in a commitment to seek to ratify the United Nations framework convention on climate change by the end of 1993. We will continue to press for early ratification by a wide range of countries to ensure effective action to tackle this global problem.

Mining Communities

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what additional resources he intends to make available to the Rural Development Commission to support mining communities.

Mr. Maclean: The Rural Development Commission's resources for future years are currently the subject of discussion in the public expenditure round. The commission already operates a range of economic and social programmes in two rural east midlands coalfield areas and has recently increased the range of assistance available in the more southerly area. The commission is examining urgently what further assistance it might provide in coalfield areas of rural England.

Natural Resources

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to encourage the establishment of an EC-wide inventory of natural resources during the United Kingdom's presidency of the EC.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom presidency is working for the early establishment of the European environment agency which will have as one of its priorities the development of a EC-wide inventory of sources of environmental data and information.

Leasehold Enfranchisement

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will put out for consultation draft legislation on his Department's proposals for leasehold enfranchisement, before a Bill is presented to Parliament, in view of their complex and radical nature.

Mr. Baldry: No.

Coastal Zone Planning

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek the establishment of an EC directive on coastal zone planning and management during the United Kingdom's presidency of the EC.

Mr. Maclean: At present, the Commission has not published a proposed directive on coastal zone planning. Therefore, the United Kingdom cannot take this forward during the presidency.

Historic London

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with English Heritage on its views on the impact of enfranchisement on historic parts of London.

Sir George Young: My officials have discussed the proposals, including in particular the arrangements for estate management schemes, with English Heritage.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to encourage the establishment of a sustainable development commission for Europe during the United Kingdom's presidency of the EC.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom presidency is taking the lead in encouraging the early establishment of the sustainable development commission which will have world-wide responsibilities.

Environmental Policy

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy during the United Kingdom's presidency of the EC to secure that the implementation of subsidiarity will not lead to *(a)* weakening of member states' obligations on environmental policy, *(b)* loss of redress for EC citizens relating to environmental policy, or *(c)* diminution of the Commission's powers to intervene in environmental issues where member states do not meet obligations.

Mr. Maclean: Yes.

Building Regulations

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he plans to bring forward proposals to change building regulations in light of the construction products and workplace directives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Building Regulations 1991, which came into force on 1 June 1992, contain appropriate references to the construction products directive, which was implemented in the United Kingdom through the Construction Products Regulations 1991. We are currently considering what further changes may be needed in the Building Regulations to make them consistent with regulations made to implement the workplace directive.

Drinking Water

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to bring forward proposals ~~to bring~~ United Kingdom standards for lead pollution of drinking water into line with the World Health Organisation guideline level of 10 migrograms per litre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: We are continuing urgent consideration of what more should be done by the Government and water companies in the light of the World Health Organisation's guideline, which we expect to be promulgated early next year. The World Health Organisation recognises that it will take time and money for countries to meet the new guideline.

Housing (Pregnant Women)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many pregnant women were successfully prosecuted in each of the last five years for fraudulent attempts to gain priority status on housing waiting lists in Bradford, Leeds, Sheffield, Manchester, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Coventry, Southampton, Liverpool, Newcastle, Middlesbrough, Hull, Salford and Bristol.

Mr. Baldry: Such information is not held centrally.

Benefit Fraud

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authority councillors were prosecuted in each of the last five years for fraudulently obtaining benefits while in receipt of council attendance allowances; and if he will give the political party which they represented.

Mr. Robin Squire: My Department does not collect this information.

Home Safety

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to making the promotion of home safety a statutory responsibility of local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: None. It is for local authorities to decide whether they wish to promote home safety, taking into account local circumstances.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will help those local authorities which have established home safety committees.

Mr. Baldry: No. Local authorities who have chosen to establish such committees will no doubt first have taken into account the resource implications of doing so.

Environment Council

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Environment Council on 20 October.

Mr. Howard: I chaired the Environment Council which met in Luxembourg on 20 October. My hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside represented the United Kingdom.

The Council agreed a common position on a new regulation on the supervision and control of shipments of waste within, into and out of the European Community. The Council has invited the European Parliament to co-operate in expediting the adoption of this regulation so that the next meeting of the Council in December can settle the date when the EC and the United Kingdom can ratify the Basel convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal. The regulation could therefore come into operation in 1994. The Government will have powers under the regulation to ban imports for final disposal from all countries including member states of the EC unless they produce hazardous waste in such a small quantity that it would be uneconomic for them to provide their own disposal facilities. The regulation also contains strict controls on the international movement of recoverable wastes and will give legal effect to an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development decision on the movement of recoverables.

The Council agreed to press for methyl bromide to be added to the list of controlled substances covered by the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer at next month's meeting of the parties in Copenhagen, with an initial control involving a freeze at 1991 levels by 1995. My hon. Friend indicated that the United Kingdom would have been willing to go further and accept a 25 per cent. cut in methyl bromide production and consumption by the year 2000 if other member states had been willing to do likewise. The Council also exchanged views on the controls on chlorofluorocarbons and other ozone-depleting substances that the Community should press for in Copenhagen and on other issues likely to arise there.

The Council held a discussion on the fifth environmental action programme—"Towards Sustainability"—and gave initial consideration to a draft Council resolution endorsing the programme. Ministers envisaged the adoption of the resolution in December when the European Parliament's opinion has been received.

The Council held a discussion about the European Environment Agency. Ministers expressed regret at the lack of a decision on the location of the agency which continues to prevent it from beginning its work. They expressed the hope that the European Council would, as a matter of urgency, reach a decision on this issue.

The Council discussed informally climate change and follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. On the former, they agreed that the climate change convention should be ratified by the end of 1993; that member states should produce the national plans required under the convention by the same time; that member states' own plans for reducing CO_2 emissions should be submitted to the Council by the end of this year; and that the Council will consider the Commission's proposals for monitoring member states' CO_2 emissions at its next meeting. On the latter, Ministers reaffirmed the plan agreed at the Lisbon European Council for follow-up action to Rio.

The Council discussed the Commission's proposal for a regulation on eco-auditing, which would establish a voluntary scheme to encourage positive and effective environmental management of industrial operations and public reporting of the environmental impacts of their activities. Ministers endorsed the continuation of work aimed at the further refinement of the proposal to enable early agreement on it.

The Council considered for the first time the Commission's proposal for a revision of controls on the wildlife trade—the "Convention on Trade in Endangered Species regulation". Other member states joined the United Kingdom in supporting a significant strengthening of current controls, while emphasising that any extension of controls beyond those species covered by CITES must be on a scientific basis. The Council agreed that any harmonised controls within member states must be sharply focused; that the Community must avoid needless bureaucracy; and that it was important to ensure that member states retained an appropriate level of discretion in operating the controls. Ministers invited the Committee of permanent representatives to continue their work on this issue.

The Council took note of progress in preparing a directive which would extend to light-duty vehicles provisions on the control of exhaust pollutants which already apply to passenger cars and heavy commercial vehicles. Ministers hoped to reach a common position on the draft directive in December.

Highway Signs

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines his Department issues to local authorities on highway signs in areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have been asked to reply.

The visual appearance of traffic signs is required to comply with the traffic signs regulations and general directions 1981. Circular roads 7/75 gives advice on the ways of minimising the intrusion of traffic signs on highways in rural areas. Guidance on the provision of signs to tourists attractions is given in circular roads 1/91.

Copies of these circulars are in the Library.

Sludge Incinerators

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what planning applications for sewage sludge incinerators are currently being considered by planning authorities in England and Wales; and if he will name those which he has called in for public inquiry.

Mr. Baldry *[pursuant to his reply 22 October 1922, c. 351]:* The Secretaries of State are not automatically informed of all planning applications for sewage sludge incinerators. However, the Town and Country Planning (Development Plans and Consultation) Direction 1992 requires local planning authorities to notify them of development proposals which would significantly prejudice implementation of a development plan. Through this mechanism, we are aware of two applications currently before local planning authorities—Crossness in the

London borough of Bexley and at Beckton in the London borough of Newham. Neither of these applications has been called in.

In addition to these current applications, Northumbrian Water and Internal Technology Europe Ltd. have appealed to the Secretary of State in respect of their incinerator proposals at East Howden in north Tyneside and at Portrack in Stockton-on-Tees; a public inquiry has been held and the Secretary of State is considering the inspector's report.

Fuel Supplies

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will relax the compulsory competitive tendering rules governing purchasing by local authorities to allow local authorities in England and Wales to identify the country of origin of fuel supplies.

Mr. Robin Squire: The purchase of supplies by local authorities is not subject to the compulsory competitive tendering legislation. The Government have no plans to repeal part II of the Local Government Act 1988 which prohibits local authorities from introducing non-commercial considerations into the purchasing of supplies.

EDUCATION

Grant-Maintained Schools

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if it is his intention to apply the same criteria to grant-maintained schools as to local education authority schools when considering the rationalisation of school places.

Mr. Forth: We are determined to reduce wasteful surplus capacity and will apply similar criteria to all proposals for the rationalisation of school places.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which grant-maintained schools were visited by Her Majesty's inspectors during the period January 1992 to July 1992 and what was the total costs of these inspections; in the case of each school, *(a)* how many visits have taken place, *(b)* what is the number of inspectors involved, *(c)* what is the total number of days involved and *(d)* what is the cost; and whether it is proposed to publish any report arising from these visits.

Mr. Forth: HMI visited 50 GM schools in the period mentioned. None of the visits was a formal inspection intended to lead to a published report. The information available is given in the table.

School	*Number of Days*	*Cost (£)*
Hendon	2·0	780
Queen Elizabeth	2·0	780
Queensbury	4·0	1,560
Baverstock	2·0	780
Small Heath	4·0	1,560
St. James CE	2·0	780
Old Swinford Hospital	2·0	780
London Oratory	4·0	1,560
Heckmondwike GS	4·0	1,560
Kings School, Lincoln	3·0	1,170
Wilson's School	2·0	780
Audenshaw	2·0	780
Bankfield HS	2·0	780
St. Francis Xavier	4·0	1,560
Southlands	1·0	390
Claremont HS	2·0	780
Ribston Hall	1·5	585
London Nautical	21·0	8,190
Bridgewater Hall	1·0	390
Ecclesbourne	5·5	2,145
Marling	1·0	390
Stroud HS	1·0	390
Watford Boys' GS	2·0	780
Longfield HS	4·0	1,560
Wolverhampton HS for Girls	2·0	780
Bullers Wood	2·0	780
Handsworth GS	5·5	2,145
Great Barr	2·0	780
Crossley Heath	2·0	780
North Halifax HS	1·0	390
Wilmington Boys' GS	2·0	780
Lancaster Girls' GS	2·0	780
King Edward VI, Lincoln	1·0	390
Stratford	3·0	1,170
Watford Girls' GS	1·0	390
Vyners	1·0	390
Haydon	1·0	390
Homewood	1·5	585
Southlands	1·0	390
Bourne County Primary	2·0	780
Moulton Primary	2·0	780
Kingswood	1·0	390
Manor High	1·5	585
Avon Valley	1·0	390
Christs Hospital	2·0	780
The Gartree Tattershal	1·0	390
Salterlee Primary	0·5	195
Bassingbown Village College	1·0	390
Minster College	1·0	390
Myton	2·0	780
Total	122·0	47,580

Assisted Places

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many assisted places remained unfilled in 1992 in each standard region.

Mr. Forth: At the end of the academic year 1991-92, the numbers of assisted places available, the numbers taken up and the numbers unfilled in each region are as shown in the table:

Region	*Assisted places* *Available*	*Taken-up*	*Vacant*
North-east	1,477	873	604
North-west	7,214	6,408	806
Yorkshire and Humberside	2,267	1,794	473
East Midlands	2,063	1,846	217
West Midlands	3,146	2,721	425
East Anglia	1,578	1,340	238
South-west	3,580	3,246	334
South-east	5,873	4,403	1,470
Greater London	6,114	5,010	1,104

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total number of assisted places; and how it has increased since the inception of the scheme.

Mr. Forth: The total number of assisted places available and the total number taken up since the scheme's inception in 1981 are given in the table:

Academic Year	*Places Available*	*Places Taken Up*
1981-82	5,446	4,185
1982-83	11,058	8,616
1983-84	15,866	13,102
1984-85	20,699	17,386
1985-86	25,210	21,412
1986-87	29,295	24,478
1987-88	33,228	26,899
1988-89	33,217	27,083
1989-90	33,280	27,008
1990-91	33,302	26,740
1991-92	33,312	27,641

The figures are for England only

Problem Schools

Mr. Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will set out the basis for the assumption in his departmental White Paper, "Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools," that problem schools will be in the local education authority sector rather than the grant maintained sector.

Mr. Forth: No such assumption has been made. Chapter 11 of the White Paper sets out the steps that will be taken to tackle failing schools in the local education authority sector. Chapter 3 includes details of the powers which my right hon. Friend will have to ensure that remedial action is taken where grant-maintained schools are failing to provide an adequate standard of education for their pupils.

Expenditure, Birmingham

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the level of education underspend for the Birmingham local education authority for each of the past three years.

Mr. Forth: It is for the Birmingham local authority to determine its spending on education in the light of local circumstances and priorities. The Government do not set targets for spending on individual services. The Government do, however, calculate for each service what an authority would need to spend to provide a standard level of service—its standard spending assessment (SAA).

The latest available figures showing the difference between Birmingham's estimated spending on education and the education component of its standard spending assessment are given in the table.

Year	*Education SSA* *£ million (rounded)*	*Estimated spending on education* *£ million (rounded)*	*Difference* *£ million (rounded)*
1990-91	399	352	48
1991-92	457	392	64
1992-93	485	428	57

Note: Information on estimated expenditure is taken from the authority's returns to the Department of the Environment on forms RA90/91-92/93 and RA(SG)90/91-92/93, repriced to outturn.

Access Funds

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will consider increasing the access funds by an amount that takes into account the increase in the number of students since the inception of the funds.

Mr. Forman: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 12 May, *Official Report*, column *63*. The money allocated to access funds is not specifically related to the number of students overall but is intended to be targeted at those in real need.

"A Hard Act to Follow"

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what consideration his Department has given to the criticisms of the Education Act 1981 made in the report, "A Hard Act to Follow", published by the Spastics Society, if there is any action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: "A Hard Act to Follow" has been given very careful consideration. I met representatives of the Spastics Society and discussed the findings of the report on 24 September 1992. I have already publicly welcomed the document as a useful piece of research, and have noted that the findings will add stimulus to the current debate on special educational needs. In many respects, the report confirmed the need for the Government's new measures, which had already been announced in chapter 9 of the White Paper, "Choice and Diversity", and elsewhere.

Expenditure, Manchester

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what study his Department has made of the city of Manchester's needs for capital expenditure for its education service in the financial year 1993-94, including basic need in schools; what help he expects to be available, in particular for the replacement of school premises which are in an unsafe condition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I discussed Manchester's capital plans briefly on a visit to the authority in July. Officials met representatives from Manchester local education authority to discuss their plans in more detail, prior ito preparation of their bid.

I am meeting a delegation of officers and members from Manchester in early November to discuss their future needs, with particular reference to basic need in primary schools and surplus place removal projects in the secondary sector.

I cannot yet say what resources will be available, but Manchester's needs will be carefully considered in accordance with the normal criteria, along with those from all other LEAs. Their capital allocation will be announced in December.

London University

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from graduates of the university of London concerning the proposed break-up of the federal status of the university.

Mr. Forman: Generally, the future development of the federal university and the constitutional position of its colleges are internal matters for the university and its constituent colleges. However, we have received some representations from the society "Graduate with Honours" about the future of the federal graduation ceremony.

Computer Projects

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a table setting out for the period since 9 April *(a)* each tender issued by his Department for projects requiring the supply of (i) computer hardware and (ii) computer software, *(b)* a description of the services required, *(c)* the number of companies which were invited to tender, *(d)* the number of companies which submitted a bid without prior invitation by his Department, *(e)* which company was awarded the contract, *(f)* the value of each contract and *(g)* the length of period over which the contract will run.

Mr. Forman: The information requested is set out. In addition to these, there have been four single-tender procurements for enhancements to existing systems—for which competitive tendering was inappropriate—with a total value of £110,250.

Tenders for hardware
None.

Tenders for software
a. Supply of a payroll system for the Further Education Funding Council.
Companies invited to bid: three
Unsolicited bids submitted: none
Successful company: Centrefile Ltd.
Contract value: £20,194
Period of contract: supply only plus one year's maintenance

b. Supply of Accounting System for OFSTED
Companies invited to bid: four
Unsolicited bids submitted: none
Successful company: Tate Bramald Ltd.
Contract value: £12,095
Period of contract: supply only

c. TOPIC software for Policy Branch Information System
Companies invited to bid: 15
Unsolicited bids submitted: none
Successful Company: Verity Ltd.
Contract value: £22,007
Period of contract: supply and licence only

All values quoted exclude VAT.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list all the names of public appointments that he has made, giving the period for which the appointment was made, relevant qualifications of the appointees and what remuneration each currently receives.

The Attorney-General: I have not myself made any appointment to a public body, as yet.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Revenue

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list by *(a)* county and *(b)* location, the revenues received by the honours of the Duchy by year for the last five years.

Mr. Waldegrave: The ancient possessions of the duchy of Lancaster include the honour and county of Lancaster, the honours of Leicester, Tutbury, Bolingbroke, Pickering, Tickhill, Halton, Knaresborough. However, receipt of duchy revenues is not restricted to possessions within these honours and accounting records by honour are not maintained.

The hon. Member was given a list of all land holdings on 16 June 1992, *Official Report*, columns *360-61*. To produce revenue figures for each individual holding for the past five years could only be done at disproportionate cost, and in some cases the revenue attributable would be insignificant. Duchy gross revenue—other than from investments and deposits—is analysed by county and is set out. All revenues are shown gross.

During 1988, a new accounting system was introduced and the analysis for that year could only be done at disproportionate cost.

	1987 £	*1989* £	*1990* £	*1991* £
Cheshire (Including some mineral income in Derbyshire)	480,614	534,715	562,587	571,521
Staffordshire	448,514	529,028	537,137	541,322
Yorkshire	544,391	690,657	754,726	858,966
Lancashire	552,873	485,988	562,862	750,475
Bona Vacantia in the County Palatine of Lancaster	979,027	839,845	804,977	938,597
Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire	140,604	157,223	176,300	161,424
Greater London	789,755	1,299,000	1,409,861	1,473,881
Miscellaneous (Lincolnshire, Mid-Glamorgan, Leicestershire, Sussex and elsewhere)	97,452	115,594	85,297	87,630
TOTAL	4,033,230	4,652,050	4,893,747	5,383,816

Computer Projects

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish a table setting out for the period since 9 April *(a)* each tender issued by his Department for projects requiring the supply of (i) computer hardware and (ii) computer software, *(b)* a description of the services required, *(c)* the number of companies which were invited to tender, *(d)* the number of companies which submitted a bid without prior invitation by his Department, *(e)* which company was awarded the contract, *(f)* the value of each contract and *(g)* the length of period over which the contract will run.

Mr. Robert Jackson: This information is not held centrally and can only be supplied at disproportionate cost.

ACCOMMODATION AND WORKS COMMITTEE

7 Old Palace Yard

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what has been the cost of the recent refurbishment of 7 Old Palace Yard.

Mr. Ray Powell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) on 23 October, *Official Report*, column *399*.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Magistrates

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many magistrates have resigned or retired since 1 October; and how many magistrates have resigned or retired in October in each year since 1987.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The figures including those for the area within the responsibility of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster are:

	Number
To 23 October 1992	119
October 1991	156
October 1990	121
October 1989	145
October 1988	[1]104
October 1987	[1]94

[1] Approximate.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Chernobyl

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance has been granted by her Department to *(a)* the victims of the Chernobyl disaster and *(b)* areas affected by the disaster; and how much money has been allocated to *(a)* purchase non-contaminated food and *(b)* purchase medical equipment for hospitals.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The know-how fund is financing two Chernobyl-related projects. We have allocated £400,000 to advise how to measure radiation concentration in foodstuffs produced in Kiev region and £220,000 to prioritise clean-up requirements and prepare follow-up project proposals.

In 1991, we provided £2 million emergency medical aid —essential drugs and equipment—to the former Soviet Union—FSU—of which Ukraine received more than a third.

The European Community has agreed a food and medical aid loan to the FSU. Ukraine's share is 130 mecu. We understand Ukraine intends to use 104 mecu on food and 26 mecu for medical products.

Know-how Funds

Mr. Ottaway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of the know-how fund for central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union; and if he will give details on specific projects so far approved this year for each eligible country.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Further to my written answer of 29 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *371*, the know-how fund is continuing well. The amount spent or committed has increased to £95 million to cover more than 650 projects.

An updated list of the activities has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Somalia

Mr. Ottaway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further assistance has been provided to alleviate the plight of the people of Somalia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our total humanitarian aid for Somalia in 1992 is almost £27 million, including our share of EC aid.

It includes £1·5 million in response to the appeal of the International Committee of the Red Cross on 9 July. This is for the ICRC's food programme under which hot meals are provided via some 600 communal kitchens to over half a million beneficiaries. We also provided £1 million for the British Red Cross to use for its medical/health care programme in Somalia, as a national contribution towards ICRC's operations.

On 15 September, my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development announced a further £7·5 million to support British and international non-governmental organisations and United Nations relief operations in Somalia. Priority is being given to providing seeds and tools, helping with transport and medical supplies, and rehabilitation services.

South Africa

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the deployment of observers to South Africa in accordance with the terms of United Nations Security Council resolution 772.

Mr. Hurd: The United Nations, the EC, the Commonwealth and the Organisation of African Unity are all sending groups of observers to South Africa. Their role will be to seek, by their presence in situations of potential conflict, to prevent violence, defuse tension and promote peace. They will be operating in close co-operation with each other, and with the National Peace Secretariat—as well as with the United Nations and observer teams from other international organisations.

There will be 15 EC observers drawn from throughout the Community. The majority of participants have a police background. Two of them are British. They will arrive in South Africa on 29 October.

The EC is also providing six police experts to be attached to Judge Goldstone's recently-established investigative task forces. A senior British police officer will act as the co-ordinator of the team. This officer arrived in South Africa on 7 October.

The Commonwealth has recruited 20 observers to play a similar role to that of the EC group. One of the group is a United Kingdom police officer.

The 50 United Nations observers are drawn from the staff of the United Nations secretariat. The composition of the OAU group is still under discussion.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Lottery

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make it his policy that there should be a level playing field for pools and a national lottery.

Mr. Brooke: The Government are considering a number of representations from the pools industry.

Public Libraries

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many books were purchased for public libraries in *(a)* 1981, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* 1991; how much money was allocated in each of those years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 26 October 1992]:* Public libraries in England added 10·8 million, 11·1 million and 11·0 million books to their stock in 1980-81, 1984-85 and 1990-91 respectively. These figures include donations and free publications, as well as purchases. Their actual expenditure on books for the same years was £41·0 million, £56·8 million and £84·8 million. This represents an expenditure increase in real terms of almost 13 per cent. between 1980-81 and 1990-91.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

British Council Library, Bandung

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much money has been saved by the British Government following the closure of the British Council library in Bandung.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There was no net saving to the Government.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on whose recommendation the British Council library in Bandung was closed.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The British Council recommended and made this closure in order to release resources to meet new, high priority requirements elsewhere.

Bosnia

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the supply of arms or direct military support to the Serbian, Croat and Muslim forces in Bosnia in contravention of the arms embargo; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are a number of unconfirmed reports of arms supplies to Bosnia. An Iranian aircraft carrying arms was seized at Zagreb airport recently. The Western European Union/North Atlantic Treaty Organisation surveillance operation in the Adriatic has reported a number of ships suspected of violating the United Nation's trade and arms embargoes. But it is not clear whether these vessels are carrying goods destined for Bosnia.

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on whether the Bosnian-Serbs are continuing to receive arms and military supplies from the rump Yugoslavia; and whether any form of monitoring is proposed of the border between Serbia and the Serbian-controlled area of Bosnia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no firm evidence of whether Serbia is continuing to supply arms to the Bosnian Serbs. The Yugoslav authorities deny this. Moreover, the Bosnian Serbs are already well-equipped; further supplies from Serbia would be unlikely to have a significant effect on their military capability. The monitoring of Serbia's and Montenegro's borders with Bosnia-Herzegovina was agreed in principle at the London conference. But these borders run through mountainous terrain, and are highly permeable. Effective monitoring would absorb much personnel and equipment. The United Nations is thus according higher priority to using the resources available to ensure that the safe and rapid delivery of emergency relief supplies to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Sir Russell Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs prior to the full deployment of British forces to Bosnia-Herzegovina, what assessment he has made of the number of foreign mercenaries active in the field, their origin and the factions they are fighting with; how confident he is that British forces will be at no risk from attack by mercenaries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There have been repeated reports of mercenaries fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and some are clearly well-founded. No reliable estimate of the numbers involved has been made. Our assessment at present is that mercenaries do not as such increase the threat posed to British troops by the various armed groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has now secured agreement from the Bosnian-Muslim, Bosnian-Serb and Bosnian-Croat communities to allow free passage for British forces deployed in Bosnia-Herzegovina and to guarantee their safety from attack.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: All parties to the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina have confirmed their willingness to co-operate with United Nations Protection Forces—UNPROFOR—personnel deployed to that region in accordance with Security Council resolution 776 of 14 September.

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will seek Security Council approval to identify and name forces who attack United Nations military and humanitarian personnel in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Security Council resolution 776 of 14 September reaffirms the determination of the Council to ensure the protection and security of UNPROFOR and United Nations personnel: there is no need to seek an explicit resolution on these lines. Furthermore, United Nations personnel deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina to facilitate and escort convoys of humanitarian aid will proceed only on the basis of negotiated safe passage.

Macedonia

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those countries which have given diplomatic recognition to the independence of Macedonia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Bulgaria, Croatia, Lithuania, Philippines, Russia, Slovenia and Turkey have been notified to us as having recognised the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia as an independent state.

Kosovo

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the speech by Lord Owen representing the presidency of the EC in the debate on the former Yugoslavia in the plenary session of the Council of Europe on 3 October in which he excluded any possibility of independence for Kosovo represents Government policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We share Lord Owen's views. The Serbian authorities should grant the Kosovars genuine autonomy with full human rights, and the Kosovars should accept this. A special group on Kosovo is working intensively within the international conference.

Overseas Missions

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the agreement within the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe on 18 September to send missions to Vojvodina, Kosovo and Sanjak have been implemented; how many persons are being deployed and from which countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: CSCE long-term missions have been in place since the end of September in Kosovo, Vojvodina and Sanjak under the leadership of Ambassador Bogh of Norway. Apart from Ambassador Bogh, there are eight mission participants involved from Norway, United States, Austria, Canada, France, Sweden and Switzerland.

We welcome the establishment of these missions and the valuable role they can play on behalf of the international community in monitoring developments and in helping to prevent conflict in these troubled regions.

Yugoslavia

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a list showing those countries which have contingents as part of the United Nations protection forces—UNPROFOR—in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, indicating their numbers and function and where they are based.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The following countries have contributed contingents to UNPROFOR. Numbers, function and location where known are also indicated. The table is divided into two parts to reflect countries commitments to UNPROFOR—first phase—and those agreed for UNPROFOR—second phase.

UNPROFOR (1st Phase)

Nationality	*Strength/Type*	*Location*
Argentina	900 Infantry Battalion	
Belgium	620 Infantry Battalion	
Canada	900 Infantry Battalion	
	350 Engineer Battalion	
Czechoslovakia	500 Infantry Battalion	
Denmark	900 Infantry Battalion	
Egypt	400 Infantry Battalion	Sarajevo
France	410 Infantry Battalion	Sarajevo
	143 HQ Company	Sarajevo
	66 Airport Company	Sarajeco
	600 Logistic Base	Zagreb
	900 Infantry Battalion	
Finland	300 Construction Battalion	Zagreb
Jordan	900 Infantry Battalion	
Kenya	900 Infantry Battalion	
Nepal	900 Infantry Battalion	
Netherlands	360 Signals Battalion	Zagreb
Nigeria	900 Infantry Battalion	
Norway	100 Movement Control Unit	Zagreb
Poland	900 Infantry Battalion	
Russian Fed.	900 Infantry Battalion	
Sweden	100 HQ Company	Zagreb
Ukraine	400 Infantry Battalion	Sarajevo
United Kingdom	260 Medical Battalion	Zagreb
Various	60 Military observers	Sarajevo
Various	40 Civilian Police/Monitors	Sarajevo
Various	100 Military Police Company	Zagreb
Luxembourg/ Belgium	Composite Infantry Battalion (40 and 620 respectively)	

In addition to the above, UNPROFOR (1st phase) includes: 160 military observers from 29 countries; 650 civilian police monitors from 16 countries: deployed evenly to various sectors within Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

UNPROFOR (2nd Phase)

Nationality	*Strength/Type*	*Location*
Belgium	100 Transport	Vitez
	16 HQ	Kiseljach
	2 Support Unit	Vitez
Canada	800 Infantry	Banja Luka-Doboj
	20 HQ	Kiseljach
	380 Support Unit	Banja Luka-Doboj
Denmark	8 HQ	Kiseljach
	143 Support Unit	Kiseljach
France	1382 Infantry	Bihac
	199 Engineer Unit	Bihac
	200 Helicopter Unit	Bihac
	33 HQ	Kiseljach

Nationality	*Strength/Type*	*Location*
Netherlands	**388 Transport**	**Vitez**
	99 Signals	**Vitez**
	32 HQ	**Kiseljach**
	8 Support Unit	**Vitez**
	50 Engineer Unit	**Vitez**
Norway	**2 Engineer Unit**	
	33 HQ	**Kiseljach**
Portugal	**20 Surgical Team**	
Spain	**710 Infantry**	**Mostar**
	16 HQ	**Kiseljach**
	25 Support Unit	**Mostar**
United Kingdom	**883 Infantry**	**Jajce-Vitez**
	508 Engineer Unit	**Jajce-Vitez**
	19 Support Element	**Jajce-Vitez**
	42 HQ	**Kiseljach**
	1206 Support Unit	**Jajce-Vitez**
United States	**400 Mobile Army Surgical Hospital**	
	15 HQ	**Kiseljach**

Headquarters will be based in three areas but with the main one in Kiseljach near Sarajevo.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 19 October, *Official Report*, columns *34-35*, what information the United Kingdom authorities have received over the political responsibility for war crimes by Slobodan Milosevic and Radovan Karadzic.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: United Nations Security Council resolution 771 calls for the submission of substantiated information about violations of international humanitarian law in the former Yugoslavia. We have so far received no information relating to any named individual.

Any substantiated information we receive will be submitted to the Security Council in line with UNSCR 771.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to both Wilton Park under its chief executive, Geoffrey Denton, and to the Natural Resources Institute under its chief executive, Anthony Beattie. I have asked them to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. G. Denton to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 22 October 1992:

Thank you for your question about the papers published by the Chief Executive. The reply to your question is as follows:

Geoffrey Denton; "Reconciliation and Reconstruction in South and Southern Africa", *Wilton Park Papers*, No. 47, HMSO, 1992.

Letter from Mr. A. Beattie, to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

Lady Chalker has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about papers published by chief executives of agencies.

In the last 12 months I have contributed the foreword to two issues of NRI's newsletter 'Resource', which we distribute in Britain and overseas. The fourth issue was published in December 1991, the fifth earlier this month.

Romania

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration he has given to the impact on the Romanian economy and on the progress of change of the implementation by Romania of sanctions against Yugoslavia; if he has discussed this with his European opposite numbers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The implementation of sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro presents problems for all neighbouring states. Romania has, however, been able to pursue its programme of reform with support from the international financial institutions, including the International Monetary Fund, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the World bank, as well as with G24 balance of payments support.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is in frequent consultation with European partners and with other interested governments on all aspects of the current crisis in former Yugoslavia.

China

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the dates, programme and composition of the forthcoming delegation to visit the People's Republic of China to discuss human rights led by Lord Howe of Aberavon.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) on 23 October, *Official Report*, column *409*, and to the response I made in the Adjournment debate on the same date, *Official Report*, columns 754-58.

Computer Projects

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a table setting out for the period since 9 April *(a)* each tender issued by his Department for projects requiring the supply of (i) computer hardware and (ii) computer software, *(b)* a description of the services required, *(c)* the number of companies which were invited to tender, *(d)* the number of companies which submitted a bid without prior invitation by his Department, *(e)* which company was awarded the contract, *(f)* the value of each contract and *(g)* the length of period over which the contract will run.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The table sets out the requested information.

Tenders issued by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office since 9 April 1992 for the supply of computer hardware and software:

(i) Computer Hardware:

1. (a) LEMUR Project
   (b) For the procurement of computer hardware and software
   (c) 10 companies invited to tender
   (d) No company submitted a bid without prior invitation
   (e) Olivetti was awarded the contract
   (f) The value was approximately £500,000
   (g) The contract will run for 12 months approximately

2. (a) HESD Multi-user System Project
   (b) For UNIX system hardware and software
   (c) 3 companies invited to tender
   (d) No company submitted a bid without prior invitation

(e) Contract not yet awarded
(f) Value likely to be around £35,000
(g) Contract will run for 12 months

(ii) Computer Software
3. (a) UNIX Typing Tutor Project
(b) For procurement of 230 licences
(c) 3 companies invited to tender
(d) No company submitted a bid without prior invitation
(e) Contract not yet awarded
(f) Value approximately £15,000
(g) Contract will run for one year

4. (a) Uniplex Word Processing Project
(b) For the procurement of Uniplex word processing software
(c) 7 companies invited to tender
(d) No company submitted a bid without prior invitation
(e) Contract not yet let
(f) Value unlikely to exceed £100,000
(g) Contract will run for 12 months

Sinai

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to his answers of 12 June, *Official Report*, column *326*, and 30 June, *Official Report*, column *507*, whether a decision has been taken on the future of the United Kingdom's participation in the multinational force and observers in Sinai.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Having carefully considered the views of the signatories of the 1981 protocol establishing the multinational force and observers, we confirmed our decision to withdraw. The United Kingdom contingent left on 21 October 1992. This decision reflects the fact that over 13 years after the signature of a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel their border is stable and internationally recognised.

International Atomic Energy Agency

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what attempts have been made by Her Majesty's Government to ameliorate the shortfall in payments to the International Atomic Energy Agency for nuclear safety research and safeguards implementation.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

The United Kingdom has played an active part in ensuring that priority programmes in the areas of safety research and safeguards implementation are excluded from the effects of any shortfall in contributions. The Government have also made extra-budgetary contributions to meet particular needs for the acquisition of safeguards equipment and to assist the agency's programme on the safety of aging reactors.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the United Kingdom permanent representative to the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency voted for Libya to be elevated to the board.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

Elections to the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency are held by secret ballot. It is not Her Majesty's Government's practice to divulge its voting intentions or actions after the event on such matters.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Mining Industry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what meetings he has held with *(a)* the National Union of Mineworkers and *(b)* the Union of Democratic Mineworkers since 10 April.

Mr. Eggar: Since 10 April, my right hon. Friend has met with the Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM) on 4 June and addressed its annual conference on 9 June. I have met with it on 13 May and 22 July and also when it met with the Prime Minister on 30 September. Both my right hon. Friend and I also met the UDM on 19 October. I met with the National Union of Mineworkers on 7 July.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what matters were decided in the meeting he held with the chairman of British Coal on 3 June.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend and the chairman of British Coal discussed a wide range of issues affecting the future of the coal industry.

Closed Coal Mines

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what evaluation has been made by his Department of the implications of water pollution from closed coal mines.

Mr. Eggar: It is an offence for a mine owner to cause pollution of watercourses. The body with statutory responsibility for regulation of water pollution is the National Rivers Authority. I understand that the NRA has been reviewing data on water pollution from abandoned mines of all kinds and intends to publish its assessment in the next few months.

Industrial Strategy

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the number of companies *(a)* created, *(b)* expanded or *(c)* helped, by his industrial strategy in each principal category of industry.

Mr. Heseltine: This Government's industrial strategy is designed to benefit the long-term competitiveness of business generally.

Coal Stocks

Mr. Bayley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what reserves of coal were estimated to be in each of British Coal's mines that were in operation in September; and how long those reserves of coal would have taken to be exhausted at the rate of extraction achieved in each mine over the last 12 months.

Mr. Eggar: The scale and potential duration of coal reserves at individual British Coal mines are matters for the corporation.

Work Experience

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many of his staff have work experience *(a)* outside Government service, *(b)* of science and technology in industry or commerce and *(c)* of law and accountancy in industry or commerce.

Mr. Eggar: This answer can only be given at disproportionate cost.

Electricity

Mr. Hendry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has had regarding the increase in electricity prices for large-scale manufacturing industry.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is in regular contact with large electricity users concerning electricity prices.

Trentham Complex

Mr. Stevenson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of profit and loss levels at Trentham colliery complex for the last full financial year.

Mr. Eggar: The issue which the hon. Member raises is a matter for British Coal.

Parkside Colliery

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what have been the profits and losses at Parkside colliery over each of the past six years.

Mr. Eggar: The issue which the hon. Member raises is a matter for British Coal.

Fuel Prices

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether long-term contracts for the supply of gas to power stations include a clause linking the price to that of oil or any other measure; and if the Government will ensure that the price of electricity is not increased to take into account any increase in the price of gas.

Mr. Eggar: The contractual agreements between suppliers of natural gas and customers engaged in electricity generation are a commercial matter for the companies concerned. Licence conditions, including the electricity price controls, are a matter for the Director General of Electricity Supply.

Standing Charges

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will introduce the necessary regulations to abolish all standing charges for telephones, domestic electricity and gas bills for people over the state pension age for retirement; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is his estimate of the current cost of the abolition of all standing charges for telephones, domestic electricity and gas bills for people over the state pension age for retirement; and how the estimate was arrived at.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 26 October 1992]:* This is primarily a matter for the utility companies, which may decide on the form and scale of their charges—including standing charges—within the constraints of their licences and relevant legislation. The utility regulators have an important role in agreeing the pricing levels and structures.

Point of Ayr Colliery

Mr. Hanson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the viability of Point of Ayr colliery as a supplier of coal to Fiddler's Ferry power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 26 October 1992]:* The viability of Point of Ayr colliery will be considered as part of the review outlined by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade on 21 October. I should welcome any evidence or comments that the hon. Member may have on this issue to pass on to the review team.

Miners (Hours of Work)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his policy on limiting the number of hours worked underground by miners; what is the effect of the proposed European working time directive on his policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 26 October 1992]:* The Government took powers in the Coal Industry Act 1992 to repeal in due course the Coal Mines Regulation Act 1908, which restricts the hours miners can work underground. The Government have made it clear, however, that the Act will not be repealed until it is replaced either by the adoption of the proposed European Community directive on working time or the introduction of an alternative United Kingdom measure.

Cabinet Committees

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if, further to his answer of 19 May to the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes), *Official Report*, columns *110-18*, concerning the constitution and responsibilities of Cabinet committees, he will name the relevant committee charged with the responsibility for natural energy policy and the names of its members.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 22 October 1992]:* Issues of national energy policy requiring collective discussion would normally fall within the remit of the Committee on Industrial, Commercial and Consumer Affairs. Other Committees, such as the Committee on the Environment, may also discuss issues affecting energy policy as appropriate. The membership of these Committees was given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in his answer of 19 May to the hon. Member for Harlow, *Official Report*, columns 110-18.

Gas Reserves

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has on which countries, on present projections, will run out of gas reserves in the next 20 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 22 October 1992]:* The rate at which gas reserves will be depleted depends on many factors including demand, development costs, prices, levels of imports and technological developments. My Department's latest assessment suggests that United Kingdom gas reserves will be sufficient to meet expected demand, including demand for power stations for at least this period. My Department does not carry out comparative assessments for other countries.

PRIME MINISTER

Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list all the names of public appointments that he has made, giving the period for which the appointment was made, relevant qualifications of the appointees and what remuneration each currently receives.

The Prime Minister: As I told the hon. Member on 13 June 1991, *Official Report*, column *663*, in answer to a similar question, this information could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Housing Associations

Ms. Walley: To ask the Prime Minister what response he has made to representations from the National Federation of Housing Associations about the retention of the £2 billion grant for housing associations; and if he will make it his policy that no cuts in expenditure will be made to the budget for the west midlands.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Ainsworth) wrote to me on 15 October, enclosing a letter which he had received from the chairman of the west midlands regional council of the National Federation of Housing Associations (NFHA). My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Department of the Environment replied on my behalf.

The Government cannot comment on the outcome of the public expenditure survey, which will be announced in my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's "Autumn Statement". The Government have shown their commitment to housing associations as the main providers of new social housing by increasing resources for the Housing Corporation from £935 million in 1989-90 to over £1,700 million in 1992-93.

Next year resources will be allocated among the Housing Corporation's regions in accordance with the housing needs indicator, which is agreed by the Department of the Environment, the Housing Corporation and the NFHA.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 27 October.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 27 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Pit Closures

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister in agreeing to the pit closures what account he took of the effect on competitiveness of the changes in exchange rate between the pound and the dollar; and if he will publish a table showing for each year since 1970 *(a)* the relative unit value of United Kingdom exports compared with those of the United States of America in each year based on the second half of 1973 equals 100 and the fourth quarter of 1986 equals 100, *(b)* the world price of coal in terms of dollars and *(c)* an index of freight rates from (i) the United States of America, (ii) Australia and (iii) the contract price for United Kingdom coal delivered to power stations.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 23 October 1992]*: The competitiveness of British-mined coal was considered at a range of pound:dollar exchange rates. The other information requested cannot be supplied in the time available and my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will write to the hon. Member.

Middle East

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy during his visit to Egypt on 23 October to raise with President Mubarak Israel's nuclear capability and the danger of nuclear proliferation throughout the middle east.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 26 October 1992]*: I discussed a number of middle east security matters with President Mubarak. I did not discuss Israel's nuclear potential.

WALES

Perifra

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what benefits have accrued to Wales from the European Community's Perifra I and II re-training schemes.

Mr. David Hunt: The EC Perifra programme is intended to part-finance small-scale measures in favour of peripheral regions and destabilised activities in the Community. In the case of defence industries, assistance is intended to alleviate the consequences of job losses by promoting the creation of alternative employment opportunities, and eligible activities include vocational training schemes.

The Welsh Office submitted an application under Perifra I last year for the re-development of the Royal Navy armaments depot, Milford Haven. Unfortunately, that application was dependent upon the local authority purchasing the land, and this did not happen; the bid was therefore withdrawn.

A further bid for £775,000 in grant support under Perifra II was prepared for the west Wales area in close collaboration with the west Wales task force and submitted to the European Commission in June this year. On 3 August, the Commission announced that west Wales would receive a reduced allocation of £140,000 for the training and employment in technology scheme sponsored by the west Wales training and enterprise council in partnership with the Employment Service and Welsh Development Agency. This will, of course, complement my own priority actions in the west Wales area. The size of the allocation is, however, disappointing and is considerably less than we had hoped for. My officials are seeking an urgent meeting with their Commission colleagues to discuss the whole issue.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what additional resources will be allocated to support the four new environmentally sensitive areas to which reference is made in chapter 18, paragraph 18.6 of "Britain's Environmental Strategy" (Cm 2068).

Mr. David Hunt: The provision for ESAs in future years will be determined in the context of the public expenditure survey now in progress. This year, I am making available £2·5 million to meet the cost of ESA's management agreements in Wales.

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to receive a copy of the study into the Caldicot levels impoundment for wading birds being carried out by Mason Pittendrigh with respect to design and management and David Bellamy Associates with respect to the environmental aspects as part of the mitigation works in relation to the proposed Cardiff bay barrage.

Mr. David Hunt: I anticipate receiving the report of the feasibility study into the creation of a bird reserve on the Gwent levels before the end of this year.

Water Quality

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been allocated in the form of loans by the European investment bank to Welsh Water for the improvement of water quality in rivers and beaches, and the upgrading of drinking water supplies in each of the last two years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

Languages

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will grant funding to the Mercator project on European lesser-used languages at the University college of Wales, Aberystwyth.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have no plans to fund the Mercator project in Aberystwyth.

A465

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will bring forward the upgrading of the A465 head of the valleys road to dual carriageway between Witworth and Abergavenny into the medium-term programme under "Roads in Wales".

Sir Wyn Roberts: The need to complete engineering design and statutory procedures means that it is unlikely that the dualling of the A465 head of the valleys road from Abergavenny to Hirwaun will start before April 1998. The position will, however, be kept under review.

Disabled Pupils

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many disabled pupils in *(a)* mainstream educational establishments and *(b)* special schools sat (i) GCSE O-level examinations and (ii) GCSE A-level examinations in Wales for the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will indicate the numbers of disabled pupils obtaining (1) 10 or more passes at GCSE O-level, (2) five to 10 passes at O-level, (3) between one and five passes at O-level, (4) the number leaving school without any qualifications and (5) the number obtaining one or more passes at A- level.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on the examination achievements of pupils with disabilities is not collected centrally.

Visual Impairment

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many visually impaired children attend mainstream schools in each local education authority areas of Wales; and how many such children have received formal mobility training during their education.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on mobility training for children with visual impairments is not collected centrally.

The numbers of children in maintained primary and secondary schools who were blind or partially sighted and for whom the local education authority was maintaining a statement of special educational needs, in January 1991, are given in the table:

	Number
Clwyd	78
Dyfed	23
Gwent	19
Gwynedd	14
Mid Glamorgan	13
Powys	3
South Glamorgan	24
West Glamorgan	63
Wales	237

These figures include children in both mainstream classes and special classes units, in maintained primary and secondary schools. The figure for Powys includes one pupil educated outside of that authority. There may be a number of children with visual impairments for whom the LEA does not maintain a statement of special educational needs.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children between the ages of five and 16 years are estimated to have visual impairment; and if he will publish the official local education authority estimates for totals of blind and partially sighted children.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Local education authority estimates of children with visual impairments are not held centrally. Information on the total numbers of children with visual impairments for whom LEAs maintain statements of special educational needs, by local education authority, is published in table 10.04, "Pupils with disabilities, by authority, 1990-91", of the Welsh Office publication "Statistics of Education in Wales: Schools, No. 5 1991", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Computer Projects

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table setting out for the period since 9 April *(a)* each tender issued by his Department for projects requiring the supply of (i) computer hardware and (ii) computer software, *(b)* a description of the services required, *(c)* the number of companies which were invited to tender, *(d)* the number of companies which submitted a bid without prior invitation by his Department, *(e)* which company was awarded the contract, *(f)* the value of each contract and *(g)* the length of period over which the contract will run.

Mr. David Hunt: Since 9 April, my Department has conducted only one relevant tender exercise. Three companies were invited to tender for the design and programming of a software application. No bids were submitted without prior invitation. The contract was awarded to Softa and Company Ltd. for a period of four months. Information relating to the value of the contract is commercial-in-confidence.

Quangos

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will update the information given in "Public Bodies 1991" (HMSO) on quangos in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: "Public Bodies 1992" is expected to be published by HMSO in January 1993 and the relevant information is now being updated.

Health Costs

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what source of information is available to Welsh health authorities as purchasers on comparative prices for standard orthopaedic operations; what guidelines are given to health authorities in relation to baseload and marginal prices in quotation and final accounting procedures both between health authorities and within health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Providers routinely inform their purchasers of proposed prices to inform contract negotiations. On request, they also make in-year information on prices available to purchasers. Where the service is provided, tariffs include separately identified prices for orthopaedic procedures.

Guidance on setting prices was issued to health authorities in October 1990. This emphasised that providers must price their services on the basis of full costs. Marginal costs should be used only when providers are able to offer additional services, in-year, making use of unplanned spare capacity. Activity purchased in this way should be reflected in a future year's contract on a full and not marginal cost basis.

The detailed accounting requirements which health authorities should follow in completing their annual accounts and financial returns are given in the "Health Authority Manual for Accounts".

Health Promotion Authority

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the relocation of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales from Brunel house, Fitzalan place, Cardiff; and what *(a)* financial and *(b)* policy considerations played a part in the decision on the site for relocation.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Health Promotion Authority for Wales moved to Brunel house in 1988 as a temporary measure while the authority's long-term accommodation needs were properly established. At that time the authority had between 50 and 60 staff. The authority's activities have expanded since that time and it is apparent that larger accommodation is now required.

The authority has undertaken a comprehensive option appraisal of alternative premises to meet its long-term accommodation requirements. The lowest cost was selected from a short list of properties meeting the authority's requirements.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Livestock Auctioneers

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to prohibit the practice of livestock auctioneers keeping money for farmers from livestock sales at market on trust in bank accounts which are already overdrawn prior to the transaction.

Mr. Curry: This is not a matter for Government intervention.

Pesticides

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to call for a world-wide ban on the use of organochlorine pesticides.

Mr. Soames: Given the diverse range of crops, pests and climatic conditions it is for each country to decide whether pesticides best meet its particular pest control and environmental needs. The use of persistent organochlorine pesticides is already prohibited throughout the European Community. The United Kingdom also protects the third world countries from the importation of hazardous pesticides by participating in the United Nations Environment Programme/Food and Agriculture Organisation's prior informed consent scheme.

Genetically Engineered Food

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the foodstuffs that have been genetically engineered which are currently on sale to the public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The following products, produced by or containing genetically modified organisms, have been examined by the relevant expert committees advising the Government in this area and cleared for use in foodstuffs —a yeast for use in baking and three different preparations of the enzyme, chymosin, which is used in cheese manufacture. Once cleared for use, the sale of the products is a matter for the manufacturers concerned and their customers.

Data Centre for Beef

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to provide funding for the data centre for beef.

Mr. Soames: This important industry initiative has attracted considerable support. As a commercial venture with potential benefits for all producers, the board of the animal data centre should continue to look to the users for funds.

Veterinary Investigation Centres

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of veterinary investigation centres, by county, in the United Kingdom in each year since 1979.

Mr. Gummer: In 1979 in England and Wales veterinary investigation centres were operating in Aberystwyth (Dyfed), Bangor (Gwynedd), Bristol (Somerset), Cambridge (Cambridgeshire), Cardiff (south Glamorgan), Carmarthen (Dyfed), Chester (Cheshire), Gloucester (Gloucestershire), Leeds (West Yorkshire), Lincoln (Lincolnshire), Liverpool (Lancashire), Newcastle (Tyne and Wear, Northampton (Northamptonshire), Norwich (Norfolk), Penrith (Cumbria), Reading (Berkshire), Shrewsbury (Shropshire), Starcross (Devon), Sutton Bonington (Nottinghamshire), Thirsk (North Yorkshire), Truro (Cornwall), Weybridge (Surrey), Winchester (Hampshire), Worcester (Worcestershire) and Wye (Kent).

In 1980, the centre at Weybridge was closed and the area it covered was divided between the Reading and Wye centres. In 1985, the centre at Liverpool was relocated to Preston (Lancashire).

In 1986, the centres at Cardiff and Northampton were closed. The areas they covered were taken over by Carmarthen and by Sutton Bonington respectively. The centres at Gloucester and Leeds were closed and the areas they covered were divided respectively between Worcester and Bristol and between Thirsk and Northallerton. In 1991, the centres at Bangor and Lincoln were closed. The areas they covered were divided respectively between Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth and between Sutton Bonington and Thirsk. The centre at Wye was closed and its area was taken over by Winchester.

This rationalisation of the service has allowed the centres to be continuously upgraded to meet the changing needs of the industry. Veterinary investigation centres in Scotland are attached to Scottish agricultural colleges and are not listed.

Milk Marketing Board

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will ensure that copies of each of the replies to the consultation paper on the future of the Milk Marketing Board are placed in the Library.

Mr. Gummer: The consultation was carried out on the basis that the consultees' views confidential. Any who wish to make their views public can do so, or will have already done so.

Computer Projects

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table setting out for the period since 9 April *(a)* each tender issued by his Department for projects requiring the supply of (i) computer hardware and (ii) computer software, *(b)* a description of the services required, *(c)* the number of companies which were invited to tender, *(d)* the number of companies which submitted a bid without prior invitation by his Department, *(e)* which company was awarded the contract, *(f)* the value of each contract and *(g)* the length of period over which the contract will run.

Mr. Curry: This Department has issued one invitation to tender for the supply of computer hardware and software in the period since 9 April 1992. The details are as follows: description of services—geographical information system; number of companies invited to tender—26; number of companies submitting an uninvited bid—nil; company awarded contract—ESRI (UK) Ltd.; period of contract—10 years.

The value of the contract cannot be provided as the information is confidential.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Sherry

Mr. Turner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy at the European Council of Finance Ministers to press for a reduction in the difference in excise duties between British sherry and Spanish sherry.

Sir John Cope: At the Council meeting on 19 October the United Kingdom and Spain reached an agreement on the duties to be charged on British and Spanish sherry. The agreement provides for duty differential between the two products, to be reduced to 25 per cent. by 1 January 1996, the name "British Sherry" being discontinued by the same date.

Inheritance Tax

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the total amount of land, in hectares, affected by transfers under the conditional exemption system in each year since the Inheritance Tax Act 1984 in Wales.

Mr. Dorrell: The total area of land of outstanding scenic interest in Wales which has been conditionally exempted from inheritance tax or capital transfer tax since 1976 is estimated at 1,500 hectares. As there are only five cases benefiting from conditional exemption, the normal rules of taxpayer confidentiality prevent any further breakdown being made available.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to require the owner of land granted inheritance tax exemptions under the Inheritance Tax Act 1984 to make public the rights of access to the general public which have been granted as a result of the inheritance tax exemptions.

Mr. Dorrell: The owner of land that has been conditionally exempted from inheritance tax or capital transfer tax is required to publicise the agreed public access arrangements. In addition, the appropriate heritage advisory agency is able to supply information about public access to heritage land including conditionally exempt land, although land will not be identified as conditionally exempt.

Mortgage Interest Tax Relief

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the revenue forgone to income tax if MIRAS were available at a basic rate of 20 per cent. instead of the present 25 per cent., and the consequent saving.

Mr. Dorrell: The cost of mortgage interest tax relief in 1992-93 is provisionally estimated to be £5·3 billion. If relief were available at 20 per cent. the cost would be about £4·2 billion, a reduction of £1·1 billion.

Recession

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when is his estimate of the beginning of the recession in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement on the relative timing of the onset of the recession in the United Kingdom and other OECD countries.

Mr. Nelson: A recession is usually defined as a period of two or more successive quarters of falling output. Taking the first quarter in which output falls to be the onset of recession, following are the dates for the onset of the recessions in the United Kingdom and other OECD countries over the past two years.

Country	*Date of onset of recession*
United Kingdom	1990 Q3
United States	1990 Q3
Canada	1990 Q2
Australia	1990 Q2
Denmark	1990 Q4
Finland	1990 Q2
Germany	1991 Q2
Greece	1990 Q2
Sweden	1990 Q2
Switzerland	1991 Q1

Source: OECD, CSO.

Housing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the market value and the replacement value of the private housing stock as a percentage of money gross domestic product, for each year since 1962.

Mr. Portillo: The most appropriate measure of the market value of the private housing stock for which data are available is the value of residential buildings, published in the personal sector balance sheet. The concept of replacement value of the housing stock is not clear. However, one indirect measure which might be considered is the personal sector net capital stock in dwellings at current replacement cost. Land is included in the balance sheet measure, but not in the capital stock measure. Latest estimates of these series are available on the CSO database which may be accessed through the House of Commons Library. The relevant database identifiers are:

Market value	ALLN
Net capital stock	EXGV
"Money GDP"	CAOB

EC Budget

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the United Kingdom net contribution to the EC budget.

Sir John Cope: The latest estimate of the United Kingdom's net contribution to the European Community budget in 1992 is £2,599 million. This was published in the "Statement on the 1992 Community Budget" (Cm 1948).

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of EC agricultural support budget is spent in *(a)* Germany, *(b)* France and *(c)* Italy, respectively.

Sir John Cope: The European Commission's financial report for 1991 on the guarantee section of the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund shows the shares of agricultural market support receipts for *(a)* Germany, *(b)* France and *(c)* Italy to be 16·3 per cent., 19·8 per cent. and 16·2 per cent. respectively.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the savings to his Department of taxing invalidity benefit and the numbers of people who would be worse off expressed as a percentage of the total numbers of people on invalidity benefit.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what estimate can be made of the number of people who would have an income tax liability whose sole income was invalidity benefit if invalidity benefit were liable to tax;

(2) what would be the yield in a full year from making invalidity benefit liable to tax.

Mr. Dorrell: Provisional estimates are that the yield, at 1992-93 levels, from making invalidity benefit taxable would be about £450 million.

Some 650,000 people or almost half of those receiving invalidity benefit would have an income tax liability. Of these about 70,000 would have invalidity benefit as their sole source of taxable income.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the reports for 1991-92 published by the executive units in Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Sir John Cope: The framework document "Next Steps: A Framework for Her Majesty's Customs and Excise" requires the heads of the Department's 30 executive units to provide the chairman of Customs and Excise with a report on its unit's performance annually, including against key targets, and to publish it in a suitable form. Reports for the year 1991-92 have now been published, and copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

Disabled Passengers Scheme

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he plans to lay the appointed day order repealing the disabled passengers scheme; what assessment he has made of the effects of its abolition on disabled people; and if he will provide details of consultation between his Department and organisations representing disabled people prior to announcing these plans.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have been asked to reply.

We shall make and lay the appointed day order repealing the disabled passengers scheme shortly.

The order will ensure that current beneficiaries under the disabled passengers scheme will not lose their entitlement to exemption from vehicle excise duty as a result of the repeal.

The repeal of the scheme was announced by my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General on 7 May, in an answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) shortly before the publication of the Finance Bill 1992. The decision to repeal the disabled passenger scheme was taken because, as a result of new social security benefits introduced on 6 April this year, it was no longer possible to administer the scheme.

HOME DEPARTMENT

London Parks (Policing)

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the sums paid for the past 10 years by the Departments of the Environment and of National Heritage to the Metropolitan police for the policing of each of London's parks; what are the sums proposed for the next financial year; and if he will show the percentage increase, in real terms, for each year.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Hyde park is the only London park policed by the Metropolitan police service for which a charge is made to the Department of the Environment and in 1992 the Department of National Heritage. Charges are set out in the table.

From 1 April 1993 the Royal parks police will assume responsibility for policing Hyde park.

(1982-83 = 100 per cent.)

Financial year	*Amount received*	*Real terms*
1982-83	757,000	100
1983-84	817,000	103
1984-85	869,000	104
1985-86	1,001,000	114
1986-87	900,000	99
1987-88	1,012,000	105
1988-89	1,057,000	103
1989-90	1,114,000	102
1990-91	1,293,000	109
1991-92	1,357,000	107
1992-93	1,509,000	114
1993-94	Nil	—

Asylum

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the refusal of the United Kingdom to grant asylum to two Chinese women democracy activists in September.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There is no provision for receiving applications for asylum from abroad, but we are prepared to consider granting entry clearance for the purpose of making an asylum application where a person falls within the definition of a refugee in article 1A of the 1951 United Nations refugees convention and has close ties with the United Kingdom such as to make it the most appropriate country of refuge. On 28 August this year, Amnesty International wrote to the Home Office asylum division asking for the asylum applications of these two women, who were in Hong Kong, to be considered in the United Kingdom. The information provided by Amnesty International was carefully considered and the Hong Kong authorities were consulted. It was established that the applications had been fully considered by the Hong Kong authorities, who did not accept that either applicant would be at risk of persecution if returned to China. There were no grounds for taking a different view of the cases from the Hong Kong authorities, who had had the benefit of interviewing the applicants and hearing their representations at first hand. Neither applicant had any ties with the United Kingdom. Amnesty International was therefore informed on 4 September that there were no grounds for granting them asylum in the United Kingdom.

Asylum Bill 1991

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many individuals of his Department's staff worked on the Asylum Bill 1991 *(a)* in Committee and *(b)* in the Home Office; and how many person-hours were used in each case.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Within the immigration and nationality department three members of staff worked on the Asylum Bill in 1991-92, for the greater part of their time, two over the period October 1991 to March 1992 and one over the period August 1991 to March 1992. This work included time spent in preparing the Bill and in attending the Committee. The Bill was in Committee for some 27 hours. Other members of the Department were consulted on aspects of the Bill as part of their normal duties. In addition, three members of the legal adviser's branch of the Home Office worked on the Asylum Bill for up to 50 per cent. of their time.

Police Manpower

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a table showing for each police force area in England and Wales, and for the whole of England and Wales, the number of police officers in the authorised establishment at *(a)* 1 April 1979, *(b)* 1 April 1990, *(c)* 1 April 1991 and *(d)* 1 April 1992 and the percentage increase in each case.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is set out in the table.

Table showing the authorised establishment of police forces in England and Wales

Force	*1 April 1979*	*1 April 1990*	*percentage change*	*1 April 1991*	*percentage change*	*1 April 1992*	*percentage change*
Avon and Somerset	2,853	3,080	7·96	3,081	0·03	3,087	0·19
Bedfordshire	947	1,072	13·20	1,085	1·21	1,178	8·57
Cambridgeshire	1,090	1,205	10·55	1,209	0·33	1,241	2·65
Cheshire	1,805	1,888	4·60	1,889	0·05	1,920	1·64
Cleveland	1,411	1,502	6·45	1,502	0·00	1,502	0·00
Cumbria	1,088	1,175	8·00	1,175	0·00	1,187	1·02
Derbyshire	1,709	1,793	4·92	1,812	1·06	1,850	2·10
Devon and Cornwall	2,673	2,863	7·11	2,865	0·07	2,928	2·20
Dorset	1,164	1,271	9·19	1,272	0·08	1,302	2·36
Durham	1,349	1,375	1·93	1,378	0·22	1,389	0·80
Dyfed-Powys	934	935	0·11	944	0·96	969	2·65

Force	*1 April 1979*	*1 April 1990*	*percentage change*	*1 April 1991*	*percentage change*	*1 April 1992*	*percentage change*
Essex	2,525	2,859	13·23	2,875	0·56	2,950	2.61
Gloucestershire	1,116	1,164	4·30	1,164	0·00	1,184	1·72
Greater Manchester	6,735	7,042	4·56	7,021	−0·30	7,077	0·80
Gwent	975	1,009	3·49	1,009	0·00	1,010	[illegible]10
Hampshire	2,954	3,173	7·41	3,175	0·06	3,269	2·96
Hertfordshire	1,533	1,669	8·87	1,669	0·00	1,684	0·90
Humberside	1,939	2,007	3·51	2,007	0·00	2,034	1·35
Kent 1	2,820	3,018	7·02	3,020	0·07	3,096	2·52
Lancashire	3,118	3,201	2·66	3,203	0·06	3,229	0·81
Leicestershire	1,706	1,813	6·27	1,814	0·06	1,853	2·15
Lincolnshire	1,182	1,197	1·27	1,198	0·08	1,206	0·67
Merseyside	4,451	4,701	5·62	4,701	0·00	4,706	0·11
Norfolk	1,265	1,408	11·30	1,409	0·07	1,446	2·63
Northants	950	1,141	20·11	1,142	0·09	1,190	4·20
Northumbria	3,325	3,552	6·83	3,560	0·23	3,613	1·49
North Wales	1,279	1,351	5·63	1,352	0·07	1,369	1·26
North Yorkshire	1,328	1,408	6·02	1,408	0·00	1,418	0·71
Nottinghamshire	2,145	2,344	9·28	2,344	0·00	2,344	0·00
South Wales	3,069	3,168	3·23	3,168	0·00	3,168	0·00
South Yorkshire	2,752	2,998	8·94	2,998	0·00	3,031	1·10
Staffordshire	2,066	2,202	6·58	2,203	0·05	2,215	0·54
Suffolk	1,088	1,204	10·66	1,205	0·08	1,233	2·32
Surrey	1,599	1,659	3·75	1,659	0·00	1,673	0·84
Sussex	2,802	2,963	5·75	2,964	0·03	3,014	1·69
Thames Valley	2,997	3,685	22·96	3,685	0·00	3,812	3·45
Warwickshire	876	1,007	14·95	1,008	0·10	1,020	1·19
West Mercia	1,834	2,023	1[illegible]31	2,024	0·05	2,053	1·43
West Midlands	6,509	6,893	5[illegible]	6,895	0·03	6,977	1·19
West Yorkshire	5,104	5,279	3·43	5,281	0·04	5,295	0·27
Wiltshire	1,022	1,098	7·44	1,099	0·09	1,181	7·46
Metropolitan	26,589	28,565	7·43	28,524	−0·14	28,276	−0·87
City 2	1,022	798	−21·92	798	0·00	798	0·00
Total	117,698	125,758	6·85	125,794	0·03	126,977	0·94

1. The police establishment of the Kent constabulary will increase by 40 officers on 1 January 1993.
2. The police establishment of the City of London police was reduced at the request of the police authority.

Safe Cities

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to create any new safer cities areas; and what are his plans for the existing safer cities areas after 31 March 1994.

Mr. Jack: The safer cities programme was originally intended to create 20 local projects, all of which have now been established. We remain committed to doubling the number of safer cities projects to 40, when circumstances and resources enable us to do so.

The first 16 projects to have been established have already been guaranteed funding until March 1994. No decision has been made concerning their futures beyond that date. The four most recently established projects—in Derby, Hammersmith and Fulham, Leicester and Middlesbrough—are planned to continue in 1994-95.

Probation Service

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met representatives of *(a)* the Association of Chief Officers of Probation or *(b)* the National Association of Probation Officers; and what was the outcome of their discussions.

Mr. Jack: The Secretary of State last met representatives of the Association of Chief Officers of Probation in July 1992. The discussion covered a range of current topics relating to the changes in and expansion of probation work including the implementation of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, partnerships with the independent sector and the introduction of national standards. The Secretary of State has not met representatives of the National Association of Probation Officers this year.

I have met representatives of the Association of Chief Officers of Probation on various occasions since my appointment. These meetings have covered a number of current topics about probation work. I met representatives of the National Association of Probation Officers in July; this meeting also covered a range of topics.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many probation staff by grade were in full-time employment during 1991 in England and Wales.

Mr. Jack: The number of full-time equivalent staff employed by the probation service, by grade and in post on 31 December 1991, was as follows:

	Number
Chief Probation Officer	55
Deputy Chief Probation Officer	24
Assistant Chief Probation Officer	210
Senior Probation Officer	1,163
Main-grade Probation Officer	5,702
Probation Ancillary	1,864
Research and Information Officers	64
Other staff (Professional, Administrative, Clerical and Secretarial)	5,250

Car Crime

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the incidence of car crime in England and Wales in each year since 1982; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The information reques[illegible] is set out in the table. Figures are for offences recorded by the police.

	Theft/ unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle	*Theft from a motor vehicle*
1982	351,230	449,037
1983	325,699	424,238
1984	344,806	454,943
1985	367,426	478,968
1986	411,060	577,414
1987	389,576	658,577
1988	366,713	620,623
1989	393,399	628,912
1990	494,209	773,079
1991	582,300	913,700

Sentencing Policy

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice his Department is offering sentencers and others on the extent to which judges and magistrates are expected to take previous offences into account when determining the level of seriousness of an offence.

Mr. Jack: The criteria for determining the seriousness of an offence for the purpose of deciding on an appropriate sentence are set out in the Criminal Justice Act 1991. However, it is for the courts alone to interpret the provisions of the Act as they apply to individual cases in the light of all the circumstances of the offence and the offender and any guidance which the Court of Appeal may issue in due course. In addition, a substantial programme of training for sentencers on all matters relating to the Act has been provided under the auspices of the Judicial Studies Board.

Public Houses (Violence)

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what assessment he has made of the trend of violence against landlords and landladies in public houses; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many physical attacks on landlords or landladies of public houses were reported in 1991;

(3) if he will make it his policy to encourage magistrates to exclude from licensed premises those who are found guilty of violence against landlords or landladies of public houses.

Mr. Jack: No central record is kept of crimes of violence against licensees and their staff on licensed premises. I am aware of concern about such violence, and that a number of steps have been taken by the licensed trade, in partnership with other agencies, against the problem. The Licensed Premises (Exclusion of Certain Persons) Act 1980 enables magistrates in England and Wales, when sentencing a person convicted of violence or threatened violence on licensed premises to make an "exclusion order" prohibiting him or her from entering those or any other specified premises for a period of between three months and two years without the express consent of the licensee. Sentencing in individual cases is entirely a matter for the courts in the light of all the circumstances of the offence and the offender.

Drugs

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the drug prevention projects funded under his Department's drug prevention initiatives together with *(a)* the current level of annual funds of each, *(b)* the start date of each and *(c)* the date to which funds have been agreed in each case.

Mr. Jack: There have been 20 local drugs prevention teams established between October 1990 and March 1992 under the drugs prevention initiative. The annual fund for each team excluding salaries and running costs is £85,000. This comprises £75,000 to grant-aid local drugs prevention projects and £10,000 for publicity. An additional £15,000 to support activities undertaken during European Drug Prevention Week has been allocated to each team for this financial year 1992-93. Funds have been agreed initially for a period of three years in each case. Details on the individual teams are as follows:

Local drugs prevention team	*Start date*	*Funds agreed until*
Brighton and Hove	29 October 1990	29 October 1993
Lewisham	19 November 1990	19 November 1993
Liverpool	10 December 1990	10 December 1993
Birmingham	7 January 1991	7 January 1994
Hackney	14 January 1991	14 January 1994
Southwark	18 February 1991	18 February 1994
Newham	4 March 1991	4 March 1994
Bristol	4 March 1991	4 March 1994
Lambeth	22 April 1991	22 April 1994
Nottingham	13 May 1991	13 May 1994
Wolverhampton	20 May 1991	20 May 1994
Brent	5 August 1991	5 August 1994
Wirral	30 September 1991	30 September 1994
Bradford	18 October 1991	18 October 1994
Dundee	2 December 1991	2 December 1994
Manchester	3 February 1992	3 February 1995
Salford	19 February 1992	19 February 1995
Newcastle	7 January 1991	2 March 1995
Glasgow	23 March 1992	23 March 1995
West Glamorgan	30 March 1992	30 March 1995

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the projects that have been set up under the drugs prevention initiative and the cost of each of these projects; and how long he intends these projects to be operational.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 26 October 1992]*: The 20 local drugs prevention teams were established between October 1990 and March 1992 for initial three-year terms. The position of the teams beyond that period is currently under active review. The effectiveness of the drug prevention initiative, including the work of the 20 teams, is being fully evaluated. A structural review has been commissioned to be carried out by the university of Bristol and a private sector consultancy. The results of the review will be available in June next year. The average annual cost of each team, including its grants and publicity budget, is approximately £200,000. Details are as follows:

Local Drugs Prevention Team	*Contracted until*
Brighton and Hove	29 October 1993
Lewisham	19 November 1993
Liverpool	10 December 1993
Birmingham	7 January 1994
Hackney	14 January 1994
Southwark	18 February 1994
Newham	4 March 1994
Bristol	4 March 1994
Lambeth	22 April 1994
Nottingham	13 May 1994
Wolverhampton	20 May 1994
Brent	5 August 1994
Wirral	30 September 1994
Bradford	18 October 1994
Dundee	2 December 1994
Manchester	3 February 1994
Salford	19 February 1995
Newcastle	2 March 1995
Glasgow	23 March 1995
West Glamorgan	30 March 1995

Identity Cards

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the case for introduction of an identity card scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Although we remain ready to consider any arguments which may be advanced in favour of introducing an identity card system, we are not at present persuaded that the case for such a system has been made.

Her Majesty's Prison, Manchester

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is in a position to make a statement about the market testing of Her Majesty's prison, Manchester.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Work has now been completed on the specification for the operation of Manchester prison. This forms part of the invitation to tender issued to the prison service and potential contractors from the private sector. A copy has been placed in the Library. Following the evaluation process, we aim to announce a decision on the successful bidder in early spring 1993. It is our intention that the part of the prison that is currently being extensively refurbished shall be ready to accept prisoners from autumn 1993.

Prisoners (Injuries)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action is being taken by the prison service to reduce the level of suicide and self-injury by prisoners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The prison service's policies in this complex and important area were recently described in an information paper, "Caring for prisoners at risk of suicide and self-injury: the way forward", which was published on 20 August 1992. I have today arranged for a copy of the paper to be placed in the Library of the House. The paper outlines in detail the measures being taken across the prison service as a whole and gives examples of some local schemes. I very much support the efforts being made by the prison staff, working in partnership with voluntary agencies and increasingly with prisoners themselves, to tackle the problems associated with suicide and self-injury.

Discretionary Life Sentences

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what rules he has made governing the proceedings of the parole board when considering the cases of discretionary life sentence prisoners who are eligible for consideration under the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1991; and how the board will be constituted when considering such cases.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The parole board rules 1992 were made on 31 August 1992 under section 32(5) of the Criminal Justice Act 1991. They will come into force on 1 October. A copy of the rules has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

When considering these cases, the parole board will sit in panels of three. I have written to the chairman of the board asking him to bear in mind the following criteria when selecting panel members.

Chairman

Panels should be chaired by a High Court judge member of the Board where cases involve:

terrorist offences;
the attempted murder or wounding of a police or prison officer;
the sexual assault or mutilation and killing of a child (ie in the same incident);
serial rape;
manslaughter following release from prison on a previous manslaughter sentence;
offences giving rise to multiple life sentences.

Otherwise, a circuit judge or recorder may take the chair.

Second member

The second member should generally be a psychiatrist. But, if there is conclusive medical evidence that no serious concern exists about the prisoner's state of mind at the time of the offence or subsequently during imprisonment, a psychologist or probation officer may be appointed.

Third member

The third member of the panel should be a lay member, a criminologist, or a psychologist or probation officer (where he or she is not already the second member).

Prisoners

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 19 October, *Official Report*, columns *64-65*, (1) how many of the 616 prisoners came from each police area responsible for initiating action towards prosecutions; and in each case how many were remand prisoners and how many convicted prisoners;

(2) if he will show in respect of each police authority area how many of those held in police cells were remand prisoners and how many were convicted prisoners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 23 October 1992]:* The information collected centrally does not separate remand and convicted prisoners held in police cells, but most would have been held on remand. It is also not possible to apply the available data to the Crown prosecution service areas, but the table gives the prisoner in police cells position for 16 October by prison service establishment. This may give the hon. Member a clearer indication of the origin of the prisoners concerned.

Number of adults and young adults in police cell accommodation on 16 October, by prison service establishment

Establishment	*Adults*	*Young adults*	*Total*
Bristol	18	7	25
Cardiff	4	25	29
Durham	1	0	1
Gloucester	27	9	36
Hindley	0	7	7
Lewes	8	0	8
Leicester	8	0	8
Liverpool	2	0	2
Manchester	380	88	468
Preston	30	0	30
Risley	2	0	2
Totals	480	136	616

Prison Service

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what his Department's estimates are for the potential redundancy costs of teaching staff currently employed by local education authorities arising from changes in the provision of educational services in Her Majesty's prison service;

(2) who will have responsibility for redundancy payments of teaching staff in the event of changes in the provision of educational services in Her Majesty's prison service leading to existing contracts with further education colleges being changed;

(3) what his Department's estimates are for the overall financial costs of the proposed changes in the provision of educational services in prison service establishments.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 26 October 1992]:* The prison service has given notice that it intends to invite competitive tenders for the provision of education to inmates in prisons and young offender institutions in England and Wales, for which it is responsible, with effect from 1 April 1993. This is consequent upon changes in the further education responsibilities of local education authorities resulting from the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 and is consistent with the Government's policies on market testing, as set out in the White Paper "Competing for Quality" (Cm 1730).

Competition between the public and private sector is directed to achieving better service and value for money. It will be possible to quantify the overall benefits in quality and cost only when the tendering exercise is complete.

All existing providers are being invited to tender, and any possible consequential redundancy costs cannot therefore yet be accurately assessed. Such costs would fall to the employer of existing prison education staff, normally the local education authority or a college of further education. They would only arise if the existing provider was unseccessful in the competitive tender and it was not possible to avoid redundancy, for example, by redeployment of staff to other areas or agreed transfers to the new contractor.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what costs were incurred by his Department in employing outside consultants to advise on changes to be made in the provision of educational services in prison service establishments.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 26 October 1992]:* Consultants were employed to provide advice to the prison service on the implications for the provision of education in prisons in England and Wales of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. The cost was £27,500, exclusive of value added tax.

SCOTLAND

Football Stadiums

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will circularise planning authorities urging them to give sympathetic consideration to applications for new football stadiums in greenfield sites, particularly in cases where there is no feasible alternative for football clubs to meet with the requirements and time scale of the Taylor report.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Certain of Scotland's football clubs are required to have all-seater stadiums by August 1994 in line with recommendations contained in the Taylor report. The planning system should not obstruct this requirement.

The Government's policy, as set out in Scottish Development Department circular 17/1985, is that planning permission should always be granted, having regard to all material considerations, unless there are sound and clear cut reasons for refusal. A draft national planning policy guideline on sport and recreation, containing further guidance on the implications of the Taylor report, will be issued for public consultation in the spring.

As with any other applications for planning permission, the football clubs may appeal to the Secretary of State if they are aggrieved at a planning authority's decision or if the planning authority fails to determine an application timeously.

Water Authority Land

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total acreage of land presently belonging to Scotland's water authorities, broken down into each authority area.

Sir Hector Monro: This information is not held centrally.

Scottish Nuclear

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any intention of privatising Scottish Nuclear.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Roads

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to introduce experimental traffic measures at Dairsie.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Traffic-calming measures for Dairsie have recently been approved by the Scottish Office roads directorate and the necessary signing/road marking authorisation and revised speed limit order are presently being processed. On completion of these procedures, the "village gateway" measures will be implemented as soon as is practical.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the progress of the Auchtermuchty bypass.

Mr. James Douglas-Hamilton: The preparation work for the Auchtermuchty bypass is at a stage where it could be quickly completed, but no funding opportunity has presently been identified for the scheme and therefore no further action is being taken at this time.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the capacity of the trunk roads which pass through Cupar and their ability to accommodate projected traffic flows by the year 2000.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A transportation study to address trunk road capacity and other matters in Cupar was recently carried out by the Scottish Office roads directorate and Fife regional council. This exercise included consideration of both a bypass and an inner relief road in relation to the medium and longer-term needs of the A91 trunk road. An evaluation of the findings of the report is currently under way to determine how best to meet the requirements of Cupar and the trunk road.

Housing, East Lothian

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the availability of housing to rent in East Lothian; and if he will make a supplementary housing capital allocation to East Lothian district council for the current year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is the responsibility of East Lothian district council to consider the housing needs of its area, including housing for rent. The Government took full account of East Lothian's needs, as set out in its housing plan and housing capital programme, when decisions were taken on East Lothian's housing capital allocations for 1992-93.

All resources currently available for housing capital expenditure in Scotland in 1992-93 have been distributed. If further resources become available, the relative housing needs of East Lothian will continue to be taken fully into account.

Haddington Sheriff Court

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the backlog of cases at Haddington sheriff court relative to other sheriff courts; and if he intends to take any steps to improve the efficiency and accommodation of the court in Haddington.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer to the reply which my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) on 15 July 1992, *Official Report*, columns *708-10*, setting out the waiting periods for civil proofs and summary criminal trials for each sheriff court in Scotland. Haddington is within the national average for each category. The speedy and efficient disposal of sheriff court business is a matter for sheriffs principal. Witness accommodation at Haddington has been improved over recent years and steps are being taken to provide better interview facilities for solicitors and their clients. The main courtroom will be refurbished when resources permit.

Homelessness

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of homeless persons in Scotland and each local authority area for *(a)* the most recent date for which figures are available and *(b)* 1979-80.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 October 1992]:* Table 2 of the statistical bulletin HSG/1992/3, "Operation of the Homeless Legislation in Scotland 1979/80 to 1990/91: District Analyses", shows the number of applicant households, by local authority district, for the years 1979-80 and 1990-91, the latest date for which this information is available. Copies of the bulletin are available in the House Library.

Information on the number of persons in each applicant household is available only from 1990, in case returns supplied by authorities to the Department. The table gives for 1990-91, by district, the number of households for whom case returns have been received and the total number of persons in these households.

Number of applicant households and number of persons in these households 1990-91

Area	*Number of case returns received for households applying as homeless in 1990-91*[1]	*Numbers of persons*
SCOTLAND	32,379	67,965
Borders		
Berwickshire	16	55
Ettrick and Lauderdale	17	40
Roxburgh	109	230
Tweeddale	49	119
Central		
Clackmannan	523	1,035
Falkirk	1,300	2,756
Stirling	575	1,249
Dumfries and Galloway		
Annandale and Eskdale	97	255
Nithsdale	600	1,197
Stewartry	97	259
Wigtown	107	273
Fife		
Dumfermline	311	788
Kirkcaldy	1,325	3,049
North East Fife	476	1,063
Grampian		
Aberdeen	1,485	3,232
Banff and Buchan	225	602
Gordon	290	785
Kincardine and Deeside	45	141
Moray	195	543
Highland		
Badenoch and Strathspey	19	58
Caithness	7	22
Inverness	361	899
Lochaber	75	182
Nairn	40	104
Ross and Cromarty	107	263
Skye and Lochalsh	68	155
Sutherland	10	36
Lothian		
East Lothian	960	2,108
Edinburgh	2,633	5,902
Midlothian	143	344
West Lothian	532	1,054

Area	*Number of case returns received for households applying as homeless in 1990-91*[1]	*Numbers of persons*
Strathclyde		
Argyll and Bute	330	774
Bearsden and Milngavie	81	202
Clydebank	655	1,390
Clydesdale	446	942
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	421	1,107
Cumnock and Doon Valley	67	155
Cunninghame	445	1,038
Dumbarton	1,705	3,223
East Kilbride	521	1,064
Eastwood	11	28
Glasgow	8,565	15,054
Hamilton	329	837
Inverclyde	360	796
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	440	991
Kyle and Carrick	607	1,202
Monklands	309	574
Motherwell	988	2,070
Renfrew	957	1,965
Strathkelvin	318	835
Tayside		
Angus	468	1,174
Dundee	924	2,084
Perth and Kinross	432	1,234
Islands Councils		
Orkney Islands	19	51
Shetland Islands	131	265
Western Isles	53	112

[1] The 32,379 case returns represent 94 per cent. of the 34,600 applications in 1990-91.

Housing

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total amount of capital expenditure on housing for each of the financial years 1979-80 to 1991-92 inclusive in cash and real terms.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

Gross Capital Expenditure on housing in Scotland by local authorities, Scottish Homes and New Town Development Corporations

£ million

	Cash terms	[1]*Real terms*
1979-80	421·0	1,021·0
1980-81	477·0	977·6
1981-82	480·1	897·2
1982-83	561·3	979·3
1983-84	706·0	1,177·1
1984-85	583·0	925·8
1985-86	600·1	903·1
1986-87	657·9	958·5
1987-88	791·4	1,093·6
1988-89	800·7	1,031·9
1989-90	985·2	1,191·2
1990-91	953·8	1,066·4
1991-92	1,081·1	1,127·0

[1] Expressed in 1992-93 prices.

Recycling

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make supplementary credit approvals available as hypothecated local authority expenditure to enable local authorities to engage in recycling projects.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 26 October 1992]:* No. As in previous years, local authorities in Scotland will each receive a capital consent allocation for its general services capital programme. Allocations will be determined in light of the proposals for capital expenditure contained in the detailed financial plans submitted by authorities. Thereafter, within the limits of their consent, it will be for local authorities to determine their own priorities for capital expenditure, including on recycling projects.

Health Care

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what private psychiatric services are offered by Grampian Healthcare.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 26 October 1992]:* None.

Organic Farming

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken and what further measures he proposes to promote organic farming in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 26 October 1992]:* Through Food from Britain, the Government set up and now fund the United Kingdom register of organic food standards to determine national standards, codes of practice and provide credibility to certification procedures. The Government also fund a wide range of research relating to organic farming, from strategic research into production methods through to wider issues such as the environmental impact of organic farming systems.

In addition, Scottish farmers of organic produce can benefit under a number of schemes open to farmers generally. These include the farm and conservation grant scheme; set-aside arrangements and the group marketing grant scheme. The need for any further measures will be considered in the context of the implementation of the European Community agriculture and environment regulations.

Forth Valley Health Board

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how much money has been spent on refurbishing Forth Valley health board headquarters over each of the past five years;

(2) if he will give a detailed breakdown of the total expenditure on refurbishing Forth Valley health board headquarters over the past five years.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 26 October 1992]:* The total expenditure on refurbishing Forth Valley health board's headquarters at 33 Spittal street and 9 Gladstone place, Stirling over the past five years is as follows:

	1988-89 £	*1989-90* £	*1990-91* £	*1991-92* £	*1992-93 to date* £
Capital-backlog maintenance	519	9,330	37,767	15,601	46,328
Equipment	127,411	83,429	95,108	206,980	43,863
Maintenance	21,800	34,265	25,436	27,046	35,535
Total	149,730	127,024	158,311	249,627	125,726

EMPLOYMENT

Pit Closures

Mr. Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions she has had with *(a)* the chairman of British Coal, *(b)* members of the National Economic Development Council, *(c)* the director-general of the Confederation of British Industry, *(d)* the Major Energy Users Council, and *(e)* the coal industry trades unions on the implications of the coal industry pit closure plans.

Mr. McLoughlin: Employment Ministers have not met representatives of these bodies to discuss the pit closures. There has been a meeting with the training enterprise councils involved to discuss what help can be given.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on what day her Department first made preparations to deal with the impending pit closures.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 26 October 1992]:* My Department has been aware for some months of possible future pit closures and has been involved in contingency planning.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions she has had with the European social affairs and regional Commissioners in regard to the implications for EC employment and regional aid programmes of the pit closure programme.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

I have been in contact with Mr. Millan, the Commissioner with responsibility for regional policies, and discussions have begun at official level.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the level of resignations amongst directors of training and enterprise councils in the 12-month period to the end of June.

Mr. McLoughlin: In the year to the end of June 1992, the turnover of TEC directors—excluding chairmen—was 19 per cent. Although information on the reasons for these moves is not held centrally, the common reasons are moves around the country, retirement or changes of job.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the present level of funding for TECs to meet current demand for training programmes for young people; and what estimate she has made of the effect of any budget cuts.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced to the House on 7 July, *Official Report*, columns 171-72, new measures to establish a national system for monitoring the numbers of young people seeking training. There is currently no shortage of funds for TECs to meet the demand for youth training.

Unemployment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures she is taking to alleviate hardship resulting from concentrations of high unemployment.

Mr. McLoughlin: The social security system provides comprehensive support for unemployed people in all parts of the country through unemployment benefit, income support and help with housing costs. The social fund provides a mixture of interest-free loans and non-repayable grants to meet the costs of specific items. To help unemployed people to find work as quickly as possible, we are now offering the widest range of help and advice ever made available to unemployed people.

Medicopharma UK

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 22 May, *Official Report*, column *348*, whether Medicopharma UK has now met all claims for redundancy payments; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Redundancy payments have been made to all entitled employees, initially by the company and, following the company's insolvency, by the Department's redundancy payments service. In addition, some claims in relation to protective awards made by an industrial tribunal are currently being processed.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if she intends to take any action to speed up the hearing of industrial tribunal cases at London, North;

(2) how many industrial tribunals were lodged each year in the area covered by London, North industrial tribunals, Woburn place for the period 1987-1991; what proportion of these proceeded to hearing; what number are settled; and what number were withdrawn before hearing;

(3) what is the average time between the lodgement of an industrial tribunal IT1 form, and its being heard at London, North tribunals each year for the period 1987 to 1991.

Mr. McLoughlin: The listing of industrial tribunal cases for hearing depends on the availability of tribunal chairmen and I am informed that there has recently been a shortage of chairmen in the London, North region. Appointment of chairmen is the responsibility of my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor and in an effort to improve the situation, five new chairmen—one full time and four part time—have been appointed in the past six months. I understand that further appointments are under consideration. London, North has also adopted an intensive case listing policy in an effort to accelerate the throughput of cases.

Tribunal statistics are held for financial rather than calendar years and the tables have been compiled on that basis. The number of applications lodged at London, North is shown in table 1. Table 2 shows the outcomes of cases dealt with. I regret that information on the waiting time between a claim being lodged and heard is not available in the precise form requested. The figures in table 3 show the percentage of applications coming to first hearing within six, eight, 10, 12, 20 and 26 weeks respectively of receipt of the application.

Table 1
Applications lodged

	Number
1 April 1991—31 March 1992	5,667
1 April 1990—31 March 1991	4,308
1 April 1989—31 March 1990	4,007
1 April 1988—31 March 1989	2,405
1 April 1987—31 March 1988	2,661

Table 2
Outcome of applications

	Heard	*Settled*	*Withdrawn*
1 April 1991—31 March 1992[1]	1,041	919	1,216
1 April 1990—31 March 1991	1,170	688	1,248
1 April 1989—31 March 1990	738	1,008	792
1 April 1988—31 March 1989	1,000	660	547
1 April 1987—31 March 1988	938	978	650

[1] 1 April 1991—31 March 1992 figures are provisional.

Table 3
Waiting time for cases to come to first hearing

	Percentage under (weeks)						
	6	*8*	*10*	*12*	*16*	*20*	*26*
1 April 1991—31 March 1992	1	2	10	17	34	53	75
1 April 1990—31 March 1991	1	6	13	23	46	61	77
1 April 1989—31 March 1990	5	19	31	44	65	75	85
1 April 1988—31 March 1989	4	15	26	36	49	79	91
1 April 1987—31 March 1988	10	26	41	54	71	83	90

Employment Service

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the Employment Service.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the papers published by the Employment Service in the last 12 months. This is something which falls to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

I have attached to this letter an annex which sets out the details you have asked for. If there is a particular publication which you are interested in please let me know and I will ensure you receive a copy promptly.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PUBLICATIONS

General information about the Employment Service:

This is the Employment Service (CORP 1 August 1992).

Public Employment Services: Into the 1990s (article in the Employment Gazette October 1992).

Performance and Accounts:

Employment Service Annual Report and Accounts 1990-91

Employment Service Annual Report and Accounts 1991-92

Employment Service Operational Plan 1992-1993.

Advisory and information booklets and leaflets:

Helping You Back to Work. Information for Claimants (UB40/UBL18 revised September 1991).

Just the Job—New Edition (EMPL 45 revised September 1991).

Jobseeker's Charter leaflet (JSC1L December 1991).

Jobseeker's Charter. Help us to get it right . . . and how to complain if you think we have got it wrong (JSC3L December 1991).

Restart Course leaflet No. 1 (RCL1 February 1992).

How to be Better Off in Work (BOIWL1 September 1992).

Job Search Seminar Leaflet (JSS L3).

Guide for Managers/Executives/Professionals (EXJ1).

Just for the Record Leaflet—Help for People with a Criminal Record (OFJ1).

Working Abroad (OPU1).

Working in Holland (OPU3).

Working in the UK (OPU4).

Working in France (OPU5).

Working in Germany (OPU6).

Working in Belgium (OPU7).

Working in Spain (OPU8).

Working in Portugal (OPU9).

Working in Italy (OPU10).

Working in Ireland (OPU11).

Working in Denmark (OPU12).

Working in Greece (OPU13).

Working in Luxembourg (OPU14).

Employing People with Disabilities—Sources of Help (PEL2).

Employing People with Disabilities—PACT Placing, Assessment and Counselling Team (PEL).

PF1—Folder for A4 inserts entitled "Information on Disability and Employment".

Information leaflet for people with severe disabilities on Sheltered Placement scheme (SPS1).

Information leaflet for host companies about the Sheltered Placement Scheme (SPS2)

Marketing Leaflet for Employers (EMPL46).

Our New Computer System (NUBL1).

Job Interview Guarantee scheme Client Wallet.

Job Interview Guarantee scheme Employer Wallet.

How to make the most of your Work Trial.

Research and Evaluation:
The Employment Service Research and Evaluation branch carries out internal studies and commissions studies by external contractors. With the exception of those produced by some contractors the reports of these studies are not published as on sale documents. Copies are placed in the House of Commons Library and sent to people who ask for them. The following lists the reports which have been issued in the past year and, where appropriate, the name of the external contractor concerned. The items marked * are available on sale.

External Contractor Reports
Evaluation of joblink—Qualitative study report (Research Services Limited November 1991).

National Customer Satisfaction Survey—Report of Findings (Research International Limited January 1992).

New Clients: A survey of new clients to the Employment Service and their response to New Client Advisor interview (Social Community Planning Research March 1992).

Quality assessment and guidance in Job Review Workshops (Psychological and Statistical Services April 1992).

Working with a disability: Barriers and facilitators (Social Community Planning Research May 1992[1]).

Job Interview Guarantee (JIG) Evaluation—Report on a survey of JIG employers (British Market Research Bureau May 1992).

Attitudes to Employment Service Local Offices: Qualitative Survey (Ecotec Research and Consulting Limited June 1992).

An evaluation of the Pilot Employment Initiatives for Disabled People scheme (Ecotec Research and Consulting Limited June 1992).

Progression, Regression, Turnover, Quality and Support in Sheltered Employment (Policy Research Unit July 1992[1]).

Restart Cohort Study (Policy Studies Institute September 1992).

Quality of Assessment and Guidance in Job Review Workshops (Psychological and Statistical Services October 1992).

Internal Research Reports

Actively Seeking Work—Evaluation (Report 68 November 1991).

Survey of non-claiment users of ES local offices (Report 69 January 1992).

Multifunctioning Pilots—an assessment of performance (Report 70 January 1992).

Evaluation of ES461—the initial cliam form for unemployment benefit (Report 71 March 1992).

Private Employment Agencies (Report 72 April 1992).

Restart Course Follow-up Survey (Report 73 July 1992).

The Effectiveness of the NCA (New Client Advisor) Interview (Report 74 October 1992).

NUBS2 (National Unemployment Benefit computer System) Business Pilots Staff Views (Report 75 October 1992).

Psychological Service Project Reports

Critical Skills of Employment Service Advisors (Report No. 410 October 1991).

Utility Analysis: A method of costing the impact of a training intervention (Report No. 407 November 1991).

A Questionnaire Survey of Training Needs in Employment Department Corporate Services Branch (Report No. 402 December 1991).

A Questionnaire Survey of Training Needs in Employment Department Estate Branch (Report No. 403 December 1991).

An Evaluation of the training which equips newly appointed Adjudication Officers to deal with Doubtful claims to unemployment benefit (Report No. 411 January 1992).

Exit Interviews with Psychologists (Report No. 404 January 1992).

Job Interview Guarantee: An evolving Placement Programme (Report No. 408 March 1992).

Do Prison Linked Jobclubs work and evaluation for initiatives at Pentonville and Holloway.

PDCA in West Midlands—Evaluation Report (Report No. 409 March 1992).

How Users assess the reception, post, messenger and typing services provided at 236 Grays Inn Road (Report No. 410 March 1992).

Participant Observation of 3 day Occupational Assessment workshops for unemployed people in the North East Region (Report No. 412 May 1992).

Outcomes for the first Employment Department Head Office PDPLINK programme (September 1991 to May 1992): a project-based approach to personal development using external placements (Report No. 413 July 1992).

How participants and tutors rated the December 1991 SEO to Grade 7 Manager Development workshop (Report No. 141 April 1992).

End of programme evaluation of the first "Executive

Stretch": A personal development option for senior managers (Report No. 415 June 1992).

Referrals to Sheltered Employment (Report No. 416 September 1992).

Evaluating the Impact of the ES Stress Pack (Report No. 399 September 1992).

Is there a gap in provision for people with special needs (Report No. 406/R September 1992).

How People in the Employment Service view Travel and Subsistence, Development and Pay Issues (Report No. 417 October 1992).

Training Disability Employment Advisors in assessing individual clients with the aid of psychological tests: An early evaluation of Enhanced Assessment Training (Report No. 418 October 1992).

Improving the usability of information systems . . . a briefing for systems developers (Report No. 400).

Adjudication:
Analysis of Adjudication Officers' Decisions for Quarter ending 31 December 1991.

Analysis of Adjudication Officers' Decisions for Quarter ending 31 March 1992.

Analysis of Adjudication Officers' Decisions for Year ending 31 March 1992.

Analysis of Adjudication Officers' Decisions for Quarter ending 30 June 1992.

Personnel Related:
Revised Administrative Assistant Interview Plan, Guidance and Rating Form.

Revised Administrative Officer Interview Plan, Guidance and Rating Form.

Article on "Promotion Through Vacancy Advertising" (PVA) appeared in the Spring edition of "Equality Network".

Financial Services

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will supply figures for the numbers employed in the financial services sector for each of the past three years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is as follows.

Employees in employment: Great Britain

June of each year	*Thousands Banking, finance and auxiliary activities*[1]
1990	671·1
1991	648·7
1992	623·7

[1] Class 81 and Group 831 of the 1980 standard industrial classification (SIC 80).

Doncaster Travel-to-work Area

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will outline the current travel-to-work area boundaries for the Doncaster area; and if her Department has any plans for reviewing them.

Mr. McLoughlin: The current travel-to-work areas, TTWA, have been compiled from 1981 ward boundaries, using data from the 1981 census of population. The wards for the Doncaster TTWA are as follows: Ardwick, Armthorpe, Askern, Balby, Bentley, Central, Bentley, North Road, Bessacarr, Central, Eddington and Warmsworth, Hatfield, Intake, Richmond, Rossington, South East, Southern Parks, Stainforth, Thorne, Town Field, Wheatley—which are all in the Doncaster local authority district—and Haxey, which is in the Boothferry local authority district.

A travel-to-work area review is planned and will take into account any significant changes in commuting patterns in the United Kingdom. It will use the special workplace statistics from the 1991 census of population scheduled for release in November 1993. Draft TTWAs are expected to be available approximately six to nine months after that.

Manufacturing Employment

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will publish a table showing the absolute and percentage change in the level of manufacturing employment in each Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development country since October 1990; and if she will make a statement on the United Kingdom's relative performance according to this indicator.

Mr. McLoughlin: Comparable information from the OECD is available only for the total of the energy, manufacturing and construction industries. Manufacturing is the lagest component but its share in the total differs between member states. Changes since September 1990 are shown in the table.

Changes in civilian employment in production and construction industries between September 1990 and June 1992
Seasonally adjusted (thousands)

	Absolute change	*Percentage change*
Canada	−284	−9·2
USA	−1,578	−5·1
Japan	761	3·6
Australia	−164	−8·2
Austria[1]	27	2·2
Finland	−153	−20·[illegible]
France[2]	−175	−2·7
West Germany	47	0·4
Italy[3]	−85	−1·2
Norway	−32	−6·5
Portugal[3]	−118	−7·5
Spain	−128	−3·0
Sweden	−173	−13·2
Switzerland	−62	−5·0
United Kingdom[4]	−767	−11·6

[1] Latest data available is at December 1991.

[2] Figures available are not seasonally adjusted.

[3] Latest data available is at March 1992.

[4] Figures exclude participants in work related Government training programmes (for which separate industry estimates are not available).

Source: OECD, except United Kingdom (Employment Department).

The level of employment is not the only or the best indicator of the health of the country's manufacturing sector. It would be wrong to ignore improvements in productivity for instance. A better measure is provided by the ratio of manufacturing output to total gross domestic product. This has remained broadly constant in the United Kingdom over the past 10 years, as it has in a number of other countries including France, Italy and west Germany.

Computer Projects

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will publish a table setting out for the period since 9 April *(a)* each tender issued by her Department for projects requiring the supply of (i) computer hardware and (ii) computer software, *(B)* a description of the services required, *(c)* the number of companies who were invited to tender, *(d)* the number of companies who submitted a bid without prior invitation by her Department, *(e)* which company was awarded the contract, *(f)* the value of each contract and *(g)* the length of period over which the contract will run.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Employment Department group has issued a substantial number of tenders for the supply of computer hardware, software and associated services since 9 April 1992. Details of these in the form requested could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Benefit Disqualifications

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list by unemployment benefit under each paragraph of section 20(1) of the Social Security Act 1975 for the latest month for which information can be obtained for the Doncaster area *(a)* how many unemployed people were disqualified for unemployment benefit, *(b)* what were the reasons given by his office, *(c)* what was the length of disqualification imposed, *(d)* how many unemployed people appealed against his office's decision and *(e)* what was the result of the appeal.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question about the latest available information on the number and length of unemployment benefit disqualifications, and subsequent appeals under Section 20(1) of the Social Security Act in the Doncaster area. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Unfortunately information is not available in the form you have requested. We compile information on disqualifications by region; the Doncaster area is included in our Yorkshire and Humberside region and quarterly rather than monthly intervals. A record is not kept of the length of disqualification periods imposed under Section 20(1) of the Social Security Act 1975. We collect information on the number of appeals made in each region broken down by the numbers reviewed and allowed by adjudication officers and the numbers submitted to social security appeal tribunals.

During the quarter ending 30 June 1992 the number of people in Yorkshire and Humberside disqualified for receiving unemployment benefit under section 20(1) of the Social Security Act was as follows:—

Leaving employment voluntarily without just cause	4,002
Employment lost due to misconduct	1,746
Refusal of employment without good cause	14
Neglect to avail oneself of an offer of employment	26
Refusal to comply with written instructions	Nil

Although voluntary termination of approved training without just cause, misconduct whilst on approved training, refusal of an offer of approved training without good cause and neglect to avail oneself of approved training can also lead to disqualification under Section 20(1) a record is not kept of the number of disqualifications under these sub-heads.

In this same period the number of appeals processed in Yorkshire and Humberside was as follows:—

Total of all appeals received	563
Appeals reviewed and revised	121
Appeals submitted to Social Security Appeal Tribunal	405

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Forensic Science Laboratory, Newtownbreda

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what plans he has to rebuild the forensic science laboratory at Newtownbreda following the recent bomb damage; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has to re-locate the forensic science laboratory from Newtownbreda; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mates: The Northern Ireland forensic science laboratory is functioning from temporary premises. A full study is being carried out of the options for permanent accommodation for the laboratory.

Firearms

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many new firearms licences were issued in each of the past five years; how many applications were refused in each of these years; and how many were issued on appeal to the Secretary of State in each of those years.

Mr. Mates: Firearms licensing is the responsibility of the Chief Constable of the RUC. There is a statutory right of appeal from the Chief Constable's decision to the Secretary of State.

The table sets out the total numbers of firearm licences issued, refused and issued on appeal to the Secretary of State. These figures relate to all licences—new licences, variations of licence and renewal of licences—since it is not possible to provide figures on new licences only without incurring disproportionate cost.

Year	*Licences issued*	*Licences refused*	*Licences issued[2] on appeal*
1987	41,161	781	133
1988	33,815	821	122
1989	27,923	948	153
1990	39,810	773	112
1991	33,432	343	70
[1]1992	19,630	412	43

[1] up to 30 September 1992

[2] includes those resolved by Chief Constable following submission of appeal

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the date of the terrorist bomb at the forensic science laboratory at Newtownbreda; and how many owner/occupiers of homes have now received an interim compensation payment of £2,000 or more as a result of damage caused to their homes by this explosion.

Mr. Mates: The date was 23 September 1992. By 25 October, the Compensation Agency had authorised interim payments in all cases where it was possible to do so. The total number authorised in the case of owner/occupiers was 45, of which five amounted to £2,000 or more.

Students' Unions

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the amount of public funds allocated to the students' unions in Northern Ireland in each of the past five years; what proposals he has to abolish for students at the Queen's university of Belfast and the Ulster university, compulsory membership of the students' unions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Public funds are not allocated direct by Government to students' unions in Northern Ireland. However, the amounts which have been allocated by universities and colleges of education in Northern Ireland to students' unions were as follows:

	Universities £	*Colleges of Education* £
1987-88	917,612	62,293
1988-89	886,315	65,915
1989-90	1,088,505	69,350
1990-91	1,241,948	73,500
1991-92	1,350,000	77,900

Information on the amounts paid by further education colleges is not available.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education recently announced that he is bringing forward proposals on the voluntary membership of students' unions and consideration is now being given to the options available for the implementation of those proposals.

Births

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many babies were born at *(a)* Ards hospital, *(b)* Bangor hospital and *(c)* Ulster hospital in each of the past five years.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

	Live births					*Still births*				
Hospital	*1987*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1987*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Ards	1,069	987	950	936	959	5	6	5	4	4
Bangor	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ulster	2,100	2,059	1,905	1,988	2,035	21	11	7	5	12

Local Government Staff Commission

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the reasons for the variance from year to year in the budget of the Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland; and what action he will take to avoid substantial increases in costs to local government authorities.

Mr. Atkins: The variance in the budget of the Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland in recent years can be attributed to the development of its role in assisting district councils and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in a range of services connected with the recruitment, training and terms and conditions of employment of officers.

Approximately 14,000 people are employed by district councils and the NIHE. Under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, the staff commission has a statutory duty to, among other things, establish advisory appointment panels, draw up codes of procedure for recruitment and promotion; assist in the development of training of officers and monitor the fair employment practices of district councils.

The staff commission carried out an organisational review in 1991 which identified a need for the commission to restructure and to take on additional staff in order to be able efficiently and effectively to discharge its statutory functions. This it has done: it now offers a comprehensive package of services delivered by a team of professionally qualified officers which assists councils and the NIHE in the full range of personnel services.

The increased costs of the staff commission therefore relate primarily to the remuneration of new staff, although the commission did move to new premises this year and the rental and furnishing costs associated with this are reflected in the current year's budget.

Although the commission's budget has risen substantially over the past few years, I am entirely satisfied that it is necessary in order to ensure that it is in a position to help councils and the NIHE meet their statutory obligations and also to enable it to assist them to enhance and develop their reputation as good employers.

Lough Foyle

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what damage to the environment has been caused by the recent leak from the Du Pont synthetics factory into Lough Foyle; what will be the cost of the clean-up; how far the company will be charged for the cost of cleaning up the pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Scientists in the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland consider that the leak has not resulted in any significant damage to water quality or aquatic life in Lough Foyle. Samples of water and of shellfish taken after the spillage showed a slight increase in normal background levels but within a few days the levels had fallen and results were only slightly above or at the levels of detection.

No subsequent clean-up operations were necessary.

Belfast Institute

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many vice-principals there were in the three colleges merged to form the Belfast Institute; how many *(a)* vice-principals and *(b)* deputy directors were appointed to the new institute; how many of these were formerly vice-principals in the old structure; of the former vice-principals, how many have remained on vice-principal protected salaries; and what teaching duties these persons now perform.

Mr. Hanley: The management structure of the new institute provides for three deputy director posts—its nomenclature for vice-principal—of which two have been filled to date. One of these was a former vice-principal. Of the remaining four former vice-principals, three continue to be employed on protected salaries and none of these undertakes teaching duties. The other former vice-principal has retired.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to improve communication between the different sites of the Belfast Institute.

Mr. Hanley: This is a matter for the institute and the Belfast education and library board.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total cost of upgrading the Computerised Information Management of Further Education in Northern Ireland system, and the cost of *(a)* hardware and *(b)* software needed to cope with the needs of the Belfast Institute.

Mr. Hanley: A total of £201,326, comprising £85,523 for hardware and £115,803 for software, installation and training, was required to enhance the capability of the Computerised Information Management of Further Education in Northern Ireland System to meet the management information needs of the institute.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland where the central headquarters of the Belfast Institute is situated; what were the set-up costs; how many persons are employed in the central headquarters; what were the annual running costs.

Mr. Hanley: The central headquarters of the Belfast Institute is at Park house, 87-91 Great Victoria street, Belfast. The cost of adapting the premises was £101,000. Twenty-five institute staff are located there. The estimated annual running costs are £113,000.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many heads of department were appointed to the new Belfast Institute; and how many of the heads of department of the former colleges were not appointed and retain salaries; and what are the annual costs associated with such department status former heads of departments over the salaries payable for the posts they now occupy.

Mr. Hanley: All heads of department in the former colleges continue to be employed as heads of department in the new institute, with the exception of six who elected to retire on amalgamation.

Students

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the number of students from *(a)* Northern Ireland, *(b)* the Irish Republic, *(c)* Great Britain and *(d)* elsewhere, in each further education college in Northern Ireland, in (i) total and (ii) full-time equivalents; and what is the cost to the United Kingdom taxpayer in respect of these students.

Mr. Hanley: The latest enrolment details are for the 1991-92 academic year and are set out in the table; however, full-time equivalent numbers are not yet compiled for that year. It is not possible to calculate costs. For information on the latest overall student unit costs I would refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 19 October, *Official Report*, column *104*.

Further Education College	*Northern Ireland*	*Republic of Ireland*	*Great Britain*	*Elsewhere*
Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education	21,427	37	2	2
North West Institute of Further and Higher Education	5,166	734	4	5
Fermanagh College of Further Education	2,607	175	0	0
Limavady College of Further Education	1,431	0	0	5
Omagh College of Further Education	2,118	13	0	0
Antrim College of Further Education	1,901	0	0	0
Ballymena College	3,723	0	0	0
Newtownabbey College of Further Education	3,544	1	0	21
New Technical College, Ballymoney	1,378	5	0	0
Coleraine Technical College	1,860	4	0	0
Magherafelt College of Further Education	1,311	0	0	0
Larne College of Further Education	1,201	0	0	0
Northern Ireland Hotel and Catering College, Portrush	286	6	0	0
Lisburn College of Further Education	3,230	0	0	0
Down College of Further Education	2,952	1	0	8
Newcastle College of Further Education	1,078	0	0	32
Castlereagh College of Further Education	3,119	2	1	0
North Down and Ards College of Further Education	5,815	56	0	1
Lurgan College of Further Education	1,544	17	0	0
Portadown College of Further Education	2,993	3	0	0
Armagh College of Further Education	2,026	23	0	0
Banbridge College of Further Education	1,496	0	0	0
East Tyrone College of Further Education	2,422	3	0	0
Newry/Kilkeel College of Further Education	4,000	231	0	0
Total	78,628	1,311	7	75

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many students from *(a)* the Irish Republic, *(b)* Great Britain, *(c)* elsewhere in the EEC and *(d)* elsewhere, attend each of the universities in Northern Ireland; and what is the cost of students from (i) the Irish Republic and (ii) the rest of the EEC to the United Kingdom taxpayer.

Mr. Hanley: Final enrolment figures are not yet available for 1992-93. However, the latest available estimates for 1992-93 non-Northern Ireland domiciled enrolments at each of the universities in Northern Ireland are as follows:

	Queen's University Belfast	*University of Ulster*
(a) Irish Republic	637	1,775
(b) Great Britain	329	444
(c) Elsewhere in EC	50	214
(d) Elsewhere	491	133

Information on the cost of students is not readily available in the form requested and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. However, the estimated cost to public funds of tuition fees for eligible students from the EC in the 1992-93 academic year will be about £4·2 million.

Assistance to Business

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of firms sponsored by *(a)* the Local Enterprise Development Unit, and *(b)* the Industrial Development Board in Northern Ireland, in each of the last two years, the total sums paid to the firms in each category in those years, the total costs relating to (i) the LEDU and (ii) the IDB and the number of persons now employed in these two groups of firms.

Mr. Atkins: The available information is as follows:

	Number of firms which have received offers of assistance	*Total amounts paid to these firms (£ million)*
1990-91		
IDB	83	28·79
LEDU	3,011	9·6
1991-92		
IDB	59	6·98
LEDU	2,072	5·6

There are currently 25,116 employees in IDB client companies which accepted of assistance in the past two years. It is not possible to provide a similar LEDU figure without disproportionate cost, but there are currently 31,550 employees in all LEDU client companies.

Terrorism

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing the sums paid for *(a)* criminal injuries and *(b)* criminal damage, which arose as a result of terrorist activity in Northern Ireland in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available and the amount estimated for such payments in the appropriation orders for those years; how any shortfall in the estimates was funded; what other Northern Ireland programmes were reduced as a result of transfers to pay for such damage; and whether payments were sought and received from the contingency fund to cover higher than expected compensation payments.

Mr. Mates: The available information on the amounts paid for criminal injuries and criminal damage resulting from terrorist activity is as follows:

Financial year	*Criminal damage £000*	*Criminal injuries £000*
[1]1988-89	11,766	3,466
1989-90	18,168	6,489
1990-91	18,756	7,965
1991-92	29,765	10,878

[1] From 6 August 1988.

The amounts exclude costs incurred by applicants in making their claims. In formulating estimates, no distinction is made between terrorist and non-terrorist compensation.

Within the Northern Ireland block, the Secretary of State has flexibility to reallocate any savings in order to meeting increased requirements. In recent years the amount of such savings has generally been sufficient to cover new demands, including compensation costs, without the need for imposed reductions or access to the reserve. In 1991-92, exceptionally, it was necessary to introduce a brief moratorium on certain—mainly capital—expenditure as a result of substantial increased demands: these arose primarily in education and health rather than solely or mainly in relation to compensation costs.

Racial Discrimination

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has on the level of racial discrimination in Northern Ireland; what are the racial divisions he intends to recognise in legislation to outlaw discrimination on grounds of race; and by what physical definition he intends to divide the population into its racial groups.

Mr. Mates: The former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in March 1992 agreed in principle to the publication of a consultative document which would examine the scope for legislation on racial discrimination and consider what additional action ought to be taken by the Government to promote equity of treatment for ethnic groups. This should be published later this year. Consideration of the content of possible legislation will be informed by the outcome of the consultative process.

Road Accidents

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he has taken in each of the last five years to recover DSS payments made to support persons who were injured in road accidents from the compensation received by the injured party from insurance companies; and what sums were received by his Department in each of those years.

Mr. Hanley: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie. My noble Friend Lord Arran has asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. A. Wylie to Mr. William Ross, dated 26 October 1992:

Your recent Parliamentary Question on the recovery of compensation payments has been passed to me for reply as I am responsible for social security operational matters.

I should explain that prior to September 1990 compensation payments were reduced by the amounts of social security benefits received and this was a matter between the compensator and the benefit claimant. No records of such payments are therefore available.

In July 1989 a Compensation Recovery Scheme was introduced in both Great Britain and Northern Ireland following which a Compensation Recovery Unit was established. Under the Scheme compensation payments made on or after 3 September 1990, where an injury occurred on or after 1 January 1989, are reduced by an amount equal to the whole value of benefits received for the injury in question, but only up to the date of settlement or for a maximum period of five years.

I regret that information relating to amounts recovered in respect of persons injured solely as a result of road accidents is not available. The total amounts recovered in respect of all accidents since the introduction of the Scheme for each year are as follows:

	£
September 1990—March 1991	581,505
April 1991—March 1992	2,830,102
April 1992—September 1992	2,036,921

I hope this is helpful to you and I will be pleased to provide any further information you may require.

Environmental Protection Act 1990

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he now expects the standards of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to be applied in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: The Government intend to introduce in Northern Ireland provisions similar to those of the Act in due course.

Chlorobutadine

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish his Department's assessment of the dangers to health if chlorobutadine is inhaled or absorbed through the skin.

Mr. Hanley: Danger to health from chlorobutadine depend on concentration and exposure time. At the levels encountered in industry it is of low toxicity. Exposure to the high levels can result in skin, eye and lung irritation and generalised toxic systemic effects. Gross overexposure, as in the case of many chemicals, can lead to fatalities. It should therefore be handled with care and in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the chemical formula of the residues of the chlorobutadine spillage in the drainage system of the Du Pont site at Maydown, County Londonderry, and Lough Foyle; what effect such residues have on the environment; and whether they exceed environmental protection standards.

Mr. Atkins: The chemical formula of the compound is 2-chloro-1, 3-butadiene ($C_4\ H_5\ Cl$) (Chemical Abstract Service (CAS) No. 31900-55-7).

The levels detected in samples collected in the week beginning 12 October 1992 were at or below the analytical detection limit. At such low levels it is considered that there has been no adverse effect, given that chlorobutadine is not known to bioaccumulate.

The median tolerance limit (TLM96) for the compound is 234 milligrammes/litre—the test species is the blue gill sunfish. This is the concentration at which 50 per cent. of the test species survive. Levels detected in samples were of the order of 10,000 times lower than this value.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the warning equipment first denoted a fault in regard to the spillage of chlorobutadine at the Du Pont factory at Maydown, County Londonderry; what action was taken then; when the spillage was sealed off; when his Department was notified; and what steps he has taken to determine the extent of the damage and dangers to workers and persons resident near the plant and the environment.

Mr. Atkins: The Department has been advised by Du Pont that the warning equipment at the Maydown factory first signalled a fault in the early hours on Tuesday 6 October 1992. This signal was misinterpreted by an employee as having been caused by fumes from a vat containing chlorobutadine which had been cleaned out. At 7 am it was discovered that a pump had failed and was allowing chlorobutadine to escape to the waste stream to Lough Foyle. A second alarm failed to go off because it was blocked by the substance.

The processing was stopped at once but Du Pont has advised the Department that it did not at first appreciate the scale of the spillage. It was not until further analysis had been made of the routine samples from the waste stream and the recovery system had been checked that it was realised on Thursday afternoon, 8 October, that some two to three tonnes could have been spilled.

The Department of the Environment was first advised by Du Pont of the spillage before lunchtime on Friday 9 October.

Arrangements were made at once to take water and shellfish samples from Lough Foyle and the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) immediately issued a warning against consuming fish or shellfish from the Foyle system. Subsequent analysis of the samples showed an increase in normal background levels, but samples taken later showed that the levels had fallen, with most slightly above or at the level of detection. On 14 October, DHSS withdrew the advice against eating fish and shellfish.

The Department of the Environment considers that the spillage has not resulted in any significant damage to water quality or aquatic life in Lough Foyle. Arrangements will be made for long-term monitoring but it is unlikely that any persistent effects will be found, as chlorobutadine is not known to bioaccumulate. The health and safety inspectorate of the Department of Economic Development has been inspecting the chemical plant to avoid a recurrence of this type of incident.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the exposure limits to the vapours of chlorobutadine; and whether those limits were exceeded in the recent spillage of chlorobutadine at the Du Pont factory at Maydown, County Londonderry.

Mr. Atkins: Exposure limits to vapours of chlorobutadine have been assigned in United Kingdom and in the United States at 10 parts per million over an eight-hour working day/40-hour week. There is no evidence to suggest that these limits were exceeded.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the storage of chlorobutadine is covered by the regulations set out in Statutory Rules of Northern Ireland 1992 No. 401.

Mr. Atkins: No. These regulations—the Pollution of Waters by Dangerous Substances (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992—do not relate to storage. They implement the requirements of a series of European Community directives on pollution caused by dangerous substances discharged into the aquatic environment. Chlorobutadine is not one of these substances.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish his Department's assessment of the dangers to human health and to the environment of chlorobutadine and the adequacy of a long-term exposure limit of 10 parts per million for this substance.

Mr. Hanley: The Department believes that the normal use of chlorobutadine within industry does not pose a significant risk to human health or to the environment. In terms of occupational exposure, the internationally accepted standard concentration in the air of 10 parts per million, calculated on the basis of an eight-hour day over a working lifetime, is considered to be safe.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the inspection carried out by his Department of the spill of chlorobutadine at the Du Pont site at Maydown, County Londonderry.

Mr. Atkins: My Department's officials have inspected the neoprene plant at Du Pont and have had discussions with the company's staff. The company has reviewed its alarm systems and has instructed its staff, if there is any suspicion whatsoever of a spillage, to stop processing immediately and divert the waste stream to an emergency holding facility.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of whether the storage and transport of dangerous substances at the Du Pont site at Londonderry meet the standards set out in current regulations.

Mr. Atkins: The health and safety inspectorate of the Department of Economic Development inspects this plant regularly and is satisfied that the storage and transport of dangerous substances meet the requirements of the current health and safety legislation.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment his Department has made of whether the storage and transport of chlorobutadine on the Du Pont site at Maydown, County Londonderry, meets the standard set out in current regulations.

Mr. Atkins: The health and safety inspectorate of the Department of Economic Development inspects this plant regularly and is satisfied that the storage and transport of chlorobutadine meet the requirements of the current health and safety legislation.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what surveys he has carried out to discover how many persons or animals suffered or appeared to suffer discomfort as a result of the spillage of chlorobutadine at Du Pont's site at Maydown, County Londonderry, in early October.

Mr. Hanley: No specific public health surveys have been carried out. However, the Western health and social services board was alerted to the spillage and the incident was widely publicised throughout Northern Ireland. To date, there have been no reports of discomfort or illness to humans or animals as a result of the incident.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of whether the precautions taken against static discharges of dangerous substances at the Du Pont site at Maydown, County Londonderry are adequate.

Mr. Atkins: Du Pont has a consent from the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland DOE NI) under section 7 of the Water Act (NI) 1972 to discharge its trade effluent to Lough Foyle. All the effluent from the factory is discharged through a single outfall.

Prior to the recent incident, DOE (NI) had been reviewing the Du Pont discharge consent and was on the point of finalising new tighter consent conditions. Du Pont is an environmentally responsible company and has consistently complied with the consent conditions. Improvements over the years in the factory processes have made it possible to impose more stringent discharge standards.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of whether the storage and transport of dangerous substances at the Du Pont site at Maydown, County Londonderry, presently meet the standards set out in the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Atkins: The provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 have not yet been extended to Northern Ireland. The storage and transport of dangerous substances at the Du Pont site meet the standards applicable under current legislation.

DEFENCE

Empty Houses

12. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many empty houses are currently owned by his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 30 September 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, 9,388 MOD-owned dwellings were vacant of which 9,167 were service married quarters. The majority of the vacant properties were either undergoing or awaiting major modernisation work, or allocated to incoming service families. A total of 1,807 dwellings were in the process of being sold, and a number of others were being considered for disposal.

Armed Forces (Commitments)

13. **Mr. Ancram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what additional commitments have been required of United Kingdom armed forces as a result of responses to international problems by the United Nations, the European Community, the Western European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation over the past 12 months.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In the past 12 months, the armed services have been asked to contribute personnel to United Nations operations in the former Yugoslavia and Cambodia, and the joint NATO/WEU sanctions monitoring operation in the Adriatic. Military personnel are also filling headquarters and support posts in the EC monitor mission in the former Yugoslavia during the period of the United Kingdom's EC presidency. At the same time, the United Kingdom contribution to the United Nations force in Cyprus and the multinational force and observers in Sinai are reducing.

Yugoslavia

16. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's current contribution to peacekeeping in Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

17. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give an update on the level of the British commitment to the United Nations peacekeeping force in Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: A main party of about 1,800 personnel is expected to be operational in Bosnia by mid-November. In addition, 400 extra troops, mainly Royal Engineers, will be involved in order to assist in the initial stages of deployment. This brings the total number to be deployed initially to 2,400, including headquarters troops. We have also provided United Nations observers, a field ambulance and an RAF Hercules has been taking part in humanitarian airlift operations into Sarejevo.

Forces in Europe

18. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the strength of British forces currently stationed in Europe, broken down by countries.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The total strength of British forces currently stationed in Europe outside of the United Kingdom as at 1 July 1992 was 62,643. The distribution by country was:

	Number
Germany	53,488
Cyprus	4,722
Gibraltar	1,045
Belgium	692
Italy	669
Holland	611
Denmark	366
Norway	344
Former Yugoslavia	305
France	206
Portugal	105
Turkey	59
Switzerland	31

Trident

19. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the progress of the Trident programme.

Mr. Aitken: The Trident programme continues to progress to time and within budget towards its in-service date of the mid-1990s. The first Trident submarine, Vanguard, left Barrow-in-Furness for her contractor's sea trials on 23 October.

30. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest estimate of the cost of Trident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The currently estimated cost of the Trident procurement programme is £10,518 million at 1991-92 prices and £1 = $1·59.

Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe

20. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in arrangements for NATO forces to undertake a peacekeeping role for CSCE.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: NATO is considering ways in which it might support CSCE peacekeeping operations if called upon to do so. Allies have, in addition, provided valuable support to the United Nations deployment in the Balkans as well as deploying forces for sanctions monitoring in the Adriatic.

Turkey

21. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on British forces deployment in eastern Turkey.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom contribution to the coalition deterrent force in south-east Turkey comprises eight Jaguar and two tanker aircraft plus ground support. These forces have played and continue to play a major part in helping to ensure the safety of Iraqi citizens in northern Iraq. The continuing presence of British coalition forces demonstrates our determination that renewed repression will not be tolerated.

Eastern Europe

22. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to meet other NATO Defence Ministers to discuss NATO defence policy in relation to eastern Europe.

Mr. Rifkind: I will next see my alliance colleagues at meetings of European Ministers and the defence planning committee in Brussels from 9 to 11 December 1992. I expect our discussions to cover a range of current alliance business.

Zimbabwe

23. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his policy regarding United Kingdom military assistance for Zimbabwe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom provides a range of military training for the Zimbabwean armed forces, including places on defence-related courses in the

United Kingdom and the provision, since independence in 1980, of a resident British military advisory and training team (BMATT). The size and nature of our military assistance programme are kept under regular review.

Defence Expenditure

24. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the level of 1991-92 defence expenditure spent *(a)* in the south-east region and *(b)* in the Yorkshire and Humberside region.

Mr. Aitken: Information on Ministry of Defence expenditure by standard United Kingdom region is only available for equipment expenditure. In 1990-91, the latest year available, we estimate that the Ministry of Defence spent £2,900 million in the south-east region and £150 million in the Yorkshire and Humberside region.

Low Flying

25. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on changes in the occurrence of low-flying training since 1 January 1990; what changes he proposes in the near future; and what changes he proposes in the arrangements to inform the public and deal with complaints.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We expect to cut the amount of jet low flying in the United Kingdom by about 30 per cent. by the end of 1994. The appointment earlier this year of regional community relations officers for the Lake district and the Borders has provided the public in those areas with a focal point for their inquiries on low-flying matters. The management of the United Kingdom low-flying system is kept under constant review and changes are made when necessary.

Nuclear Deterrence

26. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on nuclear deterrence.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government intend that our independent nuclear deterrent should continue to provide the ultimate guarantee of our security in the decades ahead, as it has for decades past.

Korean War

27. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the result of his inquiries into the position of British soldiers captured during the Korean war, who may have been held in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No evidence has been received that supports allegations that British soldiers captured during the Korean war were held in the Soviet Union.

Iraq

28. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made by the United Nations peacekeeping forces, with the involvement of United Kingdom troops, towards implementing the United Nations resolution relating to the disposal of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Significant progress has been made with substantial United Kingdom involvement. Despite Iraqi obstruction much vital evidence has been uncovered, but more remains to be found. The process of destroying weapons and facilities is well advanced, with the majority of the proscribed items declared or discovered to date destroyed by the Iraqis under United Nations supervision.

Naval Support Command

29. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence where the naval support command is to be situated.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Although some work remains to be completed, I hope to be able to announce the preferred location in the Bath area for the naval support command by around the end of the year.

Allivane Ltd.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all contracts signed between his Department's logistics executive and Allivane Ltd. in the export of military equipment since 1987.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has no record of any contracts between the Army's logistic executive and Allivane Ltd. for the export of military equipment since 1987. One contract was signed in 1988 for the short-term storage in MOD facilities of ammunition subsequently exported by the company.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* all addresses of Allivan Ltd. and Allivane International Group as registered by his Department as authorised exporters of military equipment during the period 1985 to 1989.

Mr. Aitken: I will write to the hon. Member.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* the letter of reply to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent of 23 July in response to the written question on hazardous waste control policies of his Department.

Mr. Aitken: The text of my reply of 23 July was as follows:

> I undertook to write to you in response to your recent Parliamentary question concerning our procedures for the minimisation and disposal of toxic and radioactive wastes.
>
> I should say at the outset that it is our overall policy to minimise or eliminate the use of toxic substances whenever this is practicable. Because discharges of such materials can occur at every stage of their manufacture, use and disposal the only method of reducing exposure to them is to restrict their use to essential applications or to phase them out altogether. Accordingly, special controls exist over the use of cadium, lead, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's), asbestos, arsenic, triorganotins and pesticides. The controls reflect the requirements of domestic legislation or EC Directives or both. They are outlined in the Department's Environment Manual together with information on minimisation of use and phasing out. Additional guidance on the use of toxic materials and disposal routes is contained in regulations issued by the Directorate of Defence Health and Safety and, also Health and Safety Executive Guidance notes. Waste residues containing such substances are defined as special waste and are subject to disposal procedures regulated by the Control of

Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1988. It is our policy that special waste will only be disposed of at a properly licensed disposal facility and that the transport of special waste will follow strictly the prenotification, consignment note and recording requirements stipulated by the Regulations.

The Department's policy is to dispose of radioactive waste through nationally available disposal routes wherever possible, in conjunction with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution in England and Wales and Her Majesty's Industrial Pollution Inspectorate for Scotland. Very low and low level waste are transported in purpose built containers and by approved methods for disposal at an authorised site which, for low level waste, is the BNFL site at Drigg in Cumbria. There is at present no national disposal route for intermediate level wastes and MOD, like the civil nuclear operators in the United Kingdom, has to store such waste under secure controlled conditions at the site of origin, pending the availability of the deep depository planned by UK Nirex Ltd. to be in operation in 2005. The increasing costs associated with the available disposal routes is an additional incentive to minimise the amount of waste generated by our activities over and above the obvious health and safety and environmental considerations. Accordingly, radioactive waste minimisation is, and will remain, a key element in our operating procedures.

I hope that this is helpful.

Nuclear Defence Expenditure

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* the letter of reply to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent of 22 July in response to his written question on nuclear defence expenditure.

Mr. Aitken: The text of my reply of 22 July was as follows:

I said I would write in answer to your question on 16 July about nuclear expenditure and 13 Figure of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1992 (CM 1981).

The figure shows in some detail how the Defence Budget is distributed to Top Level Budget Holders under the New Management Strategy. Expenditure on nuclear warhead testing and nuclear warhead design and development is included in the Chief of Defence Procurement's top level budget. A small amount is also included in the Chief Executive of the Defence Research Agency's top level budget.

British Aerospace

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to meet the chairman of British Aerospace to discuss defence procurement.

Mr. Aitken: My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to do so.

Recruitment

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans the forces have to change their recruiting techniques both for officers and for other ranks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no plans to change recruiting techniques. Although the reduction in the size of the armed forces has resulted in lower recruiting targets, there will be a continued need for new recruits during the drawdown period in order to preserve an appropriate balance of age and skills.

RAF Ascension Island

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 18 June, *Official Report*, column *666*, if the detailed investment appraisal of the continuing charter of Maersk Ascension for bulk fuel storage for the RAF at Ascension island has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The investment appraisal on bulk fuel storage for the RAF at Ascension island has been completed. My Department is now considering whether to go ahead with the project.

Plymouth Urban Development Corporation

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in determining the amount of *(a)* funds and *(b)* surplus land to be transferred from his Department's vote to the proposed Plymouth urban development corporation; what are the mechanics of the transfer; what progress has been made in determining the future of the Royal William Yard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The MOD land identified for transfer to the proposed Plymouth urban development corporation (UDC) comprises Royal William Yard—and adjacent land at Western Kings—RAF Mountbatten and an area of Mount Wise. The precise nature of the intended conveyance remains to be resolved. In addition it is proposed that £20 million from MOD funds is made available to the proposed UDC through normal financial channels over a four-year period. The future of all the areas transferred will be a matter for the proposed UDC to determine.

Nuclear Weapon Transporters

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 2 June, *Official Report*, column *530*, what further progress has been made in the provision of armoured nuclear weapon transporters and containers to Russia.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) earlier today.

Fishery Protection

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Royal Navy has been able to meet the requirement for fishery protection in 1992-93; which ships are currently assigned to the coastal division of the fishery protection squadron; and what plans he has to fulfil the fishery protection requirement in 1993-94.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Royal Navy Fishery Protection Squadron is on target to meet the level of patrolling for 1992-93 agreed with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency. HM ships Blackwater, Brinton, Sheraton, Berkeley and Brecon are currently assigned to the coastal division of the Fishery Protection Squadron. Plans for fishery protection in 1993-94 are still under consideration.

"Options for Change"

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many battalions are now deployed in, or committed to, Northern Ireland; and how that figure varies from the assumptions underlying "Options for Change".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are currently 12 battalion-sized units deployed in Northern Ireland. Planning under "Options for Change" assumed that no less than 10 such units would be deployed but that the actual number would be revised from time to time in the light of the security situation.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the effect of the deployment of British forces with the United Nations in Bosnia on his Department's projections for military requirements under "Options for Change".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The requirement to allow sufficient leeway to deal with the unexpected and to meet peacetime commitments without unacceptable strain was one of the major considerations underpinning our work on "Options for Change". The deployment of forces to Bosnia has had no impact upon our plans for the restructuring of the Army.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the projected interval between emergency tour deployments for infantry soldiers if current and planned deployments in Northern Ireland, Bosnia and elsewhere continue as well as amalgamations of battalions and cuts in infantry strength under "Options for Change"; and if he will make a statement on the attainability of his Department's target of 24-month intervals between emergency tours for infantry soldiers under present circumstances.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The effect of current and planned deployments to Northern Ireland, Bosnia and elsewhere will be to reduce the projected interval between emergency tours for infantry battalions, although the impact will vary from case to case. The projected intervals for the 17 battalions due to undertake emergency tours during 1993-94 will range from 17 to 82 months.

It was always recognised that the non-availability of units undergoing amalgamation or redeployment would also affect tour intervals in the short term but once the restructuring process is complete, the target tour interval of 24 months will be achieved.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many infantry soldiers currently serving on emergency tours have returned to such duties after an interval of less than 24 months; what is the shortest interval for an individual soldier; and how many of those soldiers are involved in the amalgamation of battalions under "Options for Change".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Of the infantry battalions currently serving on emergency tours none has returned to such duties after an interval of less than 24 months—this excludes deployment to the Gulf. Tour intervals for individual soldiers would usually reflect those of their parent unit unless they have been posted between battalions in the interim.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the number of applications for redundancy by officers, non-commissioned officers and private soldiers in each infantry battalion which is commencing the process of amalgamation under "Options for Change"; and how those figures relate to the reduction in personnel required under his plans.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The closing date for applications for the second phase of the Army redundancy programme is 30 October. I will write to the hon. Member once this period is over and my Department has had an opportunity to assess the response.

Departmental Budget

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the impact on his Department's budget of the reduction in the value of sterling in relation to other European currencies and the dollar.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As explained in Supply Estimates 1992-93 (HC273-I), about 10 per cent. of the defence budget is to be spent in US dollars and deutschmarks during 1992-93. As in previous years, the MOD has bought forward the bulk of its estimated requirements for these two currencies through the Bank of England in accordance with government accounting practice. Recent changes in the pound's value should not therefore lead to significant additional expenditure in 1992-93. The requirement for other European currencies is less than 1 per cent. of the total defence budget and any effect of the change in the pound's value is likely to be small.

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the feasibility of continuing with plans to produce the European fighter aircraft without participation by Germany, Italy or Spain.

Mr. Aitken: The Government are making every effort to ensure the continuation of EFA on a collaborative basis. If these are unsuccessful, the Government believe that it would be technically feasible for the United Kingdom to continue the project alone but we would need to consider the cost and other implications.

Indonesia

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British armed services personnel are currently stationed in Indonesia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: At 1 September 1992 there were three. One Navy officer and one Army officer as military attaches and one Army soldier as support staff.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what military training Her Majesty's Government currently supply to the Government of Indonesia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Her Majesty's Government provide training for members of the Indonesian armed forces covering a wide range of military topics, including officer development courses such as staff college, and technical instruction. Details of training provided are confidential between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Indonesia.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the provisions of the memorandum of understanding signed in September by the United Kingdom and Indonesian Governments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The two Governments signed a supplement to the existing defence equipment memorandum of understanding. This will cover training arrangements in connection with a possible further sale of Hawk aircraft. The supplement will only become valid if a contract for the sale is concluded.

Computer Projects

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a table setting out for the period since 9 April *(a)* each tender issued by his Department for projects requiring the supply of (i) computer hardware and (ii) computer software, *(b)* a description of the services required, *(c)* the number of companies which were invited to tender, *(d)* the number of companies which submitted a bid without prior invitation by his Department, *(e)* which company was awarded the contract, *(f)* the value of each contract and *(g)* the length of period over which the contract will run.

Mr. Aitken: The information the hon. Member requests is not held centrally and could not be provided without incurring disproportionate cost.

Activity Bulletins

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to place regular bulletins on developments and activities in *(a)* Bosnia and *(b)* the Gulf, which affect the troops deployed there, in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I am considering how best to keep the House informed of developments and activities in Bosnia and the Gulf which affect British forces. I will inform the hon. Member of my conclusions.

Cyprus

Dr. Liam Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he intends to reduce the United Kingdom contingent in the United Nations force in Cyprus.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Following consultation with other troop contributors and the United Nations secretariat the Government have decided to reduce the United Kingdom's contribution to the United Nations force in Cyprus by 25 per cent. by the end of this year. This will mean a reduction of about 200 personnel and reflects the improved security situation in Cyprus. The other major troop contributors are also reducing their contributions to UNFICYP and the United Kingdom will continue to make the single largest contribution.

HEALTH

Glaucoma

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will commission research into the variation in the levels of blindness caused by glaucoma in people of different ethnic origins.

Dr. Mawhinney: American research studies have found that Afro-Caribbeans have a higher risk of contracting glaucoma than Caucasians and that the condition occurs earlier. The results of a research study carried out in this country are expected to be published early next year.

Unemployment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if her Department will conduct a survey of the health effects on communities where significant unemployment is created by the closure of the main local industrial employer.

Dr. Mawhinney: The effect of unemployment on health has already been well documented.

Prescription Charges

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing the change in prescription charges in each year since 1976 in cash and real terms.

Dr. Mawhinney: The requested information is in the table. Only one in five prescribed items dispensed in the national health service now attracts a charge at the point of dispensing, compared with one in three in 1979. In 1991, over 100 million more items were dispensed free of charge than in 1979. Although the prescription charge has increased, it continues to represent less than half the average total cost of a prescribed item to the national health service.

Prescription charge increases 1 April 1976 to 1 April 1992, in cash and real terms

Date	Prescription charges £	Cash change £	Per cent. change/ cash	Per cent. change real terms
1 April 1976	0·20	—	—	—
1 April 1977	0·20	—	—	−12·0
1 April 1978	0·20	—	—	−9·8
16 July 1979	0·45	0·25	125·0	92·8
1 April 1980	0·70	0·25	55·6	31·5
1 December 1980	1·00	0·30	42·9	42·9
1 April 1981	1.00	—	—	−8·8
1 April 1982	1·30	0·30	30·0	21·4
1 April 1983	1·40	0·10	7·7	2·9
1 April 1984	1·60	0·20	14·3	8·8
1 April 1985	2·00	0·40	25·0	18·5
1 April 1986	2·20	0·20	10·0	6·5
1 April 1987	2·40	0·20	9·1	3·5
1 April 1988	2·60	0·20	8·3	1·0
1 April 1989	2·80	0·20	7·7	1·0
1 April 1990	3·05	0·25	8·9	0·7
1 April 1991	3·40	0·35	11·5	4·2
1 April 1992	3·75	0·35	10.3	5·5

Social Work

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the statutory responsibilities of the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work for training workers to meet the social rehabilitation needs of visually impaired people; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Under section 10 of the Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudications Act 1983 the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work has a responsibility to promote training in relevant social work. This responsibility includes promoting training in social work with visually impaired people.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in discussions with the

Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work to consider how deficiencies in training of workers with visually impaired people in the social care field can be improved.

Mr. Yeo: Officials will be meeting shortly with the training agencies in the visual impairment field together with representatives of the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work and the Local Government Management Board in order to discuss how qualifications for workers with visually impaired people can be integrated into the emerging continuum of qualifications at vocational, professional and post-qualifying levels.

NHS Staff

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* consultants, *(b)* other medical staff, *(c)* nurses, *(d)* ancillary staff, *(e)* administrators and *(f)* accountants were employed within the South East Thames region in each of the years from 1987 to 1992; and how many are estimated to be employed in the region in 1993, 1994 and 1995.

Dr. Mawhinney: The manpower statistics available centrally are set out in the table.

Responsibility for manpower planning rests with the regional health authority. The hon. Member may like to write to Mr. Peter Barker, chairman of South East Thames regional health authority, for future manpower plans.

Manpower Statistics
South East Thames Region
30 September 1987-91

	1987 WTE	*1988 WTE*	*1989 WTE*	*1990 WTE*	*1991 WTE*
Consultants	1,048·0	1,068·9	1,097·2	1,134·2	[1]1,166·0
Other Medical Staff	1,909·9	1,967·1	1,984·4	2,043·8	[1]2,031·5
Nursing and Midwifery	29,650	29,280	29,350	29,110	28,280
Ancillary	9,570	8,720	8,310	8,020	6,470
Administration and Clerical	9,210	9,590	9,760	10,030	9,560

[1] Provisional figures

Notes:

1. Medical figures include permanent paid and honorary staff only.
2. Figures for nursing and midwifery exclude agency staff.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to propose a European ban on tobacco advertising at the conference of European Community Health Ministers on 13 November.

Dr. Mawhinney: No.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will initiate a study into the relationship between the numbers waiting on the consultants' waiting list for longer than the maximum time specified under the patients charter and the numbers awaiting their initial out-patient appointment and length of that wait.

Dr. Mawhinney: No. The patients charter requires health authorities to set and publish local guarantees for the length of time people wait for out-patient appointments. The NHS is therefore expected to deliver a balanced programme that progressively reduces the whole waiting experience.

Surgery Costs

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information is collected from, held and disseminated to health authorities as *(a)* purchasers and *(b)* providers on comparative prices, both on base load and marginal costing principles, for operations in general surgery, and orthopaedic surgery.

Dr. Mawhinney: Extra contractual referral (ECR) tariffs are collected by regional health authorities (RHAs) from providers in their regions. RHAs are responsible for publishing and distributing these tariffs to purchasers within their region—including GP fund holders who request them—and to other RHAs, for distribution to their purchasers.

Distribution of these tariffs to providers is not specifically required but providers may arrange with their local RHA for access.

During the financial year a provider may agree to provide unplanned excess capacity at marginal cost. There is no national vehicle for providers to advertise marginal rates due to this being an in-year agreement. Typically this agreement would be with the local main purchaser or local GP fund holder.

Community Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what criteria will be used to determine the allocation of community care funding to local authorities which have not reached agreement by 31 December with health authorities concerning discharge arrangements;

(2) what arrangements have been made to protect the well-being of individuals who will be affected by the withholding of funding for community care when local authorities have not reached agreement by 31 December with health authorities concerning discharge arrangements;

(3) what plans she has to exclude from the receipt of community care funding any local authority which does not by 31 December have agreements with health authorities concerning discharge arrangements;

(4) what is her current estimate of the number of local authorities unlikely to have concluded the required discharge arrangements with health authorities by 31 December.

Mr. Yeo: All authorities should be able to reach the required agreements. Consideration will be given in due course to the action which may be necessary if any authorities fail to do so by 31 December 1992.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimates the Government have prepared of the cost of housing provision necessary to meet the requirements of the Government's community care plans; and whether she will publish these in a form which identifies the scale and timetable of such provision for the respective groups of people in need.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply. The new community care arrangements will be fully implemented from April 1993. Their impact on housing demand is expected to be gradual and progressive. It will be some time before a full picture of new housing requirements emerges.

Computer Projects

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table setting out for the period since 9 April *(a)* each tender issued by her Department for projects requiring the supply of (i) computer hardware and (ii) computer software, *(b)* a description of the services required, *(c)* the number of companies which were invited to tender, *(d)* the number of companies which submitted a bid without prior invitation by her Department, *(e)* which company was awarded the contract, *(f)* the value of each contract and *(g)* the length of period over which the contract will run.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested, from 9 April 1992, is shown in the table:

Number of tenders issued for:			*Description of the services required*	*Number of companies invited to tender*	*Number of companies submitting bid without prior invitation*	*Which company was awarded the contract*	*The value of the contract*	*The length of the contract*
Computer hardware	*Computer software*	*Telecommunications equipment*						
None	None	One (1)	A variety of telephone handsets and monitoring units	Three (3)	None	ASCOM Ltd.	£30,000	Not applicable. The contract was for the "one off" supply of goods
—	—	One (1)	The supply, installation, and maintenance of local area network equipment to Leeds based offices	Fourteen (14)	None	ACT Cablestream Ltd.	£500,000 plus £50,000 pa maintenance for 5 years	5 years
One (1)	One (1)	—	A broad range of IT products including hardware and software	An initial 88 responses to the original OJEC advertisement, but only 13 subsequent proposals	None	Not yet awarded	Not yet decided	2-3 years

Sorrento Maternity Hospital

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to reply to the letter of 3 June and the reminder of 17 August from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak regarding the proposed closure of the Sorrento maternity hospital.

Mr. Sackville: I replied to the hon. Member on 26 October. I regret that, due to an oversight, a reply was not sent sooner.

Employment of Children

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research her Department has commissioned into the levels of illegal employment of school age children; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: None.

Radionuclides

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for what reasons the Radioactive Substances (Hospitals) Exemption Order 1990 prescribes a higher permitted level of megabecquerels per month for radionuclides, excepting Technetium-99, in human excreta than for media other than human excreta.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

There are two different categories of procedure involved covering, namely:

(a) administration of radiopharmaceuticals to patients who then return to the exempted hospital, after treatment at another hospital, and who therefore pass a proportion of the administered activity to drain at the exempted hospital; and

(b) the preparation of radiopharmaceuticals, and other "in vitro" laboratory uses of radioactive materials on the exempted hospital premises.

From a radioactive waste management point of view, the significance of *(b)* can be greater than that of *(a)*, per unit of activity discharged to drain. This is because *(b)* involves the manipulation of radioactive materials, and because some of the radionuclides used in a pathology laboratory, especially iodine-125, have both a relatively long half-live and a relatively high radiotoxicity compared with most diagnostic radiopharmaceuticals administered to patients.

The order thus aims to ensure that there is adequate provision for patients who return to an exempted hospital, but that any hospital which undertakes ra[illegible]therapy work or diagnostic scanning on its premises, or which has substantial pathology laboratories, will not be exempt and will require an authorisation under S.6 of RSA60.

Regional Health Authority Chairmen

Mrs. Browning: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will announce the appointment of regional health authority chairmen.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[pursuant to her reply, 9 July 1992, c. 335]:* I have today invited Sir William Stavely GCB to become chairman of North East Thames regional health authority for a term of office beginning on 1 January 1993 and ending on 31 July 1995. He will replace Mr. Tim Chessells who has agreed to become chairman of the London implementation group.

Sir William is currently chairman of the Royal London NHS Trust. I have invited Mr. Michael Haines to take over the chairmanship of the trust.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Family Credit

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the current level of expenditure on family credit on families whose main earner is in an occupation covered by one of the wages councils, by *(a)* all families and *(b)* couples where the main earner is (i) male, (ii) female and (iii) single person families.

Mr. Burt: Information is not available in the form requested. An analysis of family credit recipients, by the occupation of the main earner, is contained in table A1.05 of "Social Security Statistics 1991", a copy of which is in the Library.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Mr. Scott: The following papers have been published in the last 12 months by the chief executives of the Department of Social Security's executive agencies. In addition, the Department publishes a wide range of explanatory leaflets on matters such as individual social security benefits.

Benefits Agency
- Social Fund Maternity and Funeral Payments Guide
- Social Fund Administration Guide
- Social Fund Officer's Guide, Volume 1
- Social Fund Officer's Guide, Volume 2
- Cold Weather Payments Handbook
- Addendum to Social Fund Officer's Guide
- Social Fund Officer's Guide, Amendment 1
- Mortgage Interest Direct Handbook
- Income Support for 16-17 Year Olds Handbook
- Social Fund Maternity and Funeral Payments Guide, Amendment 1
- Social Fund Administration Guide, Amendment 1
- Annual Report of the Pensions Ombudsman 1991-92
- Homeless Customers Hostels Residential Care and Nursing Homes
- Income Support Uprating Handbook
- Social Fund Officer's Guide, Amendment 2
- The Customer Charter
- The Benefits Agency National Customer Survey
- Benefits Agency Service Delivery—A Discussion Paper—One Stop
- Benefits Agency Business Plan 1992-93
- The Benefits Agency—A Short Guide for Members of Parliament
- Introduction to DLA (Disability Living Allowance)
- Introduction to DWA (Disability Working Allowance)

Resettlement Agency
- Business Plan 1992-93
- Annual Report and Accounts 1991-92
- Standards of Service under the Citizens Charter (in poster form)

Contributions Agency
- Contributions Agency Business Plan 1992-93

Information Technology Service Agency (ITSA)
- The ITSA 1990-91 Annual Report and Accounts (October 1991)
- The ITSA 1992-93 Annual Business Plan (June 1992)
- The ITSA 1991-92 Annual Report and Accounts (July 1992)

"Children Come First"

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the organisations and individuals who responded to the Government's White Paper, "Children Come First."

Mr. Burt: Listed are the organisations that responded to the White Paper "Children Come First". In addition, comments were received from some 100 private individuals and 85 members.

Association of County Court and District Registrars
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Barnado's
Basidon Council
Building Societies Association
British Bankers Association
British Agencies/Adoption and Fostering
Bradford University (Department of Applied Social Studies)
Bristol University
British Computer Society
Campaign for Justice in Divorce
Campaign for Work
Catholic Family Care Society (Northern Ireland)
Chelmsford Women's Aid
Chief Adjudication Officer: Social Security Legislation
Child Poverty Action Group
Children's Legal Centre
Children and Lone Parent Centre (Plymouth)
Church Action on Poverty
Citizens Advice Bureau (Scotland)
Confederation of British Industry (Northern Ireland)
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Council of Her Majesty's Circuit Judges
County Councils Women's Forum
Department of Economic Development (Northern Ireland)
Disability Alliance
Dudley Law Centre
Gingerbread
Gingerbread (Scotland)
Families Need Fathers
Family Charter Campaign
Family Law Bar Association
Family Welfare Association
Forum of Private Businesses
Hammersmith Unemployed Workers Group
Hillingdon Women's Centre
Justices' Clerks' Society
Lambeth TUC Unemployed Branch
Law Society
Legal Action Group
London Boroughs Association
Magistrates Association
Mencap
Moorpark Lone Parent Group
National Association of Citizens Advice Bureau
National Association of Welsh Medium Nursery Schools & Playgroups
National Childrens Home
National Commission of Women in Great Britain
National Council for One Parent Families
National Council of Women of Great Britain
Newcastle University
North East Money Advice Centre
Northern Ireland Resident Magistrates Association
Northern Ireland Family Law Association
North Yorkshire Welfare Benefits Unit
Norwich City Council
One Plus One Parent Families Strathclyde
One Parent Families York
Oxfordshire Welfare Rights
Pay Day
Payroll Alliance
Portsmouth Women's Aid Support Group
Principal Registry of Family Division
Save the Children
Scottish Council for Single Parents
Scottish Family Conciliation Service
Scottish Law Commission

Scottish Women's Aid
Sheffield University
Social Security Advisory Committee
Social Security Medical Appeal Tribunals N.I.
Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen Family Association
Solicitors Family Law Association
Spastics Society
Stepfamily
The Childrens' Society
Thamesdown Law Centre
TUC
University College London
Wages For Housework Campaign
Wandsworth Social Services Department/Welfare Rights Unit
Welsh Womens Aid Trust
West Yorkshire Probation Service
Womens National Commission
Womens Aid Federation
Wythenshawe Law Centre

Benefit Statistics

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of households receiving the following benefits *(a)* housing benefit, *(b)* community charge benefit, *(c)* family credit and *(d)* income support; and if he will list the figures separately for those households in which the head of household is (i) in full-time employment and (ii) in part-time employment.

Mr. Burt: The information is not available in the precise form requested. The available information as at May 1991 is as follows:

Number of households with earnings

	Thousands
Housing Benefit	330
Community Charge Benefit	641
Income Support cases with earnings of claimant	117
Income Support cases with earnings of partner	48
Family Credit (as at July 1992)	430

Notes:

1. Head of the household may not necessarily be the claimant.
2. In income support cases, neither the claimant nor the partner could have been in employment for more than 24 hours a week.
3. There will be considerable overlap between the benefits, e.g. the figures given for income support may also include housing benefit/community charge benefit.
4. Information on earnings is collected separately for a claimant or partner in income support cases, although there may be some overlap.
5. All figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average amount of housing benefit paid each week to *(a)* tenants receiving income support and *(b)* other housing benefit recipients not receiving income support, who are respectively (i) local authority tenants, (ii) housing association tenants and (iii) other tenants in Great Britain and in each region of Great Britain.

Mr. Burt: The latest information, for May 1991, is set out in the table.

Region	*Housing benefit with income support*		*Housing benefit without income support*	
	Weekly average benefit for local authority tenants £	*Weekly average benefit for private tenants* £	*Weekly average benefit for local authority tenants* £	*Weekly average benefit for private tenants* £
South East	29·67	40·18	20·66	26·72
London	35·87	47·62	28·83	31·46
North	22·74	30·18	14·94	20·46
Wales	26·14	32·31	17·86	24·21
Scotland	23·05	34·51	16·09	21·95
Yorkshire and Humberside	21·48	30·76	13·86	23·44
East Midlands	23·04	31·29	14·98	21·17
East Anglia	25·65	37·46	17·82	26·01
South West	26·91	37·56	19·19	29·24
West Midlands	25·23	31·69	18·10	21·22
North West	24·28	33·48	16·70	21·05
Great Britain	26·16	37·20	18·37	24·98

Note:

The average weekly amount of housing benefit for housing association tenants is included in the amounts for private tenants.

Disability

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to provide more reliable information about *(a)* the level of disposable household income of those currently receiving invalidity benefit, *(b)* the level of disposable income of those claiming, but not receiving, invalidity benefit and *(c)* the level of disposable income of those from whom entitlement to invalidity benefit has been withdrawn.

Mr. Scott: Information on the income of invalidity benefit claimants is not available as this information is not required to make a decision on the claim. Information on the income of invalidity benefit recipients—but not the other two groups identified by the hon. Member—is available from surveys such as the family expenditure survey (FES). The family resources survey, announced in July 1992, will have a larger sample size than the FES and will provide better information in due course.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his practice to provide a direct ministerial answer to letters sent to him by hon. Members relating to the ineffective working of the disability living allowance scheme, and not to transfer such letters to the Benefits Agency.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to the reply by the then Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 6 June 1990, at column *615*.

Social Fund

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will issue new guidelines on the granting of social fund payments to appointed persons in residential homes to cover the funeral costs of deceased residents, to include recommended time scales for dealing with applications and appeals.

Mr. Scott: Everyone taking responsibility for funeral costs is entitled to a funeral payment from the social fund if they satisfy the eligibility criteria. There is no need for special provision for people in residential homes.

The average clearance time for a funeral payment is just over eight days; but due to the complexity of some cases the Benefits Agency have no recommended time scales for dealing with applications or appeals.

Contributions Records

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what sum of money is held at the Newcastle records office unattributed to the contributions record of the specific contributor.

Miss Widdecombe: The amount of moneys held at Newcastle but unattributed to specific contributors is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive of the Contributions Agency. She will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Miss A. Chant to Sir David Mitchell, dated 27 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Contributions Agency I am responsible for answering questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State about monies held at Newcastle but unattributed to specific contributors.

This Agency deals with nearly 59 million accounts and recording contributions is almost always done automatically. But we rely on employers and individuals to provide us with the correct identity details. If for some reason we are unable to allocate the individuals' contributions they are held while we make further inquiries. In some cases individual contributors query their National Insurance position and we enlist their help to allocate contributions.

The records we hold of these unallocated contributions constantly shift day by day as items are traced and allocated and further items are added.

I am sorry that the precise information you require is not available. It could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

I hope that the information I have provided is helpful but because it may not answer all your concerns I will be writing to you shortly to see if I can be of any further assistance.

Contributors Charter and Employers Charter

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consultations were undertaken with service users in the course of the production of the contributors charter and the employers charter.

Miss Widdecombe: The consultations undertaken with service users in the course of production of the contributor's and employer's charters is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive of the Contributions Agency. She will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Miss A. Chant to Ms. Marjorie Mowlam, dated 27 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Contributions Agency I am responsible for answering questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State about the consultations that were undertaken with service users in the course of production of our Charters.

The Contributions Agency produced a working draft of the Charters which was circulated to the 36 customer organisations with whom we had contact. They were given 2 months to comment and we asked them what they thought about both its style and content. From the replies we received we made several significant amendments and incorporated those in the first versions of the Charters.

The 36 organisations represented accountants, payroll bureaux, large and small employers and the self-employed. The interests of individual contributors were represented by the National Association of Citizen's Advice Bureaux, the TUC and the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions.

Benefits Agency

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) to what extent Government forecasts of future demands on the staff of the Benefits Agency were wrong in relation to the disability living allowance; where and by whom the forecasts were made; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many hours of overtime have been worked by staff of the Benefits Agency in processing claims for the disability living allowance and the disability working allowance; and if he will indicate the equivalent in terms of additional staff;

(3) what additional resources were made available to the Benefits Agency to deal with the backlog of cases involving claims for the disability living allowance, top-up claims and claims for attendance allowance for people aged over 65 years; what was the number of cases still awaiting clearance at the end of September; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. Alfred Morris, dated 26 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about staff dealing with Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

You asked first about the forecasting of future demands upon Benefits Agency staff in relation to DLA. I should explain that the implementation of DLA was planned within the Agency by a discrete Project team based at Fylde. Staffing levels were determined using forecast workloads prepared by the Government's Analytical Services Division, which in turn were built upon the benefit's original policy intentions and some assumptions as to likely take-up rates etc.

From this basis it was calculated that around 2,000 staff would be required to administer claims to DLA and Attendance Allowance (AA) for the over 65s. However, the pleasing success of the advertising campaign and the widespread interest from disabled people, attracted a much larger number of applications in the early stages than was predicted.

Whilst at first the take up of new claims to DLA was slow, the intake in March was more than double that forecast. In addition the "Top-Up" claims received by the end of April had exceeded the total number forecast for the whole year (137,000) and by the end of September had reached 195,000, an increase of 35 per cent.

At the same time the staff in the Disability Benefit Centres, where DLA claims are processed, experienced a surge in claims to AA. Over 55,000 more claims than originally forecast were received in the period February to April, representing an overall increase of 42 per cent. Indeed the total claims activity for DLA (including "Top-ups") and AA for those over 65 during the period February to April inclusive was an intake of 447,000 which represented an increase of 27 per cent. (94,000 claims) over the original estimate of just over 353,000. Consequently, the effects of both the numbers and the rate at which claims were received resulted in backlogs.

As you will know from my recent letter to Members, we have as a result increased the number of staff devoted to handling DLA and AA claims by over 800.

You also asked about overtime. Since the onset of the new benefits almost 420,000 hours of overtime have been worked by staff at the Disability Benefits Centres (DBCs) and the Fylde Unit which is equivalent to around 340 posts in terms of additional staff. I have also established a senior management task force to tackle the arrears and to optimise work flows.

These measures have increased the throughput of new claims considerably, and we are on schedule to clear the backlog shortly.

Your third question also asked about number of cases still awaiting clearance at the end of September. The table below gives details of outstanding claims for the months June to September inclusive:—

	New claims	*Top-ups*	*AA*
June	125,000	123,000	153,000
July	117,000	104,000	143,000
August	106,000	79,000	122,000
September	90,000	58,000	90,000

All figures are provisional and may be subject to amendment.

During the same period, the numbers of claims cleared rose steadily from 15,600 in April to 52,000 in September in the case of DLA claims with 22,700 and 70,500 respectively for AA cases. The clearance of top-up claims remained steady at around 7,000 per week during the months August and September.

Of course there will always be a certain number of cases in action at any one time. We expect this normal on hand level for new claims to be in the region of 50,000 cases for DLA and just below 60,000 for AA.

Finally you also asked how many hours of overtime had been worked by staff in processing claims for Disability Working Allowance. So far no overtime has been worked by staff in processing applications for this benefit.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by what criteria he plans to determine the award of performance-related pay to Michael Bichard, chief executive of the Benefits Agency.

Mr. Burt: Mr. Bichard's entitlement to performance bonus is largely dependent upon the achievement of a range of specific targets which include improving on the performance targets which we set the Benefits Agency each year. These are published in the "Benefits Agency's Business Plan", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Disability Allowances

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the disability and other organisations from which expressions of concern have been received about delays in processing claims for the disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. Alfred Morris, dated 26 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking if he will list the disability and other organisations from which expressions of concern have been received about delays in processing claims for Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

The organisations that have made general enquiries to the DLA Ministers Unit about the delays in processing DLA claims, as opposed to those that have made customer specific enquiries, are attached.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Organisations/Representative bodies who have made general complaints about delays in the processing of DLA claims:

Angus Citizens Advice Bureau
Carers National Association
Dartford Unemployed Group
Hampshire County Council
Isle of Wight Spastics Society
Knowsley Care Society
Manufacturing Science Finance Union
Manningham Project
Middlesbrough Law Centre
Motor Neurone Disease Association
Nantwich and District Citizens Advice Bureau
Rugby Citizens Advice Bureau
Shirley Citizens Advice Bureau
Skye and Lochalsh Community Advice Service
Solihull Citizens Advice Bureau
Swansea Citizens Advice Bureau
The Terrence Higgins Trust
Wakefield Centre for the Unemployed
Wear Valley Citizens Advice Bureau (Bishop Auckland)
Wycombe Living Options in Practice

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many special rules claimants have died before receiving benefit from disability living allowance; and in how many such cases, payment was made after six months from the application.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total expenditure for *(a)* disability living allowance, *(b)* disability working allowance, *(c)* mobility allowance and *(d)* attendance allowance from 1 April to 1 October.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not yet available.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how analysis of potential take-up benefit was undertaken prior to the introduction of disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: The analysis of potential take-up of disability living allowance lower rates was made using data produced in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys surveys of 1985-88. OPCS questions related to lack of independent mobility were used to produce estimates of the number of potential lower rate mobility beneficiaries. Questions relating to the extent of people's need for help with personal functions and with preparing food were used for the lower rate care component.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects the backlog of claims for disability living allowance benefit to be cleared; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. David Marshall, dated 26 October:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about when the backlog of claims for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) will be cleared.

I should explain that there are two categories of claims for DLA. Firstly there are claims from people who were not already in receipt of Attendance Allowance or Mobility Allowance when DLA was introduced. Secondly there are applications from people who were in receipt of one of these benefits but who may be entitled to an additional amount under the DLA entitlement rules. These latter applications are known as "top-up" claims. Since February, therefore, when applications began to be accepted for the new benefit, we have been dealing with claims made under the old scheme and processing the new-style claims at the same time.

In the first eight months of live operation over 303,000 new claims and almost 195,000 "top-up" claims were registered.

I wrote to all MPs on 19 October explaining how the backlog has arisen and detailing the measures introduced to deal with it. I am glad to say that these measures have already resulted in a substantial improvement in the speed of claims processing.

At the end of September the number of claims still to be dealt with was approaching 90,000 new claims and 58,000 "top-up" claims. This compares with the outstanding figures of 125,000 new claims and 121,000 "top-up" claims in July. Most significantly, Disability Benefit Centres are now clearing 12,000 claims per week compared with approximately 6,000 per week in June and only about 3,000 per week in April. The clearance of "top-up" claims remained steady at around 7,000 per week during the months August and September.

I am by no means complacent about the number of applications still to be processed and am currently monitoring the situation closely. I am confident, however, that we will have reached a steady state shortly for new claims and by the end of November for "top-up" claims.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown by number and percentage of the total number of claims for disability working allowance received by his Department that were refused on the grounds that *(a)* the claimant was not in remunerative work, *(b)* the claimant's income was above the limit, *(c)* the claimant was not in receipt of a qualifying benefit, *(d)* the claimant was receiving family credit, *(e)* the joint income of the claimant and his or her partner exceeded the limit, *(f)* the claimant was working less than 16 hours a week or *(g)* for other reasons.

Mr. Scott: By 16 October the total number and percentage of claims refused in each category was as follows:

		Percentage
Not in work or working less than 16 hours a week	10,208	59
Income of claimant and partner exceeds DWA level	1,929	11
No qualifying benefit	4,455	26
Receiving family credit	409	2
Other reasons	425	2

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures were taken by his Department, and when, to identify people receiving severe disablement allowance or with underlying entitlement to severe disablement allowance following their transfer to retirement pension who became eligible for the age-related addition introduced in December 1990; and if he will make it his policy that no one will lose out due to ignorance of their entitlement.

Mr. Scott: In August 1990 DSS local offices identified and arranged to pay, from 3 December 1990, all severe disablement allowance (SDA) recipients entitled to an age-related addition. A check of national insurance records was made in May 1992 to identify those retirement pension recipients, with an underlying entitlement to SDA, who had not received an age addition.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to publish the findings of research commissioned by his Department on invalidity benefit; what is the total cost of this research; and how he plans to use it.

Mr. Scott: The Department has commissioned a number of related research studies about invalidity benefit. The findings of an international comparative study of the growth in incapacity benefit caseloads were presented to the Beveridge anniversary conference in September. Fieldwork for some of the remaining studies is still in progress, and it is not yet known when the findings will be published. The research will cost £320,000. It is designed to explain the growth in invalidity benefit caseloads and to improve forecasts of the numbers receiving the benefit.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total number of appeals heard by disability appeal tribunals to date; and if he will provide a breakdown of these by *(a)* outstanding mobility allowance, *(b)* outstanding attendance allowance and *(c)* disability living allowance and attendance allowance, post-February 1992 appeals.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to him given to him by my hon. Friend on 13 July at column *455.*

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown of the numbers awarded the disability living allowance to date by *(a)* those awarded the higher rate of the care component, *(b)* those awarded the middle rate of the care component, *(c)* those awarded the lower rate of the care component, *(d)* those awarded the higher rate of the mobility component and *(e)* those awarded the lower rate of the mobility component.

Mr. Scott: Following is the information requested.

Number of awards of each component of disability living allowance made at 30 September

		Number
(a)	Higher rate care	25,000
(b)	Middle rate care	34,000
(c)	Lower rate care	73,000
(d)	Higher rate mobility	75,000
(e)	Lower rate mobility	75,000

These figures include new claims and "top up" claims from existing attendance allowance or mobility allowance beneficiaries.

All figures are provisional and may be subject to amendment.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average award of invalidity benefit *(a)* for all claimants, *(b)* for single people, *(c)* for childless couples and *(d)* for couples and/or single parents with dependants.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average weekly payment of invalidity benefit for a single person and a married couple at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested. The average weekly payment of invalidity benefit as at 30 March 1991(1) was £67·40.

Notes:

[1] The latest date for which figures are available; information from a 1 per cent. sample of claimants.

[2] Separate information is not available for single people and couples.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the number and percentage of recipients of invalidity benefit who are also in receipt of income support.

Mr. Scott: Available information is in the table:

	Number
Number of invalidity benefit recipients on 30 March 1991[1]	1,306,000
Number of income support claimants, in receipt of invalidity benefit, in May 1991[2]	104,000
Number of income support claimant's partners in receipt of invalidity benefit, in May 1991[2]	7,000

Notes:

[1] Information from 1 per cent. sample of claimants.

[2] Information from the annual statistical enquiry.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the savings to his Department of freezing invalidity benefit and the numbers of people who would become eligible for income support as a result.

Mr. Scott: The answer would depend on the assumptions made by the hon. Member.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average income of people in receipt of invalidity benefit as a percentage of average full-time earnings among men and women employees.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested. The average gross weekly income of benefits units[1] in which there is at least one IVB recipient is £155[2]. This represents 65 per cent.[3] of the average weekly earnings of adults in full time work.

[1] A benefit unit is a single adult or a couple, together with any children dependent on the adult(s) who are entitled to claim benefit in their own right.

[2] Source: Family Expenditure Survey 1989.

[3] Source: New Earnings Survey 1989.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown of successful disability working allowance applicants by *(a)* average hourly earnings, *(b)* average hours worked, *(c)* average age, *(d)* sex, *(e)* marital status, *(f)* householder status and *(g)* qualifying benefit.

Mr. Scott: Information on the householder status of applicants is not available. The table provides estimated figures derived from an analysis of successful claims up to 31 August.

	Estimated figures
Average hourly earnings	£2·92
Average hours worked a week	30
Average age	37
Number of awards to men	1,089
Number of awards to women	765
Number of awards to single people	1,120
Number of awards to couples	734
Qualifying benefits:[1]	
Invalidity benefit	240
Severe disablement allowance	66
Income support with disability premium	128
Housing benefit with disability premium	20
Community charge benefit with disability premium	56
Lower rate disability living allowance	161
Higher rate disability living allowance and attendance allowance	1,183

[1] Applicants may have more than one qualifying benefit.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for attendance allowance and mobility allowance were made *(a)* in the six months prior to February 1992 and *(b)* in the six months prior to February 1991.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

	Attendance allowance	*Mobility allowance*
August 1991-January 1992	283,000	118,000
August 1990-January 1991	209,000	85,000

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many invalidity benefit recipients there are by age, sex, household, and marital status.

Mr. Scott: Available information is in the table. This shows the number of invalidity recipients on 30 March 1991, the latest date for which information is available.

Age	*Men*	*Women*	*Married women*	*Other women*	*All persons*
All ages	976,100	329,900	225,600	104,300	1,306,000
Under 20	200	200	—	200	400
20-29	24,800	28,400	17,200	11,200	53,200
30-39	60,000	49,700	33,600	16,100	109,700
40-49	125,600	75,100	53,300	21,800	200,700
50-59	291,500	139,500	99,600	39,900	431,000
60 and over	474,000	37,000	21,900	15,100	511,000

Note: Information from a 1 per cent. sample of claimants.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for the disability working allowance were received by his Department in each month since its introduction.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on 19 October at column *173.*

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the current claim pack for disability living allowance is to be replaced by the revised version; and if he will provide details of his Department's plans to monitor the impact of the changes in the revised pack and state when and where the results of such monitoring will be published.

Mr. Scott: As part of our continuing efforts to meet the needs of customers, improved claim packs for disability living allowance (DLA) and attendance allowance (AA) will be available in November. In monitoring the effectiveness of the claim packs we engage in an ongoing dialogue with disabled people themselves and their organisations.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much has been spent in total by his Department to date on publicity for disability living allowance and disability working allowance; and if he will publish a breakdown by type of medium used.

Mr. Scott: The Department has spent a total of £7,227,304 on publicity for disability living allowance and disability working allowance. The breakdown by medium is as shown:

	£
Advertising	3,288,149
Exhibitions	74,850
Film/video	562,816
Marketing/response	1,947,448
Publications	1,026,685
Research	327,356
Total	7,227,304

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for the disability working allowance have been received by the Department to date; and if he will provide a breakdown by *(a)* the number and percentage of these that resulted in an award, *(b)* the number and percentage of these that were refused and *(c)* the number and percentage of these that are awaiting a decision.

Mr. Scott: By 16 October 1992 the number of claims for disability working allowance received was 21,174; and the number of awards made was 2,401, 11 per cent; the number of claims refused was 17,426, 82 per cent. and the number of claims awaiting a decision because further information was needed to assess the claim was 619, 3 per cent.; the remainder of claims were withdrawn by the claimant before a decision was made.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the number and percentage of invalidity benefit recipients who are in receipt of other sources of income by source and average amount of such other income.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested. Available information is shown in the table.

Table: Benefit Unit with an IVB Recipient: Sources and Amount of Components of Gross Income, 1989

Source of Income	*Percentage of benefit units with at least one member on IVB in receipt of other named source of income*	*Average amount of income, for those in receipt of given source of income*
	per cent.	*£*
IVB	100	59
Occupational pensions	43	60
Investment income	62	21
Income support	6	23
Housing benefit/rent rebate	35	16
Community charge benefit (Scotland only)	6	6
Other social security pensions and benefits	18	8
Earnings	24	129
Other income	86	20
Gross income	100	155

Source: Family Expenditure Survey, 1989.

Notes:

1. Gross income is income received by a benefit unit in which there is at least one IVB recipient, and includes all social security benefits and pensions. A benefit unit is a single adult or couple, together with any children dependent on the adult(s), who are entitled to claim benefit in their own right.
2. Average amounts of income are gross of tax and NI contributions, and are rounded to the nearest £1.
3. CCB was only applicable to Scotland in 1989.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people choose to remain on invalidity benefit after reaching retirement age; and if he will provide an estimate of the savings to his Department in each of the years up to and including 1997-98 if the right of invalidity benefit recipients to remain on invalidity after reaching retirement age were removed.

Mr. Scott: The number of invalidity benefit recipients over retirement age on 31 March 1991—the latest date for which information is available—is:

	Number
Men	200,900
Women	37,000
Total	237,900

There would be no savings to the Department if the right of invalidity benefit recipients to choose to remain on the benefit after reaching retirement age were removed. The rate of benefit payable to invalidity benefit recipients over retirement age is based on their entitlement to the retirement pension which would then be put into payment.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many awards of the higher rate mobility component made since 3 February were made *(a)* on the ground that the person was severely mentally impaired and displayed severe behavioural problems and *(b)* under the deaf-blind provisions.

Mr. Scott: Number of people awarded the higher rate mobility at 30 September:

(a) On grounds of severe mental impairment and severe behavioural problems: 715
(b) Under deaf-blind provisions: 62

Includes new claims and "top up" claims from existing attendance allowance and mobility allowance beneficiaries.
All figures are provisional and may be subject to amendment.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown of successful disability working allowance applicants by *(a)* people already working and *(b)* people who started working shortly before making an application for benefit.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available to say how many disability working allowance recipients were previously in employment. Of the 2,401 people who had claimed successfully up to 16 October, we estimate that 27 per cent. had received invalidity benefit, severe disablement allowance or a disability premium with income support, housing benefit or community charge benefit in the eight weeks before claiming disability working allowance.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for invalidity benefit and severe disablement allowance were referred to the regional medical services in each month since January 1991; how many of these cases resulted in medical examinations; and what were the outcome *(a)* where examinations took place and *(b)* where they did not.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is in the table.

References to the regional medical services cleared between quarters ending March 1991 and March 1992.

	31 March 1991	*30 June 1991*	*30 September 1991*	*31 December 1991*	*31 March 1992*
Incapable of work (without examination)	135,750	132,820	156,842	120,192	127,745
Claim terminated before examination—no opinion given	1,840	2,282	3,625	1,716	3,571
Failed to attend examination	17,576	14,062	14,347	17,045	14,664
Incapable of work (after examination)	47,154	41,125	43,507	40,182	51,545
Capable of work (after examination)	10,188	8,525	9,008	8,188	9,332
Capable of work within limits (after examination)	14,024	11,753	12,920	10,512	14,785
Total number of references cleared	226,532	210,567	240,249	197,835	221,642

Note: Information relates to references for all incapacity benefits.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average amount of benefit received by long-term sick and disabled people in each member state of the European Community expressed in pounds sterling.

Mr. Scott: Comparable information for each member state of the European Community is not available.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what number and percentage of *(a)* first claims *(b)* renewal claims and *(c)* requests for a review of attendance allowance and mobility allowance received by his Department prior to 3 February remain outstanding; how many have been decided; and what number and percentage of reviews decided resulted in the award of the lower rate of (i) the care component, (ii) the mobility component and (iii) both components of the disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for *(a)* mobility allowance and *(b)* attendance allowance were refused, annually, for each year since 1985.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

	Mobility allowance	*Attendance allowance*
1985	50,000	71,000
1986	61,000	76,000
1987	61,000	92,000
1988	72,000	111,000
1989	78,000	101,000
1990	85,000	93,000
1991	90,000	108,000

Figures rounded to nearest thousand

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total expenditure for *(a)* mobility allowance and *(b)* attendance allowance from 1 April to 1 October 1991.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested.

Estimated expenditure for each benefit in the 1991-92 financial year was:

	£ million
(a) Mobility allowance	1,061
(b) Attendance allowance	1,706

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications have been received for disability working allowance; and how many, to date, have been successful.

Mr. Scott: Up to 16 October 21,174 applications for disability working allowance had been received and 2,401 awards made.

John Gardner

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects that Mr. John Gardner of 115 Countisbury avenue, Llanrumney, Cardiff, will have a response to his application for mobility allowance, now being treated as an application for disabled living allowance.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. As the application is a personal and confidential matter, he will reply direct to the hon. Member.

Miners' Redundancy Payments

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the age distribution of the miners to be made redundant; and how long their redundancy payments are likely to last before they qualify for social security.

Mr. Burt: Information on the age distribution of miners who are affected by redundancy is a matter for British Coal.

The effect of redundancy payments on entitlement to social security benefits will depend on the nature of the payment and on the type of benefit claimed.

Most social security benefits are not affected by statutory redundancy pay, or similar payments intended as compensation for loss of employment. However, in the income-related benefits, such payments are treated as capital and may affect entitlement.

Fraudulent Claims

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated amount of money claimed fraudulently from his Department in 1991; what is the basis of the estimate; and what action he has taken to recover the estimated amount.

Miss Widdecombe: The total sum claimed fraudulently from the Department is not known. The Benefits Agency has a target which is based on detected fraud. In 1991-92 £427 million was estimated to have been saved. This estimate is derived from

1. the calculation of the weekly amount of benefit being claimed wrongfully when action by fraud investigators put a stop to the fraud or irregularity;
2. the conversion of this weekly amount to an estimated overall saving;
3. the actual value of benefit saved by the termination or prevention of an instrument of payment irregularity.

The multiplier used for item 2 was 32. This was based on the estimated average number of weeks the fraud would have continued had fraud staff not stopped it.

The Benefits Agency pursues vigorously the recovery of overpayments of benefit from those who cheat the system. In appropriate cases criminal or civil proceedings will be instituted.

Terminal Illness

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations have been received by his Department from organisations working with terminally ill people on problems with the special rules procedures and the particular difficulties caused to people with terminal illness on account of the delays with the processing of disability living allowance claims; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We receive a large volume of correspondence on disability benefits, some of which comes from organisations involved in the care of terminally ill people and refers to the special rules arrangements. Much of the correspondence applauds the rules, some contains suggestions on further improvements we might make to the procedures. We welcome these representations, which we actively consider.

We have also received representations about delays in dealing with claims in respect of people with a limited life expectancy. Unfortunately, because of the massive influx of claims more generally on disability living allowance and attendance allowance, some delays have occurred in dealing with claims made under the special rules. The Benefits Agency is taking firm action to clear the backlogs and in doing so treat claims for people who are terminally ill as a top priority.

Doctors' Fees

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the fees payable to doctors for each type of medical examination required for adjudication purposes for all social security benefits and for the disablement pension.

Mr. Scott: The fees payable to doctors for medical examinations required for all social security benefits are as follows:

	£
Regional Medical Service	
Part-time referees Sessional Rate	88·40
War Pension Medical Board	
Consultant members	
One Case	54·40
Two Cases	77·60
Sessional Rate	108·70

	£
Examination and Report necessitating a Domiciliary Visit	
Chairman and Member of Single Doctor Board:	
• up to and including 1·5 hours	37·90
• over 1·5 up to and including 2·5 hours	56·90
• over 2·5 hours	88·40
Second Member:	
• up to and including 1·5 hours	33·00
• over 1·5 up to and including 2·5 hours	49·60
• over 2·5 hours	77·10
Medical Board	
• *per session* (2·5 to 3·5 hours):	
Chairman	88·40
Members	77·10
single doctor acting as a board	88·40
• *per case:*	
Chairman	31·60
Members	27·50
single doctor acting as a board	31·60
Consultants	
• *Work in NHS hospital:*	
Examination and report or treatment	
Standard fee per case	54·40
Standard fee per case when hospital laboratory radiological or other technical facilities are used	81·50
Sessional fee	108·70
Sessional fee when hospital laboratory or radiological or other technical facilities are used	163·10
• *Work in private consulting rooms*	
Examination and report or treatment	
Standard fee per case	69·90
Per session (3·5 hours)	163·10
Examining Medical Practitioner Examination for DLA and AA65+	
Chairman and Member of single Doctor Board:	
• up to and including 1·5 hours	37·90
• over 1·5 up to and including 2·5 hours	56·90
• over 2·5 hours	88·40

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people were in receipt of the invalidity benefit from each year since 1983-84.

Mr. Scott: The information is in the table:

Year	*Beneficiaries (in thousands)*
1983-84	760
1984-85	825
1985-86	865
1986-87	935
1987-88	1,010
1988-89	1,100
1989-90	1,190
1990-91	1,265
1991-92	1,325

Source: 1992 Departmental Report and earlier Public Expenditure White papers.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what his Department's expenditure on invalidity benefit has been, in cash and constant prices, for each year from 1983-84, until the latest year for which figures are available; and what is the expected outturn expenditure on invalidity benefit for 1992-93.

Mr. Scott: The table shows expenditure on invalidity benefit for Great Britain at cash and constant 1992-93 prices in each year from 1983-84 to 1992-93.

Year	*Cash £ million*	*1992-93 prices £ million*
1983-84	1,972	3,123
1984-85	2,142	3,403
1985-86	2,249	3,386
1986-87	2,673	3,896
1987-88	2,968	4,103
1988-89	3,359	4,331
1989-90	3,837	4,642
1990-91	4,431	4,955
[1]1991-92	5,255	5,491
[2]1992-93	5,695	5,695

[1] Estimated outturn only.

[2] Planned expenditure.

Computer Projects

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table setting out for the period since 9 April *(a)* each tender issued by his Department for projects requiring the supply of (i) computer hardware and (ii) computer software, *(b)* a description of the services required, *(c)* the number of companies which were invited to tender, *(d)* the number of companies which submitted a bid without prior invitation by his Department, *(e)* which company was awarded the contract, *(f)* the value of each contract and *(g)* the length of period over which the contract will run.

Miss Widdecombe: The tenders issued by the Department for computer hardware and software since 9 April 1992 are as shown in the table. We have not supplied information on the value of the contracts as to do so could be a breach of commercial confidentiality.

a(i)(ii) *Hardware (H/W)* *Software (S/W)*	*(b)* *Description*	*(c)* *Number of companies invited to tender*	*(d)* *Bids from companies without invitation*	*(e)* *Contract awarded to:*	*(g)* *Length of contract*
S/W	Contributions Agency—Civil recoveries system. Supply & development of bespoke software, with installation, training & maintenance.	1	None	Linetime Ltd.	Indefinite: Renewable annually
S/W	CD—ROM Project. This is a BA initiative involving computerisation of training material & instruction manuals.	6	None	Future Office Systems	Project Specific
S/W	Terminal Emulation s/w package able to run all STAP supplier unix platform. Initial requirement is for the FAMIS & CSA Projects. Future requirements not yet known.	3	None	ICL	To 1995
H/W	Provision of a networked & upgraded computer system for use within Private Office.	2	None	ICL	Project Specific
H/W & S/W	Provision of computer equipment and implementation to 7 computer centres for the Child Support Agency.	3	None	IBM	Project Specific
Cabling	Cabling of BA Offices for the FAMIS Project.	3	None	ICL IBM Siemens Nixdorf	1 Year

Independent Living Fund

Ms. Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what form the replacement for the independent living fund will take; what will be the size of its financing; and what criteria will apply for individual applicants receiving it.

Mr. Scott: Details of the arrangements will be announced in due course.

Maxwell Pensioners

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress has been made by the special unit and the trust fund established to assist the Maxwell pensioners.

Mr. Lilley: On 8 June I announced a number of Government initiatives following the loss of assets from the Maxwell pension schemes. These included the provision of a £2·5 million emergency fund to help to keep pensions in payment in the short term, the setting up of the Maxwell pensions unit within my Department, and the establishment of the Maxwell Pensioners Trust.

The unit has made grants amounting to just over £1 million to eight pension schemes. All pensions in payment in February 1992 are being paid, as are those due to people who have retired since then at the normal retirement age for their scheme. In addition, grants have been made in respect of people who have retired since February 1992 on grounds of ill health. Pension scheme members who have been contracted back into the state earnings-related pension scheme (SERPs) have that part of their pensions paid direct by my Department.

The unit is also working with Sir John Cuckney, as chairman of the Maxwell Pensioners Trust and special adviser to the unit, to help in the recovery of missing assets, by encouraging out-of-court settlements wherever possible, reducing the time and cost of legal actions. The unit has established constructive working relationships with pension scheme trustees, the liquidators and administrators dealing with the Maxwell companies, and the pensioners action groups.

The Maxwell Pensioners Trust was formally constituted on 17 July to help secure Maxwell pensions in the longer term. Following an initial appeal, the trust has raised just under £6 million. And payments have already been made, or are being processed, to 86 ex gratia pensioners. This is a creditable achievement, but substantially more funds are needed if the justifiable anxiety felt by the pensioners about their future security is to be properly addressed.

No Government could accept an obligation to use taxpayers' money to make good losses resulting from fraud. However, I believe it is right for the Government to exercise those responsibilities we do have in ways which actively assist the pensioners' position. I am announcing one further such step today.

When pension scheme members who have been contracted out of SERPS are brought back into the state scheme, the pension scheme is required to pay state scheme premiums for each member to the national insurance fund. The amounts involved can be substantial. I have discretion to postpone collection of these premiums for as long as I am satisfied that it would not be in the interests of scheme members to enforce payment.

I have decided to exercise this discretion, on a scheme by scheme basis, in the case of the Maxwell pensioners. This amounts to an interest-free loan to the trustees of the pension schemes of some £100 million. It is a major extension of Government assistance to securing pensioners' financial future, and it will give the schemes a breathing space while the remaining matters in dispute are resolved.

This measure will not close the gap between the Maxwell schemes' assets and liabilities. For that, we still need substantial contributions to the trust. I hope that this further example of Government support will encourage those companies and institutions that have not so far felt able to contribute to the trust to reconsider its position.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 28 October 1992

HOME DEPARTMENT

Magistrates

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how judges and magistrates will be advised to treat aggravating or mitigating factors when determining the seriousness of any offence.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to his similar question on 27 October, at column *578*.

Police Officers

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a table showing for each police force area in England and Wales and for the whole of England and Wales the number of police officers actually in post at *(a)* 1 April 1979, *(b)* 1 April 1990, *(c)* 1 April 1991 and *(d)* 1 April 1992, and the percentage increase in each case.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is set out in the table.

Table showing the strength of police forces in England and Wales[1]

Force	*31 March 1979*	*31 March 1990*	*Percentage change*	*31 March 1991*	*Percentage change*	*31 March 1992*	*Percentage change*
Avon and Somerset	2,825	3,094	9·52	3,092	−0·06	3,081	−0·36
Bedfordshire	902	1,050	16·41	1,105	5·24	1,093	−1·09
Cambridgeshire	1,064	1,193	12·12	1,201	0·67	1,250	4·08
Cheshire	1,778	1,870	5·17	1,895	1·34	1,874	−1·11
Cleveland	1,334	1,467	9·97	1,489	1·50	1,477	−0·81
Cumbria	1,056	1,166	10·42	1,184	1·54	1,179	−0·42
Derbyshire	1,563	1,795	14·84	1,741	−3·01	1,706	−2·01
Devon and Cornwall	2,660	2,852	7·22	2,873	0·74	2,898	0·87
Dorset	1,128	1,269	12·50	1,281	0·95	1,289	0·62
Durham	1,312	1,375	4·80	1,368	−0·51	1,389	1·54
Dyfed-Powys	910	935	2·75	935	0·00	947	1·28
Essex	2,461	2,822	14·67	2,889	2·37	2,898	0·31
Gloucestershire	1,076	1,170	8·74	1,162	−0·68	1,174	1·03
Greater Manchester	6,419	6,992	8·93	7,014	0·31	7,061	0·67
Gwent	965	1.008	4·46	999	−0·89	1,009	1·00
Hampshire	2,949	3,154	6·95	3,179	0·79	3,211	1·01
Hertfordshire	1,462	1,657	13·34	1,666	0·54	1,695	1·74
Humberside	1,849	1,995	7·90	1,998	0·15	2,026	1·40
Kent	2,724	2,984	9·54	3,005	0·70	3,074	2·30
Lancashire	3,097	3,201	3·36	3,212	0·34	3,198	−0·44
Leicestershire	1,701	1,769	4·00	1,818	2·77	1,845	1·49
Lincolnshire	1,171	1,188	1·45	1,209	1·77	1,196	−1·08
Merseyside	4,427	4,714	6·48	4,689	−0·53	4,621	−1·45
Norfolk	1,223	1,363	11·45	1,405	3·08	1,414	0·64
Northamptonshire	905	1,126	24·42	1,139	1·15	1,158	1·67
Northumbria	3,272	3,529	7·85	3,541	0·34	3,464	−2·17
North Wales	1,268	1,337	5·44	1,349	0·90	1,347	−0·15
North Yorkshire	1,342	1,379	2·76	1,387	0·58	1,398	0·79
Nottinghamshire	2,117	2,316	9·40	2,336	0·86	2,331	−0·21
South Wales	2,936	3,135	6·78	3,137	0·06	3,168	0·99
South Yorkshire	2,546	2,923	14·81	2,991	2·33	3,008	0·57
Staffordshire	1,978	2,187	10·57	2,217	1·37	2,176	−1·85
Suffolk	1,064	1,194	12·22	1,209	1·26	1,218	0·74
Surrey	1,440	1,645	14·24	1,657	0·73	1,706	2·96
Sussex	2,758	2,949	6·93	2,969	0·68	2,984	0·51
Thames Valley	2,639	3,659	38·65	3,714	1·50	3,772	1·56
Warwickshire	841	975	15·93	1,020	4·62	990	−2·94
West Mercia	1,743	1,991	14·23	2,026	1·76	2,034	0·39
West Midlands	5,981	6,855	14·61	6,876	0·31	6,941	0·95
West Yorkshire	4,727	5,260	11·28	5,268	0·15	5,087	−3·44
Wiltshire	997	1,130	13·34	1,165	3·10	1,221	4·81
Metropolitan	22,214	28,362	27·68	28,312	−0·18	28,381	0·24
City	829	799	−3·62	813	1·75	808	−0·62
Total	109,653	124,834	13·84	125,535	0·56	125,797	0·21

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[1] Figures for 1 April are not available; 31 March figures have therefore been provided.

Samuel Kulasingham and Prem Sivalingham

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he expects to make a decision as to whether he will exercise his power under section 17 of the Criminal Appeals Act 1968 to refer to the Court of Appeal the case of Samuel Kulasingham and Prem Sivalingham;

(2) when he received an interim or final report from the Essex police inquiry team, established in April 1992 to investigate the circumstances surrounding the convictions of Samuel Kulasingham and Prem Sivalingham;

(3) whether the Essex police inquiry team, established in April 1992 to investigate the circumstances surrounding the convictions of Samuel Kulasingham and Prem Sivalingham, have obtained transcripts of any Metropolitan police interviews with the two chief prosecution witnesses at the 1988 trial, Indrakumar Thiyegaral and Muralee Tharan Arulkodnenthan, which took place prior to their statements as witnesses.

Mr. Jack: The Essex police are continuing their inquiries into this case and I expect to receive their report shortly. I shall then be in a position to decide, after proper consideration of all the relevant information, whether there are grounds for referring either conviction to the Court of Appeal.

I understand that the inquiry team has established that both the two chief prosecution witnesses were interviewed by officers of the Metropolitan police before statements were taken from them as witnesses, but that no record was made of either of these interviews.

Probation Service

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the resource implications of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 for the probation service; and what is his best estimate of the additional costs involved for the probation service in England and Wales.

Mr. Jack: Increased central Government support for the probation service was set out in the Home Office annual report published in February 1992 as follows:

	1992-93	*1993-94*	*1994-95*
Central Government support (£ million)	290	314	338
Provision for total staff numbers	14,234	14,713	15,100
(Including year-on-year staff increases of;)	560	398	376

The additional staff and resources are primarily for the implementation of the Criminal Justice Act 1991; these represent the current best estimates of the additional resources needed.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what remuneration has been offered to probation staff to enable them to undertake new duties in respect of the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 27 October 1992]*: The Criminal Justice Act will involve new responsibility for the probation service. To respond to this we have provided for a substantial increase in the numbers of probation officers. In addition, we recognise that there will be an impact on the work of some existing probation officers. As a consequence, probation employers have responded to this by offering a system of local pay flexibility to reflect the increased responsibilities which individuals might undertake. Discussions over the details of this offer are continuing.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what fianancial penalties will be invoked if any probation staff refuse to undertake new duties implicit in the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

Mr. Jack: Probation staff who refuse to undertake duties in the context of the current industrial action in support of their pay claim are being asked to sign an undertaking that they will work normally and to return this undertaking within two working days. If an officer refuses to sign the undertaking, the probations committee will reduce that officer's pay by 15 per cent. while he or she continues to refuse to work normally.

Any staff who were to refuse to undertake duties in other circumstances would be subject to normal disciplinary proceedings, including financial penalties.

Court Reports

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many additional court reports will be written per annum under the provisions contained in the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

Mr. Jack: On the basis of pilot trials run in five Crown court centres between May and December 1991, it is expected that between 20,000 and 29,000 additional reports will be required each year.

Prisoners (Towels)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will consider increasing the number of towels issued weekly to prisoners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The range of items issued to inmates is subject to regular review. The number of towels currently issued each week is normally two but, because of a high incidence of vandalism, it is necessary to issue some 400,000 towels each year to meet the needs of the 45,000 inmates held in custody; this restricts the capacity of the prison service to increase the level of issue for individual prisoners. However, in an effort to improve the efficiency and acceptability of the item, the existing white towel is in the process of being replaced by one of larger size in deep-dyed colours.

Drug Prevention

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to renew the funding for each of the drug prevention projects currently funded by his Department as it reaches the end date of the period for which funds have been approved to date.

Mr. Jack: As I stated in my written answer of 27 October 1992, at column *578*, in response to earlier questions from the hon. Member, funding for the 20 local drugs prevention teams has been agreed initially for three years in each case and active consideration is currently being given to the position of the teams beyond that period.

Car Phones

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what guidelines are given to the Metropolitan police about stopping motorists who drive while using a car or mobile phone.

(2) how many charges and convictions have been obtained by the Metropolitan police concerning the use of car phones while driving.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No such guidelines have been issued to the Metropolitan police. The police may take action against drivers in such cases for the offences of driving without due care and attention or driving without proper control of the vehicle. No figures are available to show the number of charges or convictions obtained by the Metropolitan police for such offences involving the use of telephones.

Asylum

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what target date he has set his Department to clear the backlog of asylum applications.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No specific date has been set. The increase in the number of asylum division staff to 500, together with streamlined administrative procedures, is already having a considerable impact on the current backlog. Further progress will be influenced by the rate of new applications and the impact on procedures of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer of 15 July, *Official Report*, column *775*, to the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) *(a)* which concepts used in the convention are the subject of common interpretation and *(b)* what is the common interpretation referred to.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Article 1 of the Dublin convention of 15 June 1990—Cm 1623—defines for the purposes of the convention the meaning of: an alien; an applicaation for asylum; an examination of an appliction for asylum; a residence permit; an entry visa; and a transit visa.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer of 15 July, *Official Report*, column *775*, to the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) whether any definition has been reached in respect of first host country.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. This matter is still under discussion between member states.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer of 15 July, *Official Report*, column *775*, to the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) *(a)* to which third countries it is intended to extend the system of the convention by means of parallel convention and *(b)* with which countries negotiations have commenced in respect of that convention.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Formal negotiations on extending the provisions of the Dublin convention will not be undertaken until the convention has been ratified by all member states. Extension to third countries will be by the unanimous agreement of the member states.

Security Service

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he will publish, in any form that does not jeopardise national security, the number of entries in the names index and in the organisations index of the main security service computer system and provide a description of the kinds of information held;

(2) whether he will publish, in any form that does not jeopardise national security, the approximate total number of files held by the Security Service, the approximate number of red, amber and green files, and the proportion of files that are temporary; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Security Service holds only information which it needs in order to carry out the functions conferred upon it by the Security Service Act 1989. The service's record-keeping policy was described in the Security Service Commissioner's annual report for 1991. It would not be in the interests of national security to provide the detailed information requested.

Mr. John Samuels

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester on the operation on Friday, 11 September which resulted in the complaint by Mr. John Samuels.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. These are operational matters which are the responsibility of the chief constable.

Charities

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what procedures the Charity Commission uses when deciding whether or not to register charities formed to assist with specific disasters and emergencies and which require accelerated registration procedures to enable them to operate in good time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: In deciding whether to register an organisation as a charity the Charity Commissioners consider whether the object for which the organisation is established are exclusively charitable in law, accurately reflect the intended activities of the organisation and whether the activities proposed are acceptable for a body with charitable status.

Where it is strongly represented to the commissioners by the promoters of an organisation, which is formed to assist with a specific disaster or emergency, that any degree of delay in registering the charity would be harmful to the intended beneficiaries, the commissioners give priority consideration to that application for registration.

External Frontiers Convention

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements he has made for the public distribution of the draft convention on external frontiers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Copies of the draft convention between the member states of the European Communities on the crossing of their external frontiers were placed in the Libraries of both Houses in July.

Worcester Kurdish Refugee Association

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Charity Commissioners expect to complete their investigation into the Worcester Kurdish Refugee Association; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The Charity Commissioners expect to complete their inquiry into the affairs of the Worcester Kurdish Refugee Association in January 1993.

Hostels

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current cost level for repairs, additions or equipment in a hostel site which represents the dividing line between his Department's capital grant and operational expenditure.

Mr. Jack: Major refurbishment works, new building or extension costs, and the purchase of specific items of equipment which are expected to be in use for a number of years attract capital grant. The operational or revenue budget covers more basic redecoration and routine maintenance and the purchase of smaller items. There are items which from time to time do not easily fall into either of these categories and where judgments are made on a case by case basis as to the most appropriate form of funding.

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what circumstances a probation hostel or a bail hostel can refuse to accept as a resident a person whom the court wishes to let out on bail.

Mr. Jack: The Approved Probation and Bail Hostel Rules 1976 provide that, once a court has granted bail subject to a condition of residence in an approved hostel, admission can be refused only if there is no place available; or if the person falls outside the categories for which the hostel is approved; or if the defendant is suffering from severe subnormality or a psychopathic disorder; or with the consent of the Secretary of State.

Before the court reaches its decision, a probation officer may, through advice to the court, indicate that, in the circumstances of the individual case, a defendant would not be suitable for a place in an approved hostel, in line with the considerations set out in paragraph 16 of the "National Standard for the Management of Approved Probation and Bail Hostels". I will send my right hon. Friend a copy of the relevant section of these standards.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff are normally on duty in probation and bail hostels in England and Wales *(a)* from 6 pm till midnight, *(b)* from midnight till 6 am and *(c)* at weekends.

Mr. Jack: *[holding answer 27 October 1992]:* All approved probation and bail hostels in England and Wales have 24-hour a day staff cover. The funding of a number of hostels was increased this year to ensure that there is provision for at least two members of staff to be on duty at night in any hostel. Since the deployment of staff is a matter for probation or voluntary management committees, detailed information on staff rotas is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Prisoners (Learning Difficulties)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish figures showing the current percentage of prison inmates in England and Wales who are known to have learning difficulties.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 26 October 1992]:* Records of the number of prisoners with learning difficulties are not held centrally. In the White Paper, "Custody, Care and Justice"—Cm 1647—the Government stressed that the first priority for education programmes in prison must be to identify and provide help for those prisoners who have difficulty reading or writing and who are unable to do simple arithmetic. The national prison survey undertaken in 1991 indicated that 43 per cent. of prisoners had left school before the age of 16, prisoners had higher truancy rates than the general population, and 43 per cent. of prisoners had no qualification when they came into prison.

Criminal Justice Act 1991

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many letters he has received on the workings of the Criminal Justice Act 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 27 October 1992]:* I regret that it is not possible to identify from central records of correspondence received from all sources how many of the several thousand letters dealt with in different parts of the Home Office each month refer to the workings of the Act, either as a single subject, or as one among several others. However, it is beyond question that many correspondents are referring to the Act and these referrals have increased since 1 October when the vast majority of its provisions came into effect.

Combination Orders

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many combination orders he estimates will be made under provisions contained in the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 27 October 1992]:* The power to make a combination order was introduced by section 11 of the Criminal Justice Act which came into effect on 1 October 1992. The criteria for the use of the power are set out in the section, but sentencing in any individual case is a matter for the sentencer alone. There is, at present, no basis on which to estimate the number of occasions upon which courts may exercise this power.

Computer Projects

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table setting out for the period since 9 April *(a)* each tender issued by his Department for projects requiring the supply of (i) computer hardware and (ii) computer software, *(b)* a description of the services required, *(c)* the number of companies who were invited to tender, *(d)* the number of companies who submitted a bid without prior invitation by his Department, *(e)* which company was awarded the contract, *(f)* the value of each contract and *(g)* the length of period over which the contract will run.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 27 October 1992]*: The table provides information about tender invitations issued by my Department for projects requiring the supply of computer hardware and computer software since 9 April.

The value of each project is a matter of commercial and contractual confidentiality. Information about the number of companies who submitted a bid without prior invitation by my Department is not readily available.

Invitations to tender (ITT) issued for projects requiring computer hardware-software since 9 April 1992

(a) ITT's issued for projects			*(b) Description of services required*	*(c) Number of companies invited to tender*	*(d) Number of companies who submitted a bid without prior invitation*	*(e) Company awarded the contract*	*(f) Value of contract*	*(g) Duration of contract*
(i) Computer hardware	*(ii) Computer software*	*(iii) Hardware and software*			*See covering reply*		*See covering reply*	*See note 1*
•			Network Cabling for HMP Woodhill	1		Lancare		
•			Clothing and Textile CAD system for Prison Service Industries and Farms	3		Gerber Garment Technology		
•			Computer network cabling infrastructure	3		Misys Communications		
•			UNIX system for Immigration and Nationality Department (bought under HOUSE 1 contract)	1		International Computers Ltd.		
	•		Finance and Accounting software for UNIX system above	6		TABS		
•			Networking equipment for new DTELS HQ	5		Gandalf Digital Communications		
		•	Message Handling System for Emergency Planning	18		Not yet awarded		
•			Cabling for HMP Foston Hall-Prescoed	3		Lancare		
•			Extra Hard Disks for Police National Computer Organisation (PNC2)	7		Not yet awarded		

Note:

1. All the contracts are one off supplies.

Car Theft

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list for each police authority area the number of offences of *(a)* theft of and *(b)* unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle and *(c)* the combined total of the two committed by juveniles in each of the last five years for which figures are available and what percentage this was of the total number of offences in this category;

(2) if he will state for each police authority area and for England and Wales as a whole how many offences of theft from a vehicle were committed by juveniles in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and what percentage this was of the total number of offences in this category in each case;

(3) if he will state for each police authority area and for England and Wales as a whole, how many offences of theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle were committed by young adults in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and what percentage this was of the total number of offences of this category;

(4) if he will state for each police authority area and for England and Wales as a whole how many offences of theft from a vehicle were committed by young adults in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and what percentage this was in each case of the total number of offences in this category.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 20 October 1992]*: The data in the table relate to the number of "known" offenders —persons found guilty, or cautioned—by offence category, specific age groups and police force area 1986 to 1990. Provisional data for 1991 will not be available before the end of 1992.

Table 1

Number and percentage of juveniles and young adults found guilty or cautioned for offences of theft of a motor vehicle, unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle and theft from a vehicle 1986

Police force area	*Theft of and unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle*									*Theft from a vehicle*				
		Juveniles				*Young adults*					*Juveniles*		*Young adults*	
	Total all ages (=100%)	*Theft*	*Unauthorised taking*	*Theft and unauthorised taking*		*Theft*	*Unauthorised taking*	*Theft and unauthorised taking*		*Total all ages (=100%)*	*Theft*		*Theft*	
				Number	*Per cent.*			*Number*	*Per cent.*		*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Avon and Somerset	851	29	277	306	36	61	277	338	40	217	67	31	86	40
Bedfordshire	332	11	86	97	29	30	127	157	47	172	35	20	77	45
Cambridgeshire	265	24	85	109	41	26	68	94	35	258	80	31	111	43
Cheshire	528	18	181	199	38	35	170	205	39	375	72	19	163	43
Cleveland	547	38	198	236	43	31	181	212	39	36	13	36	16	44
Cumbria	307	21	83	104	34	18	121	139	45	77	33	43	28	36
Derbyshire	417	30	112	142	34	26	149	175	42	225	78	35	89	40
Devon and Cornwall	578	10	133	143	25	22	241	263	46	314	111	35	105	33

Police force area	*Theft of and unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle*									*Theft from a vehicle*				
		Juveniles				*Young adults*					*Juveniles*		*Young adults*	
	Total all ages (=100%)	*Theft*	*Unauthorised taking*	*Theft and unauthorised taking*		*Theft*	*Unauthorised taking*	*Theft and unauthorised taking*		*Total all ages (=100%)*	*Theft*		*Theft*	
				Number	*Per cent.*			*Number*	*Per cent.*		*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Dorset	344	17	119	136	40	20	121	141	41	130	25	19	50	38
Durham	429	28	156	184	43	20	124	144	34	193	51	26	83	43
Essex	764	74	219	293	38	63	245	308	40	466	126	27	203	44
Gloucestershire	240	5	77	82	34	13	97	110	46	150	46	31	68	45
Greater Manchester	3,000	128	1,193	1,321	44	109	1,051	1,160	39	614	240	39	208	34
Hampshire	1,012	58	320	378	37	68	339	407	40	330	108	33	128	39
Hertfordshire	477	16	151	167	35	21	179	200	42	211	56	27	104	49
Humberside	547	35	226	261	48	38	161	199	36	256	70	27	108	42
Kent	728	26	202	228	31	54	264	318	44	425	82	19	231	54
Lancashire	776	36	262	298	38	21	273	294	38	274	63	23	116	42
Leicestershire	560	26	134	160	29	34	251	285	51	205	76	37	71	35
Lincolnshire	268	13	93	106	40	12	94	106	40	198	45	23	81	41
London, City of	42	—	8	8	19	1	16	17	40	29	4	14	10	34
Merseyside	907	10	372	382	42	22	320	342	38	259	119	46	84	32
Metropolitan Police District	5,509	91	1,912	2,003	36	188	1,975	2,163	39	1,738	547	31	738	42
Norfolk	320	9	114	123	38	20	83	103	32	215	44	20	93	43
Northamptonshire	388	27	110	137	35	24	127	151	39	194	52	27	94	48
Northumbria	1,089	77	293	370	34	51	409	460	42	666	194	29	264	40
North Yorkshire	295	29	71	100	34	21	107	128	43	187	36	19	74	40
Nottinghamshire	629	37	212	249	40	39	213	252	40	408	108	26	166	41
South Yorkshire	914	84	267	351	38	63	315	378	41	257	70	27	110	43
Staffordshire	380	11	96	107	28	26	160	186	49	41	13	32	11	27
Suffolk	203	8	74	82	40	14	63	77	38	119	34	29	58	49
Surrey	284	17	61	78	27	34	92	126	44	96	23	24	44	46
Sussex	558	8	160	168	30	33	205	238	43	295	75	25	134	45
Thames Valley	929	74	259	333	36	74	321	395	43	495	145	29	228	46
Warwickshire	173	38	34	72	42	10	52	62	36	123	42	34	46	37
West Mercia	494	20	136	156	32	33	176	209	42	247	105	43	78	32
West Midlands	2,359	206	677	883	37	91	900	991	42	881	332	38	312	35
West Yorkshire	1,493	86	468	554	37	85	500	585	39	571	164	29	228	40
Wiltshire	313	6	123	129	41	10	115	125	40	175	42	24	79	45
Dyfed-Powys	149	1	53	54	36	1	54	55	37	162	23	14	101	62
Gwent	319	14	93	107	34	19	126	145	45	40	15	38	14	35
North Wales	369	11	147	158	43	13	108	121	33	177	45	25	72	41
South Wales	993	46	323	369	37	53	341	394	40	254	97	38	76	30
England and Wales	32,079	1,553	10,370	11,923	37	1,647	11,311	12,958	40	12,755	3,806	30	5,240	41

Table 2

Number and percentage of juveniles and young adults found guilty or cautioned for offences of theft of a motor vehicle, unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle and theft from a vehicle 1987

Police force area	*Theft of and unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle*									*Theft from a vehicle*				
		Juveniles				*Young adults*					*Juveniles*		*Young adults*	
	Total all ages (=100%)	*Theft*	*Unauthorised taking*	*Theft and unauthorised taking*		*Theft*	*Unauthorised taking*	*Theft and unauthorised taking*		*Total all ages (=100%)*	*Theft*		*Theft*	
				Number	*Per cent.*			*Number*	*Per cent.*		*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Avon and Somerset	858	[1]—	[1]—	340	40	[1]—	[1]—	329	38	298	131	44	103	35
Bedfordshire	388	[1]—	[1]—	147	38	[1]—	[1]—	165	43	245	93	38	95	39
Cambridgeshire	298	[1]—	[1]—	89	30	[1]—	[1]—	127	43	219	75	34	88	40
Cheshire	669	[1]—	[1]—	302	45	[1]—	[1]—	222	33	370	101	27	145	39
Cleveland	521	[1]—	[1]—	235	45	[1]—	[1]—	187	36	65	36	55	20	31
Cumbria	298	[1]—	[1]—	112	38	[1]—	[1]—	116	39	85	43	51	25	29
Derbyshire	454	[1]—	[1]—	134	30	[1]—	[1]—	192	42	252	89	35	89	35
Devon and Cornwall	660	[1]—	[1]—	165	25	[1]—	[1]—	290	44	213	14	7	104	49
Dorset	347	[1]—	[1]—	122	35	[1]—	[1]—	143	41	119	38	32	48	40
Durham	468	[1]—	[1]—	213	46	[1]—	[1]—	153	33	167	60	36	65	39
Essex	850	[1]—	[1]—	310	36	[1]—	[1]—	380	45	570	221	39	219	38
Gloucestershire	258	[1]—	[1]—	98	38	[1]—	[1]—	111	43	154	59	38	52	34
Greater Manchester	2,945	[1]—	[1]—	1,156	39	[1]—	[1]—	1,190	40	894	402	45	266	30
Hampshire	1,036	[1]—	[1]—	407	39	[1]—	[1]—	403	39	448	223	50	136	30
Hertfordshire	400	[1]—	[1]—	134	34	[1]—	[1]—	167	42	298	123	41	120	40
Humberside	609	[1]—	[1]—	287	47	[1]—	[1]—	207	34	308	109	35	107	35
Kent	741	[1]—	[1]—	239	32	[1]—	[1]—	299	40	662	256	39	253	38
Lancashire	867	[1]—	[1]—	292	34	[1]—	[1]—	367	42	312	88	28	143	46
Leicestershire	568	[1]—	[1]—	221	39	[1]—	[1]—	228	40	739	598	81	91	12
Lincolnshire	285	[1]—	[1]—	92	32	[1]—	[1]—	114	40	225	67	30	95	42
London, City of	40	[1]—	[1]—	5	13	[1]—	[1]—	18	45	32	3	9	13	41
Merseyside	986	[1]—	[1]—	373	38	[1]—	[1]—	383	39	341	177	52	100	29
Metropolitan Police District	5,031	[1]—	[1]—	1,702	34	[1]—	[1]—	1,960	39	2,076	928	45	731	35
Norfolk	341	[1]—	[1]—	117	34	[1]—	[1]—	127	37	289	98	34	108	37
Northamptonshire	430	[1]—	[1]—	181	42	[1]—	[1]—	160	37	222	72	32	94	42
Northumbria	1,295	[1]—	[1]—	515	40	[1]—	[1]—	506	39	696	250	36	260	37
North Yorkshire	272	[1]—	[1]—	75	28	[1]—	[1]—	121	44	228	90	39	80	35
Nottinghamshire	705	[1]—	[1]—	307	44	[1]—	[1]—	245	35	494	214	43	160	32
South Yorkshire	941	[1]—	[1]—	369	39	[1]—	[1]—	388	41	342	98	29	150	44
Staffordshire	443	[1]—	[1]—	133	30	[1]—	[1]—	195	44	89	54	61	23	26
Suffolk	264	[1]—	[1]—	97	37	[1]—	[1]—	84	32	144	51	35	62	43
Surrey	367	[1]—	[1]—	123	34	[1]—	[1]—	155	42	134	63	47	38	28
Sussex	516	[1]—	[1]—	167	32	[1]—	[1]—	231	45	380	130	34	155	41
Thames Valley	1,061	[1]—	[1]—	427	40	[1]—	[1]—	390	37	544	161	30	247	45
Warwickshire	217	[1]—	[1]—	79	36	[1]—	[1]—	96	44	199	65	33	75	38

Police force area	*Theft of and unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle*										*Theft from a vehicle*			
		Juveniles				*Young adults*					*Juveniles*		*Young adults*	
	Total all ages (=100%)	*Theft*	*Unauthorised taking*	*Theft and unauthorised taking*		*Theft*	*Unauthorised taking*	*Theft and unauthorised taking*		*Total all ages (=100%)*	*Theft*		*Theft*	
				Number	*Per cent.*			*Number*	*Per cent.*		*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
West Mercia	528	¹—	¹—	171	32	¹—	¹—	220	42	273	144	53	77	28
West Midlands	2,460	¹—	¹—	925	38	¹—	¹—	1,057	43	1,246	582	47	390	31
West Yorkshire	1,764	¹—	¹—	716	41	¹—	¹—	679	38	949	404	43	302	32
Wiltshire	223	¹—	¹—	81	36	¹—	¹—	77	35	234	82	35	81	35
Dyfed-Powys	166	¹—	¹—	47	38	¹—	¹—	71	43	148	57	39	41	28
Gwent	339	¹—	¹—	126	37	¹—	¹—	131	39	61	33	54	23	38
North Wales	385	¹—	¹—	148	38	¹—	¹—	152	39	176	62	35	61	35
South Wales	1,117	¹—	¹—	403	36	¹—	¹—	445	40	354	136	38	103	29
England and Wales	33,411	¹—	¹—	12,382	37	¹—	¹—	13,281	40	16,294	6,780	42	5,638	35

¹ Not available separately.

Table 3

Number and percentage of juveniles and young adults found guilty or cautioned for offences of theft of a motor vehicle, unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle and theft from a vehicle 1988

Police force area	*Theft of and unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle*										*Theft from a vehicle*			
		Juveniles				*Young adults*					*Juveniles*		*Young adults*	
	Total all ages (=100%)	*Theft*	*Unauthorised taking*	*Theft and unauthorised taking*		*Theft*	*Unauthorised taking*	*Theft and unauthorised taking*		*Total all ages (=100%)*	*Theft*		*Theft*	
				Number	*Per cent.*			*Number*	*Per cent.*		*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Avon and Somerset	877	¹—	¹—	332	38	¹—	¹—	327	37	375	173	46	127	34
Bedfordshire	326	¹—	¹—	122	37	¹—	¹—	149	46	307	95	46	68	33
Cambridgeshire	337	¹—	¹—	142	42	¹—	¹—	98	29	221	115	52	56	25
Cheshire	652	¹—	¹—	279	43	¹—	¹—	248	38	315	98	31	118	37
Cleveland	665	¹—	¹—	283	43	¹—	¹—	268	40	144	58	40	71	49
Cumbria	327	¹—	¹—	139	43	¹—	¹—	114	35	79	34	43	28	35
Derbyshire	390	¹—	¹—	131	34	¹—	¹—	154	39	385	159	41	142	37
Devon and Cornwall	713	¹—	¹—	229	32	¹—	¹—	297	42	107	14	13	49	46
Dorset	274	¹—	¹—	82	30	¹—	¹—	102	37	136	57	42	39	29
Durham	385	¹—	¹—	134	35	¹—	¹—	159	41	203	117	58	45	22
Essex	801	¹—	¹—	315	39	¹—	¹—	303	38	457	160	35	184	40
Gloucestershire	233	¹—	¹—	101	43	¹—	¹—	80	34	182	78	43	73	40
Greater Manchester	2,761	¹—	¹—	1,125	41	¹—	¹—	1,098	40	839	442	53	258	31
Hampshire	967	¹—	¹—	382	40	¹—	¹—	388	40	463	205	44	162	35
Hertfordshire	465	¹—	¹—	165	35	¹—	¹—	190	41	283	124	44	112	40
Humberside	662	¹—	¹—	297	45	¹—	¹—	252	38	349	163	47	95	27
Kent	716	¹—	¹—	248	35	¹—	¹—	292	41	1,082	707	65	238	22
Lancashire	865	¹—	¹—	271	31	¹—	¹—	371	43	786	601	76	116	15
Leicestershire	494	¹—	¹—	203	41	¹—	¹—	174	35	339	108	32	153	45
Lincolnshire	272	¹—	¹—	95	35	¹—	¹—	109	40	275	127	46	103	37
London, City of	28	¹—	¹—	3	11	¹—	¹—	7	25	12	3	25	5	42
Merseyside	1,018	¹—	¹—	359	35	¹—	¹—	435	43	359	190	53	104	29
Metropolitan Police District	4,119	¹—	¹—	1,513	37	¹—	¹—	1,506	37	1,555	641	41	544	35
Norfolk	357	¹—	¹—	131	37	¹—	¹—	140	39	271	137	51	80	30
Northamptonshire	345	¹—	¹—	107	31	¹—	¹—	139	40	214	78	36	86	40
Northumbria	1,240	¹—	¹—	471	38	¹—	¹—	511	41	681	244	36	251	37
North Yorkshire	293	¹—	¹—	94	32	¹—	¹—	142	48	242	100	41	86	36
Nottinghamshire	700	¹—	¹—	276	39	¹—	¹—	262	37	537	229	43	172	32
South Yorkshire	1,024	¹—	¹—	361	35	¹—	¹—	442	43	449	187	42	177	39
Staffordshire	641	¹—	¹—	220	34	¹—	¹—	242	38	264	237	90	14	5
Suffolk	213	¹—	¹—	85	40	¹—	¹—	68	32	183	112	61	39	21
Surrey	327	¹—	¹—	107	33	¹—	¹—	137	42	150	65	43	50	33
Sussex	494	¹—	¹—	156	32	¹—	¹—	194	39	342	100	29	152	44
Thames Valley	931	¹—	¹—	349	37	¹—	¹—	374	40	458	156	34	211	46
Warwickshire	268	¹—	¹—	103	38	¹—	¹—	116	43	197	97	49	55	28
West Mercia	489	¹—	¹—	192	39	¹—	¹—	205	42	367	260	71	63	17
West Midlands	2,158	¹—	¹—	785	36	¹—	¹—	937	43	1,207	628	52	337	28
West Yorkshire	1,758	¹—	¹—	664	38	¹—	¹—	709	40	1,216	762	63	296	24
Wiltshire	287	¹—	¹—	94	33	¹—	¹—	113	39	227	104	46	66	29
Dyfed-Powys	172	¹—	¹—	45	26	¹—	¹—	74	43	141	89	63	34	24
Gwent	328	¹—	¹—	134	41	¹—	¹—	127	39	123	63	51	40	33
North Wales	381	¹—	¹—	139	36	¹—	¹—	142	37	214	84	39	73	34
South Wales	1,309	¹—	¹—	477	36	¹—	¹—	566	43	421	207	49	130	31
England and Wales	32,062	¹—	¹—	11,940	37	¹—	¹—	12,761	40	17,057	8,408	49	5,302	31

¹ Not available separately.

Table 4

Number and percentage of juveniles and young adults found guilty or cautioned for offences of theft of a motor vehicle, unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle and theft from a vehicle 1989

Police force area	*Theft of and unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle*										*Theft from a vehicle*			
		Juveniles				*Young adults*					*Juveniles*		*Young adults*	
	Total all ages (=100%)	*Theft*	*Unauthorised taking*	*Theft and unauthorised taking*		*Theft*	*Unauthorised taking*	*Theft and unauthorised taking*		*Total all ages (=100%)*	*Theft*		*Theft*	
				Number	*Per cent.*			*Number*	*Per cent.*		*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Avon and Somerset	861	70	254	324	38	53	312	365	42	273	74	27	123	45
Bedfordshire	365	26	116	142	39	23	126	149	41	152	45	30	68	45
Cambridgeshire	263	39	51	90	34	42	58	100	38	157	52	33	67	43
Cheshire	590	28	205	233	39	40	176	216	37	258	40	16	142	55
Cleveland	623	54	253	307	49	35	196	231	37	215	69	32	108	50
Cumbria	260	12	87	99	38	12	92	104	40	104	49	47	33	32
Derbyshire	415	24	132	156	38	20	150	170	41	333	62	19	176	53
Devon and Cornwall	562	10	157	167	30	42	193	235	42	151	29	19	57	38
Dorset	259	6	105	111	43	11	71	82	32	104	40	38	34	33
Durham	344	32	91	123	36	30	120	150	44	193	43	22	93	48
Essex	758	73	232	305	40	50	215	265	35	361	90	25	187	52
Gloucestershire	262	14	109	123	47	16	69	85	32	123	28	23	57	46
Greater Manchester	2,782	83	1,011	1,094	39	116	1,007	1,123	40	711	294	41	246	35
Hampshire	854	33	269	302	35	73	291	364	43	328	103	31	136	41
Hertfordshire	370	18	129	147	40	22	118	140	38	195	38	19	109	56
Humberside	723	77	303	380	53	70	179	249	34	356	134	38	132	37
Kent	605	64	155	219	36	55	173	228	38	422	113	27	204	48
Lancashire	830	24	260	284	34	41	297	338	41	258	103	40	100	39
Leicestershire	574	23	229	252	44	28	177	205	36	323	127	39	129	40
Lincolnshire	297	7	104	111	37	17	94	111	37	236	70	30	99	42
London, City of	12	1	1	2	17	—	3	3	25	10	4	40	3	30
Merseyside	1,046	23	363	386	37	24	423	447	43	325	213	66	62	19
Metropolitan Police District	3,467	88	1,068	1,156	33	92	1,245	1,337	39	1,443	550	38	561	39
Norfolk	328	17	109	126	38	21	91	112	34	182	52	29	83	46
Northamptonshire	318	13	69	82	26	22	117	139	44	128	12	9	75	59
Northumbria	1,211	62	414	476	39	57	459	516	43	659	210	32	285	43
North Yorkshire	231	7	61	68	29	17	75	92	40	155	42	27	59	38
Nottinghamshire	823	42	292	334	41	53	276	329	40	440	125	28	196	45
South Yorkshire	895	102	231	333	37	95	270	365	41	329	107	33	147	45
Staffordshire	578	18	226	244	42	25	190	215	37	121	79	65	22	18
Suffolk	226	17	73	90	40	19	55	74	33	125	34	27	50	40
Surrey	304	24	90	114	38	12	98	110	36	87	23	26	38	44
Sussex	487	44	123	167	34	16	174	190	39	248	49	20	136	55
Thames Valley	1,030	68	415	483	47	47	328	375	36	402	135	34	180	45
Warwickshire	246	18	68	86	35	15	93	108	44	112	20	18	62	55
West Mercia	474	34	187	221	47	25	146	171	36	175	99	57	47	27
West Midlands	2,083	152	730	882	42	102	691	793	38	857	462	54	239	28
West Yorkshire	1,666	132	547	679	41	131	541	672	40	868	409	47	265	31
Wiltshire	288	22	88	110	38	20	90	110	38	140	39	28	59	42
Dyfed-Powys	164	2	48	50	30	4	64	68	41	65	30	46	21	32
Gwent	317	17	114	131	41	14	109	123	39	129	48	37	55	43
North Wales	362	19	104	123	34	15	121	136	38	134	45	34	52	39
South Wales	1,147	37	418	455	40	55	384	439	38	348	154	44	129	37
England and Wales	30,300	1,676	10,091	11,767	39	1,677	10,157	11,834	39	12,735	4,544	36	5,126	40

Table 5

Number and percentage of juveniles and young adults found guilty or cautioned for offences of theft of a motor vehicle, unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle and theft from a vehicle 1990

Police force area	*Theft of and unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle*									*Theft from a vehicle*				
		Juveniles				*Young adults*					*Juveniles*		*Young adults*	
	Total all ages (=100%)	*Theft*	*Unauthorised taking*	*Theft and unauthorised taking*		*Theft*	*Unauthorised taking*	*Theft and unauthorised taking*		*Total all ages (=100%)*	*Theft*		*Theft*	
				Number	*Per cent.*			*Number*	*Per cent.*		*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Avon and Somerset	755	54	174	288	30	45	288	333	44	312	82	26	168	54
Bedfordshire	456	50	122	172	38	31	172	203	45	180	65	36	82	46
Cambridgeshire	317	42	64	106	33	35	91	126	40	211	61	29	109	52
Cheshire	738	16	319	335	45	53	218	271	37	312	95	30	141	45
Cleveland	670	61	228	289	43	49	232	281	42	246	97	39	113	46
Cumbria	300	11	97	108	36	12	102	114	38	84	42	50	31	37
Derbyshire	434	25	127	152	35	24	146	170	39	332	115	35	141	42
Devon and Cornwall	658	20	167	187	28	35	225	260	40	195	52	27	80	41
Dorset	267	19	78	97	36	19	83	102	38	96	29	30	37	39
Durham	400	42	85	127	32	47	133	180	45	271	82	30	121	45
Essex	747	99	208	307	41	77	193	270	36	398	121	30	201	51
Gloucestershire	208	6	67	73	35	17	72	89	43	161	50	31	70	43
Greater Manchester	3,041	133	1,227	1,360	45	87	1,052	1,139	37	904	417	46	301	33
Hampshire	987	50	330	380	39	62	324	386	39	544	186	34	205	38
Hertfordshire	462	52	143	195	42	28	150	178	39	259	93	36	127	49
Humberside	668	96	267	363	54	43	167	210	31	371	134	36	144	39
Kent	717	83	143	226	32	111	187	298	42	481	99	21	248	52
Lancashire	865	34	241	275	32	57	309	366	42	263	105	40	102	39
Leicestershire	694	29	239	268	39	46	252	298	43	304	89	29	158	52
Lincolnshire	316	18	107	125	40	17	102	119	38	218	59	27	102	47
London, City of	21	—	1	1	5	2	8	10	48	9	4	44	3	33
	976	9	314	323	33	20	441	461	47	261	147	56	78	30
Metropolitan Police District	3,517	81	1,345	1,426	41	91	1,191	1,282	36	1,733	844	49	523	30
Norfolk	336	23	106	129	38	30	89	119	35	189	62	33	91	48
Northamptonshire	287	8	32	40	13	17	129	146	49	103	15	15	70	68
Northumbria	1,242	71	443	514	41	77	432	509	41	662	244	37	273	41
North Yorkshire	277	19	69	88	32	22	93	115	42	225	61	27	102	45
Nottinghamshire	988	57	365	422	43	55	344	399	40	474	140	30	227	48
South Yorkshire	968	95	243	338	35	90	351	441	46	506	137	27	240	47
Staffordshire	621	56	167	223	36	46	231	277	45	179	121	68	43	24
Suffolk	273	14	99	113	41	25	71	96	35	142	43	30	67	47
Surrey	257	17	84	101	39	16	79	95	37	82	23	28	39	48
Sussex	455	50	96	146	32	14	185	199	44	318	63	20	160	50
Thames Valley	1,204	91	419	510	42	79	383	462	38	375	158	42	155	41
Warwickshire	270	36	64	100	37	33	75	108	40	143	30	21	79	55
West Mercia	539	43	161	204	38	41	175	216	40	141	58	41	57	40
West Midlands	2,375	182	838	1,020	43	89	833	922	39	864	540	63	192	22
West Yorkshire	1,886	133	629	762	40	112	635	747	40	855	404	47	299	35
Wiltshire	292	17	88	105	36	14	117	131	45	142	30	21	69	49
Dyfed-Powys	174	4	54	58	33	14	58	72	41	52	25	48	21	40
Gwent	330	12	127	139	42	25	98	123	37	98	34	35	46	47
North Wales	292	13	84	97	33	8	104	112	38	156	51	33	64	41
South Wales	1,302	38	486	524	40	55	507	562	43	349	145	42	144	41
England and Wales	32,592	2,009	10,747	12,756	39	1,870	11,127	12,997	40	14,200	5,452	38	5,723	40

Ronnie Kray

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what treatment Ronnie Kray received at Heatherwood hospital, Ascot on 15 October; how many members of staff from Broadmoor hospital escorted him there on his visit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: I have been asked to reply.

Information about the treatment of individual patients is confidential between the hospital and the patient concerned. The provision of escorts for special hospital patients is an operational matter about which the hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the Special Hospitals Service Authority, Dr. David Edmond.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Magistrates

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how much was spent on training and retraining magistrates in the financial years 1979-80, 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and the planned expenditure for 1992-93.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Statutory responsibility for providing training and retraining magistrates lies with the 105 magistrates courts committees in England and Wales. This is funded 80 per cent. from central Government grant and 20 per cent. from local funds. At this stage it is not possible to identify the amounts that have been spent by magistrates courts committees on training and retraining magistrates in the years in question, but measures are in hand to ensure that this information is recorded in future.

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the names of those responsible for choosing magistrates for the borough of Sandwell and their length of service in each case.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The ultimate choice is that of the Lord Chancellor. He is advised by the Lord Chancellor's advisory committees, the members of which are as follows:

Name	*Date of Appointment*
Warley Advisory Committee	
Mrs. D. Cox, JP (Chairman)	1985
D. L. Crump, Esq. JP	1987
Mrs. W. V. Dyke, JP	1991
Miss B. Fletcher, JP	1991
Mrs. F. J. Groves, JP	1981

Name	*Date of Appointment*
F. D. Head, Esq., JP	1987
Miss J. E. H. Marshall, JP	1987
H. E. Nottingham, Esq., JP	1991
C. G. Simmonds, Esq., JP	1991
J. Southall, Esq., JP	1981
R. G. Trigg, Esq.	1991
West Bromwich Advisory Committee	
P. J. Elliott, Esq., JP (Chairman)	1977
Dr. A. R. M. Evans, JP	1991
D. A. Hamilton, Esq. JP	1991
A. Mandley, Esq., JP	1988
J. A. Neale, Esq., JP	1984
J. F. Nicklin, Esq.,	1988
D. Parish, Esq, JP	1981
D. B. Peakman, Esq.,	1991
A. Pitt, Esq., JP	1988
Mrs. S. M. Smith, JP	1991
Mrs. M. Wilkes, JP	1984
Mrs. D. M. Wills, JP	1991

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will give the political balance of magistrates for the borough of Sandwell.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The political allegiances of the magistrates, at the time of their appointment, were as follows:

	Number
Warley	
Conservative	70
Labour	54
Liberal Democrat	15
Independent and not known	16
West Bromwich	
Conservative	79
Labour	43
Liberal Democrat	11
Independent and not known	13

The Lord Chancellor has asked the West Bromwich advisory committee to seek additional appointments to improve the political balance.

TRANSPORT

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to undertake public consultations about substituting the channel tunnel high speed link running between Stratford and King's Cross for the North London line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Government expects to receive the report of Union Railways on the channel tunnel rail link by the end of December. We shall consider carefully its proposals and options, and will then announce a route for public consultation. We shall aim to do this as soon as possible.

M20

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in connection with the widening of the M20 between junctions 3 and 5 *(a)* how many dwellings he has acquired under the discretionary power in section 62 of the Planning and Compensations Act 1991, *(b)* how many dwellings he has agreed to acquire under section 62 but where completion has not yet taken place, *(c)* how many applications to purchase under section 62 are still awaiting his decision and *(d)* what is the average acquisition cost to his Department per dwelling of the houses acquired under section 62.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: *(a)* one dwelling has been acquired under the discretionary power contained in section 62 of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991; *(b)* further 17 are in the process of acquisition following acceptance of their application for discretionary purchase; *(c)* there are 32 outstanding applications for discretionary purchase awaiting decision; *(d)* the average cost per dwelling is expected to be in the region of £92,000.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in connection with the widening of the M20 between junctions 3 and 5 *(a)* how many dwellings he has acquired under the blight notice procedures, *(b)* how many dwellings he has the acquisition still to complete under those procedures, *(c)* what is the average acquisition cost to his Department per dwelling and *(d)* how many of the dwellings already acquired, and to be acquired, are on land that is now actually required for this road widening scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: *(a)* 264 dwellings have been acquired to date under the blight provisions; *(b)* a further 28 are in the process of acquisition following acceptance of blight notices; *(c)* the average cost per dwelling is in the region of £92,000; *(d)* 57 dwellings are on land that is expected to be physically affected by the widening scheme.

British Transport Police

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will undertake that after the privatisation of British Rail the British Transport police will remain as a unified force, independent of the metropolitan and county forces.

Mr. Freeman: The Government have no plans to end the present arrangement under which the British Transport police, as a separate service independent of the county police forces, have responsibility for security and the enforcement of law and order on the railways.

Railways, United States

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which railways' rapid transports he visited in the United States of America this summer.

Mr. MacGregor: Unfortunately I had to cut short my visit to the United States, and so could not undertake my planned visit to see commuter services provided by the private sector in the Chicago conurbation.

Norbreck Parade, London

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement detailing the reasons why his Department directed the local planning authority to refuse the application for permission to construct an access to Norbreck parade, London NW10, from the north circular road, and which was the subject of appeal proceedings on 14 October at the Ealing town hall.

Mr. Norris: The Department directed refusal of this application in order to safeguard the safety and free flow of traffic on the north circular road.

Marshalling Yards, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions his Department has had with British Rail concerning the future of Doncaster's marshalling yards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: This is a commercial matter for British Rail.

Jubilee Line

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now authorise the construction of the Jubilee line extension.

Mr. Norris: No. Discussions with the private sector continue.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list all the names of public appointments that he has made, giving the period for which the appointment was made, relevant qualifications of the appointees and what remuneration each currently receives.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The information, listed by public body, is as follows:

	Period of appointment
Civil Service Appeal Board	
Mr. R. M. Hastie-Smith CB	1 July, 1992—30 June, 1994
Mr. P. D. Jones	1 June, 1992—27 December, 1992
Mr. N. F. Ledsome CB (reappointed)	1 May, 1992—30 April, 1994
Mr. J. Pennington (reappointed)	15 August, 1992—14 August, 1994
Mr. A. Stern	15 August, 1992—14 August, 1994
All Board members are appointed on the basis of their past experience of Civil Service personnel matters.	
Members receive a fee of £110 per day of attendance, plus expenses.	
Agricultural and Food Research Council	
Professor T. Mansfield FIBiol, PhD, FRS (reappointed)	1 August, 1992—31 July, 1993
Mr. David George, OBE (reappointed)	1 August, 1992—31 July, 1994
Members receive an honorarium of £4,420.	
Economic and Social Research Council	
Professor Victoria Bruce PhD	1 August, 1992—31 July, 1996
Mr. William W. Daniel BA(Hons), MScTech	1 August, 1992—31 July, 1996
Mr. Norman Glass BA, DIP, ICES (Amsterdam)	1 August, 1992—31 July 1996
Dr. Jeremy Harbison BA, MSC, DPhil	1 August, 1992—31 July, 1996
Dr. Paul Judge BA	1 August, 1992—31 July, 1996
Ms. Jennifer Abramsky, BA(Hons)	1 October, 1992—31 July, 1995
Members receive an honorarium of £4,420.	
Medical Research Council	
Professor A. M. Breckenridge MD, FRCP, FRSE	1 August, 1992—31 July, 1996
Professor J. R. Pattison MA, BSc, DM, MRCPath	1 August, 1992—31 July, 1996
Professor Sir David Weatherall MD, FRCP, FRCPath, FRS	1 August, 1992—31 July, 1996
Members receive an honorarium of £4,420.	
National Environment Research Council	
Dr. I. J. Graham-Bryce DPhil, FRSC (reappointed)	1 August, 1992—31 July, 1995
Dr. R. J. Pentreath PhD, DSc, FRS	1 August, 1992—31 July, 1995
Professor J. R. L. Allen DSc, FRS	1 August, 1992—31 July, 1995
Dr. G. W. Robinson BSc, PhD	1 August, 1992—31 July, 1996
Members receive an honorarium of £4,597 with the exception of Dr. Robinson who receives no remuneration.	
Science and Engineering Research Council	
Professor A. W. Wolfendale BSc, PhD, DSc, FInstP, FRAS, FRS (reappointed)	1 August, 1992—31 July, 1993
Professor Oxburgh PhD, FRS (reappointed)	1 August, 1992—31 July, 1993
Dr. G. W. Robinson BSc, PhD	1 August, 1992—31 July, 1996
Professor R. Smallman FRS, FEng	1 August, 1992—31 July, 1996
Professor Wolfendale receives an honorarium of £5,900. Professor Smallman receives an honorarium of £4,420. Professor Oxburgh and Dr. Robinson receive no remuneration.	
Advisory Board for the Research Councils	
Professor R. L. Gardner, FRS (reappointed)	1 July, 1992—31 March, 1994
Sir Eric Ash, CBE, FRS (reappointed)	1 July, 1992—31 March, 1993
Professor David Currie BSc, MSocSci, Econs, PhD	1 July, 1992—31 March, 1994
Members receive an honorarium of £4,420.	

ENVIRONMENT

Leasehold Enfranchisement

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to separate the leasehold enfranchisement elements of the Housing, Land and Urban Development Bill from the other parts of the Bill and to present them as a separate Bill.

Mr. Baldry: No.

Urban Regeneration Agency

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will meet Stoke on Trent city council to discuss its response to the Urban Regeneration Agency consultation paper.

Mr. Robin Squire: The consultation exercise on our proposals on the Urban Regeneration Agency closed on 21 September. The Department took note of Stoke-on-Trent's response, along with the many others we received, in preparing the details of the agency in the Housing and Urban Development Bill which was introduced to the House on 22 October. It is too late to take receipt of further formal comments but I would be happy to discuss our plans for the agency when I visit Stoke-on-Trent on 13 November.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it is policy that any future arrangements for the proposed Urban Regeneration Agency will not discriminate against those authorities currently in receipt of derelict land grant but currently without assisted area and other status.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Housing and Urban Development Bill makes provision for a new unified grant regime for the Urban Regeneration Agency which will replace derelict land grant and the other grants to be transferred to it. The Government will take account of the current priorities for these grants, including derelict land grant, when constructing the new unified regime.

Council Tax

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account is taken of home improvements in valuation of households for the council tax.

Mr. Robin Squire: The band shown in the valuation list compiled on 1 April 1993 should reflect the size, layout and character of each dwelling on that day. If there has been a change to a dwelling since it was valued, and before 1 April 1993, the banding of the dwelling may be reconsidered by the listing officer. In all cases, the banding will reflect the open market value of the dwelling, including any subsequent improvement, as at 1 April 1991.

After 1 April 1993, home improvements and other factors which lead to a material increase in the value of a dwelling will only be taken into account when it is subsequently sold.

Eco-labelling Scheme

Mr. Coe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in implementing the eco-labelling scheme; and how it will be funded in 1992-93.

Mr. Maclean: The Government have laid regulations before both Houses of Parliament which are due to come into force on 1 November establishing the United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board as a non-departmental public body and giving it responsibility for administering and promoting the EC eco-labelling scheme in the United Kingdom.

The board was set up in an advisory capacity in July under the chair of Dr. Elizabeth Nelson. It has already made a good start in preparing the ground for implementation of the scheme and developing plans for a communications strategy. On 23 October the board and European Commission jointly hosted in the first meeting of competent bodies from EC member states, in London, to discuss issues of common interest.

Unfortunately there have been delays at the Commission in setting in place the necessary administrative arrangements for the scheme. The United Kingdom has played and will continue to play a leading role in the development of the eco-labelling scheme. Through our presidency of the European Community we are pressing the Commission to implement the scheme speedily and asking that other member states show the same commitment to it as we are showing. The board remains hopeful that the first eco-labels will start appearing on goods in the shops in the early part of 1993.

Parliamentary approval of this new expenditure will be sought in a supplementary estimate for the central environmental services vote—class VIII vote 5. Pending the approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £550,000 will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund.

Transfer of Undertakings and Acquired Rights

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the advice he has issued to local authorities over the transfer of undertakings and acquired rights directive.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Directive was implemented in the United Kingdom by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981. We are at present consulting interested parties on a draft of guidance to be issued under section 9 of the Local Government Act 1992, which states our view that it would be most unusual for the Regulations to apply to a normal contract let under the compulsory competitive tendering legislation. However the interpretation of the law in individual cases is a matter for the courts.

Computer Projects

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table setting out for the period since 9 April *(a)* each tender issued by his Department for projects requiring the supply of (i) computer hardware and (ii) computer software, *(b)* a description of the services required, *(c)* the number of companies who were invited to tenders, *(d)* the number of companies who submitted a bid without prior invitation by his Department, *(e)* which company was awarded the contract, *(f)* the value of each contract and *(g)* the length of period over which the contract will run.

Mr. Howard: The following major contracts have been awarded by my department since 9 April 1992 for the supply of computer hardware and software. No companies submitted a bid without prior invitation.

(a) Provision of computer hardware
Description of services: Provision of hardware and software to enable the department to perform automatic security back ups of its computer bureau systems.
Number of companies invited to tender:—3
Company awarded the contract: Digital Equipment Corporation
Value of contract:—£116,736
Duration of Contract:—Not applicable

(b) Provision of computer software
(i) Description of Services: Provision of a personal computer version of library periodicals software formerly provided by Comshare as part of their bureau service.
Number of companies invited to tender:—1
Company awarded the contract:—Comshare Ltd.
Value of contract:—£36,450
Duration of contract:—4 months

(ii) Description of services: Provision of computer system design software.
Number of companies invited to tender:—1
Company awarded the contract:—LBMS
Value of Contract:—£24,300
Duration of contract:—Not applicable

(iii) Description of services: IEF software
Number of companies invited to tender:—1
Company awarded the contract:—JMA Information Engineering
Value of contract:—£8,500
Duration of contract:—Not applicable

(iv) Description of services: Helpdesk software for VAX VMS system.
Number of companies invited to tender: 1
Company awarded the contract:—Intercom Data Systems
Value of contract:—£17,000
Duration of contract:—Not applicable

(v) Description of services: Diskeeper Plus Software (defragmentation)
Number of companies invited to tender:—1
Company awarded the contract:—Executive Software
Value of contract:—£4,700
Duration of contract: Not applicable

In addition, during the same period my department issued 1,471 orders for minor items of computer hardware, software and associated consumables, over half of which were from "call-off" contracts that were placed before 9 April 1992. The combined value of these orders is £1,238,000.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contribution United Kingdom nuclear fuel cycle experts have made to the International Atomic Agency's RADWASS programme on developing safety standards for nuclear waste management.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom plays a major part in the planning and development of the Radioactive Waste Safety Standards programme of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Disabled Facilities Grants

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe of 3 July, *Official Report*, column *719*, what information is available to him on the numbers of disabled people who receive no disabled facilities grants because the income or capital or family members is deemed excessive; what proportion of these do not consequently obtain the adaptations they require; if all such cases are automatically referred to the Department of Social Security for consideration of their duties under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970; and if he will make a further statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Department does not collect details of applicants for disabled facilities grant who do not qualify for assistance under the means test, because of the financial circumstances of family members, and who subsequently do not obtain the adaptations they need. There is no automatic referral procedure to social services departments. However, the Department jointly with the Department of Health, has reminded social services authorities of their responsibilities under the 1970 Act to provide financial assistance in cases where a disabled person will otherwise face hardship in meeting their share of the cost of adaptations.

EDUCATION

Funding

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will reconsider the fifth report of Session 1990-91 from the Education, Science and Arts Committee, and the first report of the School Teachers Review Body and take steps to clarify the arrangements for the funding of education.

Mr. Forth: The Government do not accept that there is any lack of clarity about the current arrangements for funding education. Under these arrangements the great bulk of central Government support for local authority expenditure is through revenue support grant which is not earmarked for particular services. Central Government are accountable for its overall support for local government spending through revenue support grant, while individual local authorities are accountable to their electorates for the decisions they take both about their overall spending and the balance of that spending between and within services.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what response he has made to the evidence submitted to his Department by the Association of County Councils on the likely vulnerability of shared local education authority/funding agency transitional arrangements.

Mr. Forth: The ACC's comments on the proposals in the White Paper have been carefully considered. In addition, my right hon. Friend has had a meeting with representatives of the ACC.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what guidance he has issued to grant-maintained schools on leakages of chlorofluorocarbons and other ozone-destroying chemicals; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps he is taking to advise local education authorities on replacing halons in school fire extinguishing systems with non-ozone depleting substances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The Department does not at present issue specific guidance on the use of ozone friendly or CFC-free materials in school buildings. However, the Department is currently reviewing the scope and content of its guidance on environmental standards for educational buildings.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from Birmingham local education authority about parental choice and grant-maintained schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: No recent representations have been received from Birmingham local education authority specifically about parental choice and grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the sources and evidence on which the statement made at paragraph 13.3 of the White Paper, "Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools", that grant-maintained schools secure better value for money is based.

Mr. Forth: Her Majesty's inspectorate has observed that grant-maintained schools have generally deployed their resources to good effect. The majority of respondents to a survey of grant-maintained schools conducted by the Grant-Maintained Schools Centre reported increased ability to focus spending on delivery of education in the classroom.

Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list all the names of public appointments that he has made, giving the period for which the appointment was made, relevant qualifications of the appointees, and what remuneration each currently receives.

Mr. Forman: The details requested are given in the table. Information on the qualifications of appointees is not kept centrally, but we are satisfied that the qualifications of appointees to this Department's public bodies fully meet the standards required.

Names of appointments to public bodies	*Period of appointment*	*Remuneration*
Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges		
Mr. D. A. L. Every[1]	3 years	—
Dr. R. Rix[1]	4 years	—
Mrs. S. Greenfield[1]	4 years	—
Mr. R. Bailess[1]	2 years	—
Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research		
Mr. J. Beale[1]	2 years	—
Ms. J. Little	2 years	—
Ms. M. Ryan	2 years	—
Professor G. Thomas[1]	2 years	—
Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education		
Professor A. J. Alexander[1]	2 years	—
Mr. J. Burn[1]	2 years	—
Sr. V. Duggan	2 years	—
Dr. M. Frazer, CBE[1]	2 years	—
Professor A. O'Hear[1]	2 years	—
Education Assets Board		
Sir Tom MacDonald[1] (Ch. PT)	1 year	£23,365 pa
Mr. H. S. Hoare[1] (Ch. Ex. FT)	2·5 years	£46,000 pa
Mr. B. C. Arthur[1]	2·5 years	[2]£153
Mr. K. J. Bridge[1]	3 years	
Ms. K. Buckley	3 years	
Mr. H. E. Couch[1]	2·5 years	
Mr. J. M. Edwards[1]	3 years	
Miss A. Lees[1]	3 years	
Mr. P. S. Lewis	3 years	
Mr. G. Locke	3 years	
Mr. A. N. Solomons[1]	2·5 years	
Fulbright Commission		
Professor M. Edwards[1]	4 years	—
Higher Education Funding Council, England		
Professor C. Campbell	3 years	[4]£4,000
Professor B. K. Follett[3]	2 years	
Mr. R. Gunn[3]	2 years	
Professor Kay Tee Khaw	3 years	
Sir Idris Pearce[3]	2 years	
Sir David Phillips[3]	2 years	
Professor J. Shaw[3]	2 years	
Sir Robert Scholey	3 years	
Dr. R. Telfer	3 years	
Miss J. Trotter	3 years	
Further Education Funding Council		
Mr. N. Bennett	3 years	[5]£4,000
Mr. A. Cann	3 years	
Dr. J. Capey	3 years	
Mr. A. Close	3 years	
Mrs. M. Davey	3 years	
Mrs. P. Haikin	3 years	
Mrs. M. Hobrough	3 years	
Mr. C. Jonas	3 years	
Cllr. L. Lawrence	3 years	
Mr. M. Lickiss	3 years	
Mr. M. Rowarth	3 years	
Dr. A. Wright	3 years	
The Further Education Unit[6]		
Mr. A. Ainsworth[1] (Ch.)	4 years	—
Mr. M. Cross[1]	4 years	—
Mr. K. Franklin[1]	2 years	—
Ms. A. Limb[1]	1 year	—
Mr. G. M. Rowarth, OBE[1]	1 year	—
Mr. C. K. Rowland[1]	1 year	—
Ms. J. Scribbins[1]	1 year	—
Mr. B. D. Short[1]	6 years	—
National Curriculum Council		
Mr. D. Pascall[1] (Ch. PT)	1 year	[7]£285 pd
Mr. J. Burn	3 years	—
Dr. J. Marks	3 years	—
Professor A. Smithers	3 years	—
Mrs. J. Wisker[1]	1 year	—
National Council for Educational Technology		
Mr. J. Richards (Ch.)	3 years	—
Ms. S. Davies	2·5 years	—
Dr. D. Laurillard	2·5 years	—
Ms. U. Malik	2·5 years	—
Ms. L. Menon	2·5 years	—
Mr. K. Satchwell	2·5 years	—
Mr. R. Scarth	2·5 years	—
Mr. J. Young	2·5 years	—
School Examinations and Assessment Council		
Dr. J. Marenbon	3 years	—
Dr. S. Nepaulsingh[1]	3 years	—
Mr. A. Pellegrini	3 years	—
Lord Sidelsky	3 years	—
Ms. K. Tattershall	3 years	—
Mr. P. Wood	3 years	—

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[1] Members of public bodies who have been re-appointed.

[2] Members receive an honorarium of £153 paid for attendance at

each monthly board meeting.

[3] Members who have previously served on the Universities Funding Council or the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council.

[4] Membership of the Higher Education Funding Council, England carries with it an honorarium of £4,000 per annum.

[5] Members of the Further Education Funding Council receive an honorarium of £4,000 per annum.

[6] Members of the Further Education Unit have had their periods of office extended from the original expiry date of 31 March 1993 (30 April in the case of Mr. Ainsworth) to 31 March 1994.

[7] Mr. Pascall receives remuneration of £285 per day for the time spend on National Curriculum Council business. This is reimbursed to his employer.

A-Levels

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils obtained three or more A-levels in *(a)* 1982 and *(b)* 1992.

Mr. Forman: The estimated number of school leavers in England who obtained three or more A-levels was 72,600 in 1982 and 86,700 in 1991, the latest year for which information is available.

Schools

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is current per capita spending on education in schools in England and Wales; and what it was in 1982.

Mr. Forth: The latest year for which actual spending information is available is 1990-91. In that year, school-based funding available per nursery, primary and secondary pupil in England was some £1,620 per pupil. This figure includes unspent balances held by schools at the year end under local management schemes. In 1981-82, school-based funding in England was some £740 per pupil, which represents some £1,240 per pupil at 1990-91 prices. There was a real-terms increase in funding per pupil between 1981-82 and 1990-91 of 31 per cent. Expenditure on schools in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Teachers Pensions Agency

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the Teachers Pensions Agency.

Mr. Forth: The Teachers Pensions Agency was established on 1 April 1992. Since that date, the following papers and guides have been issued:

The TPA Business Plan and Framework documents
A guide to Teachers Superannuation for Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges
Two Teachers' Superannuation Scheme Fact Sheets
A Guide for employers to the TPA
A Guide for teachers to the TPA
The first TPA newsletter

In addition, many of the explanatory and option leaflets in daily use by employers and scheme members have been redesigned and reissued.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Coal Imports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many tonnes of coal were imported from the Netherlands in 1991; what was the pithead cost of that coal; and if he will make it his policy to impose an anti-dumping duty on such coal.

Mr. Eggar: The Netherlands has closed all its mines and now produces no coal. In 1991 the statistics recorded 6,000 tones of coal originated in the Netherlands. It is assumed that these 6,000 tonnes were first imported into the Netherlands from other countries, processed there, and subsequently re-exported to the United Kingdom. The statistics also record that in 1991, 4·713 million tonnes of coal, destined to the United Kingdom, passed through the Netherlands in consignment.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list for each port in the United Kingdom, the tonnages of coal imports by year for the last four years; and what were the points of origin.

Mr. Eggar: Breakdowns of coal imports by port of entry, and by country of origin, for the last four years and for the current year to date, are as follows:

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	[1]*1992*
Port of entry					
Medway	565	652	855	1,989	2,249
Immingham	999	1,268	2,182	3,177	2,206
Middlesbrough	2,570	2,812	2,385	2,894	1,914
Port Talbot	1,997	2,610	2,885	2,655	1,716
London (including Tilbury)	743	782	2,104	3,016	1,596
Greenock	1,164	1,162	1,027	1,209	1,363
Liverpool	31	286	948	1,308	1,152
Belfast	192	182	332	387	536
Hull	1	44	152	416	322
Cardiff	294	229	410	491	292
Swansea	92	134	162	422	140
Others	3,036	1,975	1,340	1,527	983
Total	11,685	12,137	14,783	19,491	14,469
Country of origin					
United States of America[2]	4,073	4,874	6,176	8,132	5,375
Australia[2]	3,416	2,676	3,044	4,654	3,304
Colombia[2]	574	874	1,506	2,447	2,505
Canada	553	729	986	760	653
South Africa	276	346	356	579	621
Poland	1,270	1,055	1,043	557	588
USSR	375	181	592	900	574
China	319	450	69	294	162
Germany[2]	191	288	249	220	160
Venezuela	92	86	169	230	160
Belgium	122	78	60	231	12
Others[2]	425	501	533	488	354
Total	11,685	12,137	14,783	19,491	14,469

Because of rounding the sum of the constituent items may not agree with the totals shown.

[1] January to August.

[2] Some imports previously recorded by Customs and Excise as originating in the Netherlands have been re-allocated to the other countries indicated or, where revised country or origin data is not available, included in the residual entry "Others". This re-allocation has been carried out for 1991 and estimates of such imports previously classified to the Netherlands have been included for 1990. Figures for earlier years have not been re-allocated to individual countries.

[3] Includes imports previously recorded separately for the German Democratic Republic.

Source: Customs and Excise.

Coal Stocks

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what plans he has to sell existing coal stocks *(a)* in the EEC and *(b)* outside the EEC at a reduced price to ease the burden on the Exchequer;

(2) what proposals he has to auction the entire stock of coal above ground to the highest overseas bidder.

Mr. Eggar: The sale of coal stocks is a matter for the owners of the stocks. More generally as my right hon. Friend indicated to the House on 21 October, I will report on the level of coal stocks and whether plans to run them down are sensibly phased as part of the current review of coal policy.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to re-examine the recommendations numbered 13, 23, 36, 43, 44, 45, 48 and 49 in the second report of the Energy Committee, Session 1991-92, on the consequences of electricity privatisation.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend announced on 26 October, *Official Report*, columns 522-23, the scope of the review which we will be conducting of the proposed closure of 21 pits, within the context of the Government's energy policy.

Divisional Papers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the heads of division of *(a)* the business task force 1, *(b)* the companies investigation branch, *(c)* the competition policy division, *(d)* the financial services division, *(e)* the insurance division, *(f)* the manufacturing technology division and *(g)* the telecommunications and posts division, respectively.

Mr. Eggar: The details[1] are as follows:

Business Task Force 1[2]

None

Companies Investigation Branch

(Investigations under section 432(2) of the Companies Act 1985)

The Milford Docks Company
BOM Holdings plc.
Blue Arrow plc.

Competition Policy Division

(Various Monopolies and Mergers Commission reports)

Havas/Brunton Curtis
Unichem/McCarthy and Lloyds/McCarthy
AAH Holdings/Medicopharma
Hillsdown/ABF
Allied Lyons/Carlsberg
Sara Lee Corporation/Reckitt and Colman
Bond/British Helicopters
Scottish and Universal Newspapers Ltd./Trinity International Holdings plc.
EMAP/United Newspapers
Supply of Indirect Electrostatic Photocopiers
Supply of Cross Solent Ferry Services
Supply of Matches and Disposable Lighters
Supply of New Motor Cars
Supply of Motor Car Parts
Television Broadcasting Services
The Commonwealth Development Corporation
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority

Insurance Division

Insurance Annual Report 1991

(CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENTS)

Implementation in the United Kingdom of the Second Council Directive on Direct Life Assurance
Implementation in the United Kingdom of the EC Council Directive on the accounts of insurance undertakings
Implementation in the United Kingdom of Council directive 90/618/EEC of 8 November 1990, amending Directives 73/239/EEC and 88/357/EEC, particularly as regards Motor Vehicle Liability Insurance
Implementation in the United Kingdom of Second Council Directive on Direct Life Insurance—The Life Services Directive—Draft Regulations

Manufacturing Technology Division[2]

Industrial Materials for the Future? (Jointly sponsored by SERC and DTI)
Five-year Forward Look for Measurement Technology and Standards Work in Materials

(Papers were also circulated to consult industry on EC proposals to remove technical barriers to trade, and to inform industry of new or impending Directives and UK regulations to implement them).

Telecommunications and Posts Division

(CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENTS)

Telecommunications Terminal Equipment: Draft UK Regulations
The Satellite Broadcasting of Television Signals Regulations 1992: Draft UK Regulations

Responsibility for the former DTI financial services division was transferred to Her Majesty's Treasury earlier this year.

[1] Publicity and promotional publications excluded.

[2] Much of the Business Task Force 1 has been subsumed within the Department's Environment Division, and the Manufacturing Technology Division within the Information and Manufacturing Technology Division.

Coal Exports

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list for each port in the United Kingdom, the tonnages of coal exports by year for the last four years; and what were the points of destination.

Mr. Eggar: Breakdowns of coal exports by port and by country of destination, for the last four years and for the current year to date, are as follows:

Exports by port	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	[1]*1992*
Swansea	277	187	410	616	189
Sunderland	39	78	82	149	71
Irish Land Boundary	90	81	95	117	63
Leith (including Granton)	90	99	213	118	56
Blyth	392	442	192	279	52
Workington	326	242	108	32	38
Tyne	270	607	869	285	33
Others	255	336	338	217	156
Total	1,737	2,072	2,307	1,813	658

Country of destination	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	[1]*1992*
Irish Republic	359	331	248	268	154
France	256	210	271	346	102
Belgium	13	46	103	106	95
Spain	—	33	138	256	81
Denmark	426	521	366	175	60

Exports by port	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	[1]*1992*
Norway	106	128	145	73	55
Germany[2]	107	93	214	244	48
Portugal	170	154	190	118	33
Morocco	144	282	282	103	11
Others	155	274	351	124	18
Total	1,737	2,072	2,307	1,813	658

[1] January to August.

[2] Included imports previously recorded separately for the German Democratic Republic.

Source: Customs and Excise

Because of rounding the sum of the constituent items may not agree with the totals shown.

RECHAR

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects the initial instalment of RECHAR programme moneys to be specifically allocated to the projects; and if he will make a statement on the reasons for the delay in the payments.

Mr. Sainsbury: In accordance with the standard procedure for the European Community structural funds, the allocation is made by 11 area committees, each of which includes central and local government and European Commission representatives. So far, grant of £11·6 million has been committed to 129 projects, and a further £29·5 million of grant has been approved in principle to 359 projects. Further committee meetings will be held shortly.

In accordance with the standard procedures grant is, for financial control reasons, not generally paid on to final beneficiaries until they certify their own expenditure. So far grant of £96,000 has been paid to two projects.

Nuclear Industry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what criteria he has used in his Department's monthly publication, *Energy Trends*, to exclude natural uranium, enriched uranium and plutonium from the table of imports and exports of fuels.

Mr. Eggar: The exclusion of natural uranium, enriched uranium and plutonium from the data on imports and exports of fuels in *Energy Trends* follows internationally accepted practices for the compilation of energy statistics. There are difficulties in compiling aggregate energy statistics that include nuclear fuels, including the technical problems associated with converting data to a common unit of measurement that can be compared with other fuels.

Clean Coal Technology

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what investments his Department, and predecessor Departments, have made annually since 1979, to support research, development and demonstration projects in clean coal technology; and if he will make a statement on the criteria adopted in deciding upon investment.

Mr. Eggar: The estimated annual investment by my Department and the former Department of Energy in support of coal research and development is as follows:

1991 prices	*£ million*
1979-80	5·3
1980-81	5·7
1981-82	8·3
1982-83	6·0
1983-84	5·3
1984-85	1·3
1985-86	1·1
1986-87	2·5
1987-88	1·7
1988-89	1·1
1989-90	2·2
1990-91	11·8
1991-92	5·1

Total public sector expenditure on coal R and D over the period 1981-92 was approximately £1,000 million, at 1991 prices, of which around half was associated with the development of clean coal technology.

The Department's coal R and D programme is primarily focussed on the development of new clean coal technologies that improve the environmental performance of coal utilisation. The criteria for assessing the desirability of specific project proposals are set out within a document prepared by the Department's coal task force in August 1991. Factors include the degree of novelty, relevance to the overall objectives of the R and D programme, and the potential for exploitability. If the objective of the work is commercial, the potential benefit to United Kingdom company competitiveness is also taken into account.

Natural Gas

Mr. Bayley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what quantity of natural gas is currently consumed annually in the United Kingdom *(a)* by electricity generators and *(b)* by other customers; and what quantity his Department estimates will be consumed by electricity generators and other customers in *(a)* 1995, *(b)* 2000, *(c)* 2010, *(d)* 2020, *(e)* 2030, *(f)* 2040 and *(g)* 2050, respectively.

Mr. Eggar: Natural gas sales to *(a)* electricity generators and *(b)* other customers in 1991 and for the first half of 1992 in Gigawatt hours were as follows:

	Electricity generators	*Other customers*
1991	13,686	581,072
1992 (January-June)	7,239	305,556

Source: Energy Trends (Table 9).

An indication of the likely range of gas requirements in some possible future energy scenarios can be obtained from "Energy Paper No. 59", which was recently published by this Department. A copy of this paper has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what quantity of natural gas in the British sector of the North sea his Department estimates *(a)* is in gas fields currently being exploited, *(b)* is in gas fields identified as economically exploitable but not currently being exploited and *(c)* is yet to be discovered in economically exploitable gas fields.

Mr. Eggar: My Department's most recent estimate of recoverable gas reserves remaining in the United Kingdom were published in the Brown Book—"Development of the Oil and Gas Resources of the United Kingdom"—in April 1992. Reserves so far identified as economically exploitable are as follows:

Billion cubic metres

	Proven	*Proven plus probable*	*Maximum possible*
Fields in production and approved for development	540	805	985
Other discovered fields identified as economically exploitable	0	430	820
Total	540	1,235	1,805

In addition, reserves in unappraised discoveries and undrilled prospects are estimated at between 395 and 1,557 billion cu m.

Electricity Costs

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the current costs of producing a unit of electricity by *(a)* coal, *(b)* gas, *(c)* nuclear and *(d)* wind, respectively; and what are the projected costs over the next decade.

Mr. Eggar: The comparable capital and full fuel costs per kilowatt-hour of power stations using coal, gas and nuclear fuels depend significantly upon the contractual terms of fuel purchase, and the contractual terms under which the power station is to be constructed and operated. These are commercial matters for the companies concerned. As far as electricity is concerned it is up to the Director General of Electricity Supply to ensure that the regional electricity companies comply with their economic purchasing obligations. My Department will, however, be assessing the evidence available on the comparative economics of coal as against other sources as part of the Government's review.

Cost data for wind energy are likely to be given in the report of the Renewable Energy Advisory Group, which I hope to receive shortly, and which I expect to be published soon afterwards.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the cost of electricity for manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom and in each of the other European Community countries.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 26 October 1992]*: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 26 October, *Official Report*, columns 518-20.

Boreholes

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will direct British Coal to provide information to the British Geological Survey about its 1958 to 1965 and 1973 to 1985 drilling programmes to establish the undersea extension of the Northumberland and Durham coalfield; and if he will ensure that the academic community has access to this information.

Mr. Eggar: I understand that British Coal already provides information to the British Geological Survey in accordance with statutory requirements.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has on the number of boreholes drilled between Acklington Whin Dyke and the Grange Park fault in the Northumberland and Durham coalfield; and if he will list the borehole numbers, their co-ordinates, the coal sections and the depths to each coal section.

Mr. Eggar: The Department does not keep information on boreholes. This is a matter for British Coal.

Sectoral Divisions

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the sectoral divisions he has created in his Department; for each what are their current work programme priorities and recent contacts; and if he will list the studies, projects and research reports they have commissioned.

Mr. Eggar: In the reorganisation of the Department which my right hon. Friend announced on 3 July he said that the Department would be adopting a more directly sectoral approach in the industries for which it is responsible. Seven new sectoral divisions were created to cover the key sectors not previously dealt with in this way:

Chemicals and biotechnology
Steel, metals and minerals
Vehicles (also covering shipbuilding)
Aerospace
Electronic and electrical engineering
Mechanical engineering
Textiles and retailing

The sectoral divisions, both new and old, have been given the explicit role of sponsoring their industries, not uncritically, but as the basis for an informed dialogue and a constructive partnership between the Government and business. In addition, the new industrial competitiveness division is examining what lessons can be learnt from the leading industrialised countries and ensuring that policies of all Government Departments take due account of the need to promote the competitiveness of United Kingdom industry and commerce.

All sectoral divisions are taking forward my right hon. Friend's initiative and developing their contacts with their industries. My right hon. Friend will be reviewing their current work priorities and progress made during the MINIS discussions which he will be holding with his officials over the next few months.

Halons

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what research or evaluations his Department has conducted or commissioned on new gases which could replace ozone-destroying halons in fire-fighting applications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: None. My Department and the Department of the Environment are willing to consider requests from industry for support for collaborative research into alternative gases and technologies. However, halons are only one of five commonly used fire extinguishing media and many businesses are finding that they can use water, foam, powder or CO_2 instead.

Electricity

Mr. Jack Thompson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total capacity of electricity supplied to the United Kingdom from French sources in the years 1990, 1991 and to the third quarter of 1992.

Mr. Eggar: The quantity of electricity supplied to the United Kingdom from French sources in the years 1990, 1991 and in the first three quarters of 1992 is set out in the table.

	Electricity supplied from France (Gigawatt hours)
1990	11,990
1991	16,422
First three quarters of 1992	12,412

Source: Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics and Energy Trends.

Mr. Jack Thompson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total capacity of electricity supplied to France from United Kingdom sources in the years 1990, 1991 and to the third quarter of 1992.

Mr. Eggar: The quantity of electricity supplied to France from United Kingdom sources in the years 1990, 1991 and in the first three quarters of 1992 is set out in the table.

	Electricity supplied to France (Gigawatt hours)
1990	47
1991	15
First three quarters of 1992	20

Source: Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics and Energy Trends.

Pit Closures

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the cost to the Government of maintaining output at the 31 pits scheduled in his announcement of 13 October to be closed; whether this includes the market value of the coal being stockpiled; and whether he will publish a table showing exactly how the £100 million per month referred to in that announcement is made up by item of expenditure.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 27 October 1992]* British Coal has said that it cannot expect to sell more than 40 million tonnes of coal to the electricity supply industry next year. This is 25 million tonnes less than in the current year.

The cash operating costs of the pits concerned are about £100 million per month. This excludes stocking costs.

The coal produced could only be sold at distressed prices, over an extended period, if at all.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many pits have been subject to the consultative review procedure on redundancies in the last decade; and how many have remained open following the review.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 26 October 1992]:* The issue which the hon. Member has raised is a matter for British Coal.

Mr. Pike: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will request National Power and PowerGen to announce no further station closures during the moratorium on pit closures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The procedure governing power station closures by National Power and PowerGen is prescribed by a licence condition. The Director General of Electricity Supply announced last week that he has decided to appoint an independent assessor to examine the issues in relation to their power station closures.

Power Stations

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the expected rate of depletion of reserves of natural gas within United Kingdom or European Community ownership, at those volumes of gas contracted to be burned by gas-powered power stations in operation, or likely to be approved, stated in approximate volume, time and percentage terms.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 22 October 1992]* My Department's latest estimates of United Kingdom gas reserves are set out in the Brown Book "Development of Oil and Gas Resources of the United Kingdom". The rate at which gas reserves are depleted will depend on many factors including demand, development costs, prices, levels of imports and technological developments. I am not aware of any plans to import gas from European Community countries.

As my right hon. Friend told the House on 21 October, we will be producing for the House the conclusions we draw from our estimates of reserves, and will report on the scale of gas-generated power stations in production, in build and in the planning process.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Beef Premium

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of the arrangements for payment of beef premium from 1 January 1993.

Mr. Curry: Commission legislation giving effect to the new premium scheme is still in the course of preparation and arrangements for its application in the United Kingdom cannot therefore be finalised. I recognise the need for some form of transitional arrangement so that the provision of animals for slaughter is not interrupted in the early months of the year, but this is still to be negotiated.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Agriculture Council held on 26 and 27 October.

Mr. Gummer: I chaired the meeting of the Council of Agriculture Ministers in Luxembourg on 26 and 27 October. My hon. Friends the Minister of State in my Department and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Scotland represented the United Kingdom.

Following a short discussion on GATT I confirmed on behalf of the Community, that the Commission should attempt urgently to seek an accommodation with the United States on the Uruguay round and the oilseeds dispute following the mandates already given by the Council and using the Commission's powers under the treaty of Rome. I understand talks will resume shortly.

Progress was made on a wide range of other issues dealing with the implementation of CAP reform and of the single market. Decisions will be needed on these before the end of year.

Bananas

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the relationship between the single market for bananas and *(a)* the Lomé convention and *(b)* GATT negotiations in the Uruguay round.

Mr. Curry: The Government are determined that the arrangements for the single market in bananas should meet its Lomé convention obligations, whilst being compatible with a successful outcome to the GATT Uruguay round.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the division of licences on the single market for bananas amongst *(a)* Latin American producers, *(b)* the Association of Caribbean Producers and *(c)* European Community producers.

Mr. Curry: Negotiations are continuing on single market arrangements for bananas. No agreement has yet been reached. The Commission proposal would require licensing of all fruit from non-EC and non-ACP sources and of imports from ACP origins that exceed traditional volumes of trade. The detailed provisions for licence allocation are complex but would broadly distribute 66·5 per cent. of the total on the basis of past trade in non-EC and non-ACP fruit; 30 per cent. would be available to operators who undertook to market a related quantity of EC or ACP fruit; 3·5 per cent. would be available to newcomers to the trade.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement concerning the level of banana exports to the European Community in 1993 from *(a)* Caribbean exporters and *(b)* Latin American exporters.

Mr. Curry: The precise level of banana exports to the European Community in 1993 will depend on many factors. Negotiations on the bananas dossier are continuing and it is therefore not possible, at this stage, to forecast the level of imports in 1993 from either the Caribbean or Latin America.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to what extent *(a)* Caribbean, *(b)* Latin American and *(c)* European Community producers will have access to banana markets under the single market system.

Mr. Curry: Negotiations are continuing on single market arrangements for bananas. The Commission's proposals would apply a quota to all imports of bananas from non-EC and non-ACP sources, including Latin America; non-traditional volumes from ACP sources would also be covered; EC and ACP supplies would continue free of duty; all others would face a 20 per cent. duty. No agreement has so far been reached regarding the single market arrangements.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans Her Majesty's Government have for the maintenance of an orderly market at the start of 1993 if the single market for bananas is not fully in place.

Mr. Curry: The Government are working hard to secure agreement on a common organisation of the market in bananas by the end of this year. We shall be discussing with the Commission and other member states what arrangements may be necessary at the start of 1993 in the light of developments in the negotiations.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the responsibilities of Her Majesty's Government to Commonwealth banana exporters as a result of the Lomé convention.

Mr. Curry: The Lomé convention imposes obligations on all EC member states. In particular, article 1 of protocol 5 of that convention states:

> "In respect of its banana exports to the Community markets, no ACP State shall be placed, as regards access to its traditional markets and its advantages on those markets, in a less favourable situation than in the past or at present."

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement concerning the establishment of a quota system under the single market for bananas.

Mr. Curry: The Commission has proposed a system for the common organisation of the Community banana market based on an absolute quota on imports from non-EC and non-ACP sources, and on ACP supplies above traditional levels. This proposal provides the basis for the negotiations between member states that are currently under way.

Geopathic Stress

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research his Department is currently carrying out into geopathic stress; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Department currently spends about £50 million a year on agricultural research relevant to environmental problems. Details are given in the MAFF publication "Scientific Research and Development: The Environment", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

CAP Reforms

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what consideration was given to introducing the common agricultural policy reforms over more than one year; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when more information about the detail of the common agricultural policy reforms will be made available to farmers;

(3) what representations he has received about the speed of the common agricultural policy reforms.

Mr. Curry: The Ministry is in regular contact with representatives of consumer, farming and environmental organisations to discuss all aspects of the common agricultural policy reforms, which are being phased in over a four-year period. An explanatory booklet on the arable scheme was sent to farmers at the beginning of September; a copy was placed in the Library of the House. Discussion of detailed rules for the reformed beef and sheepmeat regimes is still continuing; farmers will be given information on these as soon as it is available.

Eggs

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to introduce salmonella testing on eggs imported into the United Kingdom from the EC and marketed in the United Kingdom as packed in the United Kingdom, before such eggs are introduced into the retail market.

Mr. Soames: Imported eggs are already subject to salmonella testing and where positive results are found these are pursued with the exporting member state. To delay the distribution of such eggs would be a clear breach of European Community law.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to fix a date for ending salmonella testing on laying flocks to bring the United Kingdom into line with the rest of the EC.

Mr. Soames: The package of measures introduced by the Government to combat salmonella in poultry, including the testing of laying flocks, has been an important factor in helping to restore confidence in British eggs.

We shall continue to keep these measures under review, taking account of the progress being made in Brussels towards the introduction of Communitywide measures for the control of salmonella in poultry.

Suckler Cows and Sheep

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the base year for suckler cows and sheep used to establish the quota for herds and flocks.

Mr. Curry: For suckler cow premium, the Government have chosen to base quotas on claims in respect of the 1992 marketing year.

For ewe premium, individual producers will receive quota equal to their eligible sheep numbers in 1991, provided they also made a valid claim in 1992. However, the total quota available to the United Kingdom industry will be based on the number of eligible animals in the national flock in 1990. The difference between the 1991 and 1990 numbers—some 320,000 ewes—will be used to create the national ewe premium quota reserve.

These decisions provide the United Kingdom suckler cow and sheep industries with the maximum quota permitted under the Council regulations.

Milk

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements he intends to make to fund the individual farmer for milk recording under the new system in place of the milk marketing board.

Mr. Curry: I understand that the Milk Marketing Board envisages that its proposed successor co-operative would continue to offer a milk recording service. This would be available to non-members on a commercial basis. It will be open to other organisations to offer competing services.

PRIME MINISTER

Libya

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he has had with President Bush over the circumstances surrounding the imposition of sanctions by the United Nations against Libya; and what plans Her Majesty's Government have to raise the issues surrounding Lockerbie at the United Nations.

The Prime Minister: The Government have worked closely with the American administration on all aspects of the Lockerbie case, including United Nations Security Council resolutions 731 and 748.

Bloodstock

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister if he will institute an interdepartmental review of the case for reducing the level of value added tax on bloodstock in the United Kingdom to reduce the difference between the United Kingdom rate and the rates levied in France and Ireland.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 26 October 1992]*: The Government recognise the regional economic importance of the bloodstock industry. My right hon. Friend the Paymaster General has worked hard with industry representatives to ensure that it is not significantly disadvantaged by the continued difference in VAT rates between member states. The introduction of the flat rate farmers' scheme and a 0·75 per cent. cut in betting duty in the 1992 Budget will help to secure the right environment in which the industry can compete successfully.

Ministers receive many well-argued cases for tax relief, many of which appear at least as deserving of a reduced rate as bloodstock. The Government believe that their long-standing policy of a VAT system based on a zero rate and a single positive rate is simple for all traders and cheap to administer.

Pit Closures

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has received from the General Secretary of the TUC about pit closures; and what reply he is sending.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 26 October 1992]*: Following British Coal's announcement of pit closures on 13 October the General Secretary of the TUC, Mr. Willis, wrote to me on 15, 17 and 20 October.

In replying, I noted that the issues he raised had been addressed in Parliament on a number of occasions and that we looked forward to the TUC's contribution to the widespread consultation announced by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Mr. Willis also wrote to me twice on 26 October. I shall reply to these letters shortly.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Departmental Offices

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement about *(a)* the timetable, *(b)* the location, *(c)* the space requirement and *(d)* the cost of the provision of new office accommodation for his Department.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend is considering the future location of the Department, which requires approximately 70,000 sq ft of useable space. He expects to make an announcement on the matter in due course and the Department will then move to its new headquarters as soon as possible.

Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list all the names of public appointments that he has made, giving the period for which the appointment was made, relevant qualifications of the appointee and what remuneration each currently receives.

Mr. Key: The Department of National Heritage is still in the process of setting up central records and the information required to answer this question is not yet centrally available.

National Lottery

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether a national lottery will be classified by the Government as gambling.

Mr. Brooke: The Government made it quite clear in the White Paper "A National Lottery: Raising Money for Good Causes", Cm. 1861, that lotteries, including the national lottery, represent the "softest" form of gambling. Properly regulated, the national lottery will provide a harmless form of entertainment.

Exhibition, Upper Waiting Hall

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Royal Armouries' new museum in Leeds to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Key: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 26 to 30 October 1992.

Tourism

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many *(a)* foreign and *(b)* domestic visitors are estimated to have been to (i) the Tower of London, (ii) Hampton Court and (iii) Greenwich in each of the years from 1987 to 1991; and how many are expected to visit each in 1992, 1993 and 1994.

Mr. Key: The figures for estimates of the number of visitors to the Tower of London, Hampton Court and Greenwich are published annually by the British tourist authority and the English tourist board. These figures, which are set out in the table, are not compiled on a foreign/domestic visitor basis.

	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Tower of London	2,289,400	2,181,700	2,214,000	2,298,700	1,923,500
Hampton Court	590,600	533,000	538,800	521,000	502,400
Cutty Sark, Greenwich	375,700	401,000	360,100	411,000	437,500
National Maritime Museum, Greenwich	442,000	707,400	423,800	563,000	587,900

Figures rounded to the nearest hundred.

There are no projected figures for the period 1992 to 1994.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Home Carers

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to exempt home carers from obligations for classified business miles payments, for education purposes.

Mr. Dorrell: I am very much aware of the important and valuable service provided by home carers. If carers receive motor mileage allowances in respect of business journeys or volunteer driving, no tax is payable if the allowances do no more than cover their costs. The allowances are liable to tax only if the allowances exceed actual costs and so result in a profit. If, however, the hon. Member is concerned about the tax treatment given in a particular case, I would be happy to look into it if he would let me have the usual details.

Fraud

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much his Department has saved from the investigation of fraud in the latest year for which figures are available; and what are the targeted savings for the next financial year.

Mr. Dorrell: Such information is not available. But in the year 1991-92 the direct yield from Inland Revenue counter-evasion work was some £1·4 billion, excluding any future or deterrent effects.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the number of people prosecuted for fraud by his Department in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Dorrell: The number of successful Inland Revenue prosecutions for false accounts or returns of income, false claims to personal allowances, deductions or repayments, false PAYE returns, and sub-contractor exemption certificate frauds, in the year 1991-92 was 167.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the number of whole-time equivalent staff employed by the Inland Revenue to detect and prosecute fraud; and what is the cost of their employment.

Mr. Dorrell: During the year 1991-92 a total of 3,600 staff units were employed by the Inland Revenue in the detection and prosecution of possible or actual tax evasion, including fraud. The cost of their employment was some £115 million.

Mortgages (Negative Equity)

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of mortgages in England with negative equity, and the number who will benefit directly from the recently announced changes in limits to unsecured loans and MIRAS entitlement.

Mr. Nelson: Estimates of the number of households with negative equity have varied considerably. A figure of around 1 million for the United Kingdom was published in the August edition of the "Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin".

The number of those who will benefit directly from the measures recently announced by the Government will depend on a range of factors, including the proportion of them who wish to move; the way in which they choose to go about it; their personal circumstances; the attitude of their lender; and the extent to which mortgage indemnity insurance can be transferred. In practice, the number of potential beneficiaries is likely to be in the tens of thousands.

EC Contributors

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the net contributors to the EC and the amount they each contribute; and if he will list the net recipients of funds from the EC and how much each receives.

Sir John Cope: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) on 22 June 1992, at column 5.

Research and Development

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated amount currently being spent on all forms of research and development excluding defence; and what were the comparable figures for 1982 and 1972.

Mr. Nelson: The available information for 1990 is given in table 2.2.2 of the "Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development 1992", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Figures for 1989 were published in the 1991 edition. Information for 1982 and 1972 on a comparable basis is not available.

Housing Associations

Ms. Walley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what response he has made to representations from the National Federation of Housing Associations about the retention of the £2 billion grant for housing associations; and if he will make it his policy that no cuts in expenditure will be made to the budget for the west midlands.

Mr. Portillo: It would not be appropriate for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to respond in detail to representations in advance of his autumn statement on 12 November.

Fact-finding Visits

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the fact-finding visits made in the last 12 months by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible; and what were the findings resulting from each visit.

Mr. Nelson: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the chief executives of the Royal Mint, Central Statistical Office and Valuation Office executive agencies. I have asked each of them to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from W. McLennan chief executive of the Central Statistical Office to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 October 1992.

I have been asked to reply direct to question No. 49, which you tabled for answer on 26 October 1992.

Neither I, nor my predecessor, Sir Jack Hibbert, have made any official fact-finding visits in the last twelve months.

Letter from R. R. B. Shutter, chief executive of the Valuation Office Agency to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992

In your question to the Chancellor ref: 3/0470 you ask for a note of the factfinding visits made in the last year by Chief Executives:

The principal factfinding visits made by me are as follows:

Visit	*Objective*
Visits to Annual Conference and other meetings of the Trade Unions representing Agency staff.	To hear staff views on pay, conditions of service and other issues, and to make "state of affairs" speech at the Conference.
Visits to regional meetings of managers and staff in the network	To give an account of issues facing the Agency and to hear staff views.
Visits to meetings of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, other professional bodies and management seminars.	To give an Agency view on technical and management matters; to present prizes and awards and give advice to students.
Visits to meetings of other Chief Executives.	To give an Agency view on public sector management issues and to hear views of colleagues.
Visits to (and with) various Management Consultants.	On customer relations (attitude survey of VO customers), on Council Tax (tendering arrangements and also financial appraisal of tendering firms) and on pay and performance management (in preparation for new pay agreement with Unions).

I am at your disposal if further assistance is required.

Letter from A. D. Garrett, chief executive of the Royal Mint, to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 26 October 1992.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has asked me to respond to your Written Questions.

I can confirm that I have made no factfinding visits and have published no papers in the last 12 months.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Mr. Nelson: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the chief executives of the Royal Mint, Central Statistical Office and Valuation Office executive agencies. I have asked each of them to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from R. R. B. Shutler, chief executive of the Valuation Agency, to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992.

In your question to the Chancellor ref: 3/0458 you ask for a note of the papers given or published by Chief Executives during the last year.

Apart from speeches to professional bodies, the only articles or papers written by me are:

"Keeping an eye on the recession" GTI Surveying Journal
(advice to students)

"Spread of experience" GTI Surveying Journal
(article for students on career progression)
(GTI = Graduates to Industry)

Valuation Office, Business Plan 1992-93
(my plans for the Agency, the current year)

Annual Report 1991-92
(my appreciation of the outturn for last year)

Please let me know if I can assist further.

Letter from W. McLennan, chief executive of the Central Statistical Office, to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 October 1992.

I have been asked to reply direct to question no. 75 which you tabled for answer on 23 October 1992.

2. A paper titled *Official Statistics in the UK: is there cause for concern*, by my predecessor Sir Jack Hibbert, was published in *Statistical News No. 96, Spring 1992.*

Letter from A. D. Garrett, chief executive of the Royal Mint, to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 26 October 1992

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has asked me to respond to your Written Questions.

I can confirm that I have made no factfinding visits and have published no papers in the last 12 months.

Tax Revenue

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the loss in tax revenue, based on average income figures and direct taxation, resulting from unemployment in the financial years 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Dorrell: The loss in tax revenue would depend on the particular circumstances of the people concerned. It is not possible to provide a meaningful estimate.

Inland Revenue (Information Technology)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has for the provision of Inland Revenue information technology services in response to the White Paper "Competing for Quality", Cm 1730.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government have authorised the Inland Revenue to proceed with a competitive tender to test the benefit available from a strategic contract with a major private sector computing supplier. If the tender reveals benefit to the Inland Revenue the aim will be to have a contract in place by the end of 1993.

Taxpayers Charter

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consultations were undertaken with service users in the course of the production of the taxpayers charter (Inland Revenue) and the taxpayers charter (Customs and Excise).

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 26 October 1992]*: The taxpayers charter was issued to provide a public statement of the standard of service at which the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise aim. There were no formal consultations.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Road Building

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what is the revised timetable for construction of the proposed Comber bypass; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the revised programme for the Forter Green road junction scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Any revised timetable for the implementation of these schemes will only be known after the outcome of the current annual review of the Government's expenditure plans has been determined.

Forensic Science Laboratory, Newtownbreda

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to re-open Newtownbreda road following the recent bomb explosions at the forensic science laboratory; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mates: The explosion at the Northern Ireland forensic science laboratory cratered the road which was subseqently closed in the interests of public safety and to facilitate forensic examinations. These examinations have now been completed and the road is currently being repaired.

Maghaberry Prison

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why no crèche facilities are provided for vistors to the women's section of Maghaberry prison; and why the visiting room is smaller than the men's section.

Mr. Mates: The provision of a crèche facility in the female visits area is presently under consideration. The decision will await the result of an efficiency scrutiny into childcare services in Maghaberry prison.

The size of the visits room reflects the overall requirements of Maghaberry prison—317 male prisoners and 42 females at 26 October 1992. Major improvements are, however, under way to construct a second visits room on the female side.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why the men's section of Maghaberry prison is subject to different evening exercise arrangements from the women's section.

Mr. Mates: Unlike the male section of Maghaberry prison, where the exercise yards are immediately adjacent to the living accommodation, allowing easy access and supervision, the exercise yards in the female section are slightly apart. For security reasons, the yards on the female side are not available for evening association periods during the winter months.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why there are fewer recreational facilities available for women in Maghaberry prison than there are for men.

Mr. Mates: Both male and female prisoners have access to the gym on a regular basis and participate in a wide range of recreational pursuits. An exercise bike and pool table for each association room in the female section of Maghaberry prison is under consideration.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why evening classes have been withdrawn from the women's section of Maghaberry prison, while remaining available to prisoners in the men's section.

Mr. Mates: Reassessment of evening classes showed that the classes were too small to be viable. However, the day programme for female prisoners has been enhanced to take account of the non-provision of evening classes.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why no inter-wing association beween women prisoners in Maghaberry prison is permitted, as compared with men.

Mr. Mates: The privilege of inter-wing association was withdrawn from female prisoners in July 1991 for operational reasons. However, it has now been reintroduced for some prisoners and will be kept under review.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing the number and ranks of officers presently serving in the RUC fraud squad; what formal qualifications such officers have in accountancy and law; and what further expertise in these fields would normally be available to them.

Mr. Mates *[holding answer 27 October 1992]:* I understand that at present the established strength of the squad is 17 officers. Their ranks are as follows:

	Number
Chief Inspector	1
Inspector	2
Sergeant	5
Constable	9

Fraud squad officers are not required to have formal qualifications in accountancy or law, although one officer has a degree in accountancy; but those in and selected for the squad must have an aptitude for this type of investigatory work. All officers attached to the RUC fraud squad receive the training necessary for their duties and members of the squad regularly attend comprehensive training courses organised at United Kingdom level.

Expertise from other relevant professional organisations,including the accountancy and legal professions, is drawn upon whenever necessary to ensure the fullest possible investigation of suspected fraud.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Indonesia

8. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with Indonesia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom maintains friendly and constructive relations with Indonesia. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State paid a successful visit there earlier this month.

Latin America

21. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to visit Latin America to discuss regional security in that area.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs looks forward to visiting Latin America again soon and to discussing a wide range of issues.

East Timor

23. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement about the state of human rights in East Timor.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We continue to monitor the situation in East Timor. During my right hon. Friend the Minister of State's visit to Indonesia earlier this month, he stressed the importance we attach to full respect for human rights in East Timor. We welcome the resumption of dialogue between Indonesia and Portugal about East Timor.

Libya

24. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reconsideration he has given to the imposition of sanctions against Libya, and the issue of the origins of the Lockerbie crime.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations Security Council reviewed the sanctions against Libya on 12 August, and agreed that there was no justification for lifting them. The Lockerbie investigation continues, but no evidence has come to light which would justify the issue of further warrants.

Yugoslavia

25. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current circumstances surrounding the peace-keeping role of the United Nations in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: UNPROFOR, the United Nations peacekeeping operation in the former Yugoslavia is mandated to carry out a number of specific tasks. These include ceasefire monitoring in Croatia—Security Council resolution 743—overseeing the demilitarisation of the Prevlaka Peninsula—SCR 779—reopening and securing Sarajevo airport—SCR 764—support for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' efforts to deliver humanitarian relief throughout Bosnia—SCR 776—and monitoring compliance with the ban on military flights in Bosnia—SCR 781. The United Kingdom is contributing forces to UNPROFOR operations in both Croatia and Bosnia.

"An Agenda for Peace"

26. **Mr. Dalis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he received a copy of the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, "An Agenda for Peace"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Secretary-General's report, "An Agenda for Peace" was published on 17 June this year. In my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs' speech to the United Nations General Assembly on 22 September he welcomed the report on behalf of the EC and its members as a very important collection of proposals which all United Nations bodies, but notably the General Assembly and the Security Council, should follow up swiftly. I have asked for a copy of this speech to be placed in the Library of the House of Commons.

Cyprus

27. **Mr. Bendall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will meet the Turkish Cypriot leader, Rauf Denktash, to discuss the situation in Cyprus.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans to meet the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mr. Denktash, who claims to be the head of a state which we do not recognise. We have regular contacts with him at senior official level.

29. **Mr. Keith Hill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the talks on Cyprus recently held in New York under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

31. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the talks on Cyprus recently held in New York under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the talks on Cyprus recently held in New York under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest position with regard to the talks on Cyprus.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: President Vassiliou and Mr. Denktash held a series of separate meetings with the United Nations Secretary-General from 15 July to 11 August. Sufficient progress was made to allow a change of format to direct negotiation between the two, under the Secretary-General's chairmanship, from 12 to 14 August.

These talks reconvened in the new format in New York on 26 October. Security Council resolution 774 makes plain that the international community expects this round to lead to the agreement of an outline settlement on the basis of the United Nations Secretary-General's "set of ideas" as set out in his report of 21 August.

32. **Mr. Nicholls:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's relations with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In line with Security Council resolution 541, we do not recognise the so-called "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus". Nor does any state other than Turkey. We support the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General in seeking a solution to the Cyprus dispute on the basis of a single, federal, bizonal and bicommunal state.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the talks on Cyprus recently held in New York under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Mr. Hurd: Direct negotiations, under the United Nations Secretary-General's chairmanship reconvened in New York on the 26 October. Security Council resolution 774 makes plain that the international community expects this round to lead to the agreement of an outline settlement on the basis of the United Nations Secretary-General's "set of ideas" as set out in his report of 21 August.

Maastricht Treaty

28. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to review with his counterparts in the European Community the methods by which member states are ratifying the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None. Article R of the treaty states that member states shall ratify the treaty in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements. These requirements differ from one member state to another.

India

30. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement regarding relations between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of India.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our relations with India are excellent.

Central America

33. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with the countries of central America.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom enjoys good relations with all the countries of central America. We support their efforts to consolidate democracy and promote economic development, primarily through our active participation in the San José dialogue between the European Community and its member states and the central American countries.

Occupied Countries

34. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will urge Israel to withdraw from all of the territories it has occupied since 1967 as part of a lasting and binding peace settlement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have constantly restated our policy that Israel should withdraw from territories occupied in 1967 as part of a comprehensive peace settlement, and meanwhile administer them in compliance with international law and human rights standards.

Western Sahara

35. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Morocco on the western Sahara.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have taken every opportunity to underline the need for the parties to the dispute to co-operate fully with the Secretary-General in the implementation of his settlement plan. This continues to offer the best hope for a fair and lasting solution.

Languages

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Council of Ministers encouraging the inclusion of the main European lesser-used languages within the Lingua programme.

Mr. Forman: I have been asked to reply.

The Government have no plans to encourage an increase in number of the languages covered by the Lingua programme.

Kashmir

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement as to what diplomatic measures he is taking to force India to implement the resolutions of the United Nations and the European Parliament calling for a peaceful settlement in Kashmir; and if he will consider imposing *(a)* economic sanctions and *(b)* an arms embargo.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are deeply concerned to see a resolution to the Kashmir dispute and are ready to help if both sides would like us to play a role. We take every opportunity to urge India and Pakistan to agree a peaceful means of resolving the dispute as they committed themselves to do in the 1972 Simla agreement. The United Nations resolutions of 1948 and 1949 set out a possible framework, but neither side fully implemented those resolutions and they have, to some extent, been overtaken by events.

United Nations (Members' Participation)

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements his Department has made to assist right hon. and hon. Members to participate in the working of United Nations institutions.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We welcome the participation of parliamentarians in the work of the United Nations. There are particular areas in which the extensive experience and tradition of democracy of the hon. and right hon. Members of this House can be of benefit. I am thinking of the growing significance of the United Nation's role in election monitoring and in providing support to emerging parliaments. We are pleased to see an example of this in the assistance the Inter-Parliamentary Union has given to the United Nations Development Programme. We remain willing to assist hon. Members of this House to participate in such areas. In addition, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office arranges an annual visit for Members of Parliament to the United Nations General Assembly. The next visit will take place early in 1993.

Aku Suki Maru

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will inquire of the Governor of Hong Kong the reasons for the invoking of legislation prohibiting the plutonium ship Akat Suki Maru from entering its territorial waters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Hong Kong Government have not invoked legislation prohibiting the ship Akat Suki Maru from entering Hong Kong waters. Hong Kong is aware of its international obligations as regards navigation through its waters. There is no reason to expect that the ship will enter Hong Kong waters.

European Single Market

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 23 October, *Official Report*, column *409*, which aspects of the common commercial policy of the European Community are not contained within its policy for a single market; and what aspects of the single market programme are not contained within the EC common commercial policy.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The common commercial policy was established by a separate chapter—articles 110 to 116—of the treaty of Rome. It governs the Community's trade relations with third countries, as distinct from the single market provisions, which deal with intra-Community trade.

Although the functioning of the single market depends, among other things, upon the existence of a common customs tariff, the articles of the treaty, as amended by the Single European Act, which govern the establishment of the single market have no direct bearing on those governing the common commercial policy.

Southern Africa

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his most recent assessment of the economic and political situation in southern Africa.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Despite tragic setbacks, the countries of the region are still going through potentially a most hopeful period of political and economic change. This difficult process is worsened by the worst drought in living memory. However, we remain optimistic.

WALES

Capital Expenditure

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what policy considerations will govern the choice of priorities for capital projects in his departmental budget in the year 1993-94 *(a)* if the Barnett formula is continued and *(b)* if it is discontinued;

(2) what evaluation he has carried out of the priority to be given to all of the capital expenditure projects in his departmental programme in relation to the proposed impact of the Barnett formula agreements.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 19 October, *Official Report*, column *149*. In due course, I shall allocate the resources of the Welsh Office block to individual programmes and projects according to my assessment of priorities.

Environmental Network

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the companies from *(a)* north Wales, *(b)* south-west Wales and *(c)* south-east Wales which have joined his Department's environmental network to date; and if he will list both the events organised to date by the network and proposed events for the future.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Since the launch in July, 51 organisations have joined the environmental managers network. Of these, 15 are from north Wales, six are from south-west Wales and 30 are from south-east Wales, as detailed in the list. I expect many more to join shortly and arrangements are in hand for updated lists of the network's members to be placed in the Library of the House every three months.

MEMBERSHIP LIST

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGERS NETWORK

North Wales Region

Kimberly Clark Ltd.
Simon Petroleum Technology Ltd.
Pilkington Insulation products
Peboc Ltd.
Iceland Frozen Foods Ltd.
Ferodo Caernarfon Ltd.
Alfred McAlpine Quarry Products Ltd.
Celtest Ltd.
Castle Cement Padestow Ltd.
Envirocheck
Hotpoint Ltd.
Deeside Titanium Ltd.
Hoya Lens (UK) Ltd.
GS Packaging Ltd.
Continental Can (Europe) Ltd.

South West Wales

Alcoa Manufacturing (GB) Ltd.
Wynnstay and Clwyd Farmers plc
Kaye (Presteigne) Ltd.
Ina Bearing Co. Ltd.
Marine and Port Services Ltd.
3M (UK) Ltd.

South East Wales

Parke Davies and Co. Ltd.
Hoover plc
ENVOTEK Chemical Environmental Consultants
Arjo Wiggins Carbonless Papers Ltd.
England Environmental Ltd.
Mid Glamorgan TEC
Western Labels
BP Chemicals
Amersham International plc

Dow Chemical Co. Ltd.
MEP Ltd.
Scott Manning Associates
EMMS Wales Ltd.
Monsanto plc
Sheer Pride Ltd.
Purolite International Ltd.
Sony (UK) Ltd.
Anacomp Data Products Ltd.
Touche Ross and Co.
Severnside Waste Paper Ltd.
South Wales Electricity plc
Allied Steel and Wire plc
Plastics Engineers Ltd.
IEP Doncasters Ltd.
Rockwool Ltd.
Star Sheet Metal Works Ltd.
Pilkington Insulation Ltd.
Biotal Ltd.
Oakdale Batteries Ltd.

Since the launch, a seminar on environmental auditing has taken place. Others are planned on wast minimisation, technology transfer, grant assistance, product appraisal and life cycle analysis and environmental awareness.

Welcome Host Scheme

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people have undertaken training under the welcome host scheme to date.

Sir Wyn Roberts: To date 3,564 individuals have undertaken training under the welcome host scheme.

Surplus School Places

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the effect the plan to eliminate surplus school places in Wales will have upon the Government commitment to support parental choice in education.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Government remain committed to the principle of parental choice. The elimination of surplus places will release resources that may be deployed elsewhere in the education service to improve facilities and raise educational standards in schools, both of which are key considerations in parents' exercise of their choice of school.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what criteria he will apply in considering the removal of surplus school places by implementing school closure.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My criteria for considering proposals for school closures by local education authorities are set out in Welsh Office circular 20/88, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will grant additional resources to the Welsh Development Agency specifically to develop urban regeneration programmes in conjunction with local authorities in the south Wales valleys.

Mr. David Hunt: I have already approved a record budget for 1992-93 of £19 million for the WDA's urban development programme. This represents a 90 per cent. increase on the previous year's budget.

Birds

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many sites in Wales currently qualify for protection under the EC birds directive; and how many of these sites have been designated to date.

Sir Wyn Roberts: To date, eight sites in Wales have been designated as special protection areas (SPAs) under the EC directive on the conservation of wild birds (79/409/EEC). In addition, a further six sites are proposed SPAs and as such are afforded similar protection to designated SPAs.

Housing (Disabled People)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total local authority housing stock in each local authority area in Wales; and if he will indicate the proportion of the stock which is *(a)* wheelchair standard and *(b)* mobility standard in each instance.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The total local authority housing stock is given in the table. Information on the stock of local authority dwellings which are *(a)* wheelchair standard and *(b)* mobility standard is not available.

Total Local Authority stock at 1 April 1992

	Number
Aberconwy	2,468
Alyn and Deeside	4,873
Arfon	4,802
Blaenau Gwent	9,626
Brecknock	2,559
Cardiff	18,125
Carmarthen	3,275
Ceredigion	3,169
Colwyn	2,432
Cynon Valley	4,760
Delyn	4,454
Dinefwr	2,386
Dwyfor	1,396
Glyndwr	2,727
Islwyn	5,723
Llanelli	6,490
Lliw Valley	4,697
Meirionnydd	1,915
Merthyr Tydfil	6,383
Monmouth	4,613
Montgomeryshire[1]	3,741
Neath	5,188
Newport	12,739
Ogwr	8,888
Port Talbot/Afan	5,298
Preseli Pembrokeshire	5,121
Radnorshire	1,110
Rhondda	4,505
Rhuddlan	2,604
Rhymney Valley	9,357
South Pembrokeshire	2,619
Swansea	15,682
Taff-Ely	6,586
Torfaen	12,424
Vale of Glamorgan	5,700
Wrexham Maelor	14,718
Ynys Mon	5,194
Wales	218,347

[1] Includes 1,111 rented new town dwellings in Newtown.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average time taken by each local authority social services department in Wales to *(a)* assess and *(b)* implement and deliver applications for house renovations to disabled persons' households.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not available centrally.

Hip and Knee Joint Operations

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the South Glamorgan health authority concerning the request made in September for quotations from the South Birmingham health authority for artificial hip and knee joint operations for residents of South Glamorgan.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I have had no consultations with South Glamorgan district health authority regarding this matter.

Examination Results

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what weight will be attached to examination performance in assessing whether a school should be closed.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Each case is considered on its merits taking all relevant considerations, including examination performance, into account.

Cadw

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the chief executive of the Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments).

Sir Wyn Roberts: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments under its chief executive, Mr. John Carr. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given. A copy of his reply will be placed in the Library of the House.

Letter from Mr. J. Carr to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated October 1992:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your recent PQ which asked if he would list for the last 12 months the titles of papers that I have published as Cadw's Chief Executive.

The principal document published by me in this period has been Cadw's first Annual Report and Accounts for the years 1991-92. I attach a copy. A copy is also available in the Library of the House.

In addition to its Annual Report the Agency has produced a wide variety of publications ranging from guidebooks in respect of monuments in the care of the Secretary of State to lists of buildings afforded statutory protection under the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

If you would like details of any of these I would be glad to provide this.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for the last 12 months the fact-finding visits the chief executive of the Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments) has made; what were his findings; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Responsibility for the subject of the question had been delegated to Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments under its chief executive, Mr. John Carr. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given. A copy of his reply will be placed in the Library of the House.

Letter from Mr. J. Carr to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated October 1992:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question which asked if he would list for the last 12 months the fact finding visits that I have made and my findings.

You will have seen that the Agency's first Annual Report which I have sent you sets out the mission statement of the Agency which is to protect, to conserve and to promote the built heritage of Wales. As part of my responsibilities as Agency Chief Executive I made a number of visits in Britain and occasionally overseas to help further promote these objectives. As the Annual Report highlight, a key responsibility I have as Chief Executive is to encourage greater numbers of visitors particularly from overseas to visit the monuments of outstanding international importance that are in Cadw's care. In December 1991 I made a visit to the United States, and participated in a workshop sponsored by the Council of Europe in Romania in September 1992.

In the day to day conduct of my responsibilities I have not as such undertaken fact finding missions but as Chief Executive of the Agency since April 1991, and Director of Cadw prior to that, I have established close associations with other built heritage managers and with others involved in Britain's tourism industry.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Development Policy

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy at the Development conference on 18 November to seek the amendment of the EC White Paper on development to ensure that the chief aims of the development policy are the elimination of poverty and the fostering of sustainable development.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We hope to see adopted by Ministers on 18 November a resolution setting out as the central objectives of development co-operation policy, the sustainable social and economic development of the developing countries, and more particularly the most disadvantaged among them; the smooth and gradual integration of the developing countries into the world economy; and the campaign against poverty in developing countries.

Rain Forests

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations the Government have made in the United Nations with regard to securing a coherent and sustainable long-term policy supported internationally to preserve rain forests in those countries where they are now under threat; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: At the United Nations conference on environment and development in June we played a leading role in getting agreement to a statement of principles on the sustainable management of the world's forests. This is the first international consensus on their value. We are working to ensure that it is followed up by an effective international review process. We are proposing in the United Nations General Assembly that this should be through the sustainable development commission.

Somalia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he, another Minister or Foreign Office official intend to visit the area of the former British Somalia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Neither the Foreign Secretary nor other Ministers have any plans at present to visit the area of the former British protectorate of Somaliland. The British ambassador to Ethiopia is likely to do so in the near future, though no date has yet been set.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the performance of the UN and its agencies, the EC and Her Majesty's Government in response to the crisis in Somalia; and whether he has any proposals for improvement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and my noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development have visited Somalia recently as part of EC Troika missions. While there is general recognition, including by the UN itself, that the relief effort was slow to get off the ground, both were generally impressed by the excellent work being done in extremely difficult and often harrowing circumstances by the UN agencies and non-government organisations. The most urgent need is to improve the security situation. We have continued to press the UN to take the further action necessary to ensure the prompt distribution of relief supplies and the safety of aid personnel. The Government have given almost £27 million to the relief effort.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the decision was taken by the United Nations Security Council to send 500 troops to Somalia; and when these troops were actually deployed in Mogadishu.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The UN Security Council agreed in principle to the deployment of troops in Mogadishu on 24 April 1992, subject to further discussion between the UN and local military factions. The Security Council on 14 August agreed that deployment should proceed. The first troops arrived on 14 September.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action *(a)* the World Health Organisation and *(b)* the Food and Agriculture Organisation have taken in Somalia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: During the first half of 1992 the World Health Organisation (WHO) funded medical and health supplies to a value of US$1·744 million for international and local non-government organisations in Somalia. WHO is raising an additional US$6·1 million to strengthen and expand its activities. The Food and Agricultural Organisation is providing an emergency supply of seeds, tools and pesticides and assistance for animal health projects.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what instructions were given to his Department's staff in Nairobi about visits to Somalia; and what were the reasons for those instructions in the period since the end of the civil war.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since January 1991, the Foreign Office has advised British nationals against visiting Somalia. British officials have been required to follow this advice, and have only visited Somalia when there was a specific need to do so. Humanitarian aid issues have been fully dealt with in Nairobi, Geneva and elsewhere. A member of the British High Commission staff in Nairobi has special responsibility for liaison with non-governmental organisations in the south of Somalia, and visits as necessary.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the outcome of the UN conference on Somalia held in Geneva; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development attended the conference of donors to Somalia held in Geneva on 13 and 14 October. The conference formally established the UN 100-day action plan to accelerate the relief effort to Somalia. The Government strongly support the plan. The new pledge of £7·5 million of humanitarian aid for Somalia which we announced in September is being used to support the aims of the plan.

EC Overseas Development Budget

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what decisions have been taken recently by the EC on the size of its future overseas development budget; and what are the real and constant price change from the budget for the current year and in 1991.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: EC Development Aid is financed partly by the European development fund and partly by the EC budget. The draft 1993 EC budget, including the provisions for development cooperation, is still under discussion. We expect a final decision by the end of the year. The information for 1991 and 1992 is as follows:

	1991	*1992*
Current prices (mecu)		
Commitment	1,477	1,770
Percentage increase		19·8
Constant (1991) prices		
Commitment	1,477	1,689
Percentage increase		14·3

Note: In 1991, 500 mecu aid was also provided for countries most affected by the Gulf crisis.

UN Conference on Environment and Development

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the assistance given to assist other countries to fulfil their obligations arising from agreements made at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Mr. Lennox Boyd: The biodiversity and climate change conventions were each signed by over 150 countries at Rio. We have contributed over £40 million to the global environment facility, the interim funding mechanism for the conventions. Our contribution was separate from and additional to our aid programme for developing countries. We want to see the GEF established as the permanent funding mechanism for both conventions.

Poland (Know-how Funds)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to spend the balance of the know-how fund for Poland; for what purposes it will be spent; what sum of money is involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since the inception of the know-how fund for Poland in 1989, expenditure has amounted to £24 million of our £50 million know-how fund pledge. On current plans the large part of the remainder will be spent by the end of the 1994-95 financial year. The bulk of the money is committed in the priority areas of banking and financial services (including accountancy and privatisation), management development and assistance with economic and industrial restructuring. There are also substantial initiatives in the areas of energy efficiency and local government.

Famine in Africa

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with other EC ministers regarding the famine in Africa.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We discuss the continuing crisis in Africa and humanitarian needs regularly with other Community Ministers. We were prominent in discussions culminating in the Community's decision to launch this year's special food aid programme and have recently led EC troika fact-finding missions to Africa, including Somalia. EC Ministers will review the situation on 18 November at the Development Council, which will be chaired by my noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development.

United Nations World Population Conference

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what preparations have been made for the United Kingdom input to the 1994 United Nations world population conference; which Government Department will be responsible for these preparations; and what plans there are to draw on non-governmental organisations contributions to this conference on the lines of the NGO involvement in the June 1992 Earth summit.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We will participate fully in preparatory meetings for the United Nations 1994 international conference on population and development. We will also participate in the European population conference in March 1993 which will provide a European regional contribution to the preparations. The questions of which Government Department will take the prime responsibility for the preparations and the arrangements for drawing on NGO contributions are under consideration.

DEFENCE

Sea King Helicopters

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has agreed a contract with Westland for the additional six Sea King helicopters announced by the then Minister of State for Defence Procurement on 19 February.

Mr. Aitken: Following the successful conclusion of negotiations with Westland Helicopters Ltd., a contract for six new Sea King MK3 helicopters has been placed today. The contract is worth some £60 million.

Euroflag

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he intends further involvement in the Euroflag consortium in relation to United Kingdom tactical military transport requirements; and if he will act to ensure the involvement of United Kingdom companies in potential projects resulting from the work of the consortium.

Mr. Aitken: We will continue to follow developments on the European future large aircraft project, and will consider aircraft which may result from the Euroflag consortium alongside other available options when we need to update our transport fleet.

Research Programmes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of personnel in, the number of projects in and the value of MOD contributions to LINK and EC research programmes in the Defence Research Agency for the last three financial years and projected for the current year.

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter delegated to the Defence Research Agency under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Letter from Mr. John Chisholm to Mr. Jim Cousins, dated 23 October 1992:

In his written reply of Wednesday 28 October the Secretary of State for Defence informed you that I would be replying directly to the following question:

> To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list the number of personnel in, the number of projects in and the value of MOD contributions to LINK and EC Research programmes in the Defence Research Agency for the last three financial years and projected for the current year.

The information you requested is set out below:

EC Research Programmes

Year	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Number of Projects	8	9	10	17
Number of Personnel	5·8	11·6	10·5	13·0
Value of DRA Contribution £K	220	550	510	700
LINK Programmes				
Number of Projects	0	2	3	6
Number of Personnel	0	2·1	3·1	4·9
Value of DRA Contribution £K	0	150	220	320

Note: The number of projects shown is cumulative so if a project runs for three years it has been shown in three columns.

I hope you will find this helpful.

Filipino Entrants

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Filipino wives/fianceés have entered the United Kingdom with the Gloucestershire regiment which has recently returned from Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no records of any members of the Gloucestershire regiment being married to Filipino women. Records of fianceés are not held.

Romania

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contacts the United Kingdom has with the defence forces of Romania; and what liaison or help is extended over training and exchange visits.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In keeping with the Government's policy of building closer ties with all the countries of central and eastern Europe, the Ministry of Defence has over the past 12 months established contacts with the Romanian armed forces, mostly about hydrography. We have also recently agreed a modest training package which includes English language training and attendance at selected courses run by the three services.

Operation Granby

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the amount of money received to date from each country towards the cost of Operation Granby; if he will give the amounts due from each country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government received generous support from a number of countries towards Operation Granby. Contributions in cash, amounting to some £2,049 million, were given as follows:

	£ million
Belgium	15
Germany	274
Hong Kong	16
Japan	192
Kuwait	660
Saudi Arabia	582
South Korea	18
United Arab Emirates	278
Other	14

In addition to these cash contributions the United Kingdom also received considerable host nation support and various types of assistance in kind from 20 countries, including some countries which also made cash contributions, for operations in the Gulf.

Operation Grapple

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the amount allocated by his Department for Operation Grapple for 1992-93 and 1993-94 and the amount involved in setting up the initial deployment; whether the overall budget for his Department has been increased for 1992-93 for this operation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is estimated that the additional cost of Operation Grapple for the first 12 months amounts to some £110 million, VAT exclusive, of which £17·5 million relates to the initial deployment. It is too early to provide an accurate breakdown of costs between financial years. Although costs initially fall to the defence budget they are subsequently refunded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which, under the normal rules, has vote responsibility for such operations.

SCOTLAND

Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the projects relating to research into paralytic shellfish poisoning and associated problems to which his Department has contributed in the last three years or plans to support in the present financial year; and if he will indicate the amount contributed or to be contributed in each case.

Sir Hector Monro: Two projects relating to research into paralytic shellfish poisoning—PSP for short—and associated problems are undertaken at my Department's marine laboratory, Aberdeen. They are:

1. Monitoring of algal blooms and microbiological factors in respect of fish and shellfish monitoring.
2. Nitrogen cycling in coastal ecosystems.

The full economic costs met, or to be met, by my Department between April 1989 and March 1993 amount to £132,000 for the PSP toxin monitoring component of the first project, and £1·321 million for the second project which deals with the basic processes which give rise to algal blooms.

Feus

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to change the law relating to the rights of feu superiors when a feu has been bought out.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Law Commission is currently reviewing property law in Scotland. As part of this review, the commission published a discussion paper in July 1991 seeking comments on various proposals for reform of the feudal system. The commission is now analysing the responses to the discussion paper and will submit a report in due course. I will wish to have an opportunity to consider the report in detail before determining whether any change in the law may be required.

Hospitals

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of plans to replace East Fortune hospital with a new unit for continuing care at Roodlands hospital in Haddington.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer of 27 October 1992]:* The progress of plans for the replacement of East Fortune hospital is a matter for Lothian health board.

Roads

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the effects of the traffic calming measures at Gateside, Fife.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer of 27 October 1992]:* Traffic speed surveys carried out prior to and following installation of the traffic calming measures at Gateside indicate a slight decrease in the speed of traffic. It is signifiant, however, that in the three-year period before the traffic calming measures were introduced there were two serious injury accidents and 12 non-injury accidents at this location whereas in the year since the traffic calming measures were completed there has been one slight injury accident and one non-injury accident. Early indications, therefore, are encouraging although the situation will continue to be monitored.

Council Tax

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the expected annual costs of administering the council tax in each local authority in Scotland; and what costs have been incurred to date.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 27 October 1992]*: It is for local authorities themselves to determine the expenditure required to administer the council tax, although the Government expect the costs involved to be significantly less than those for administering the community charge. Overall authorities budgeted to spend £7·5 million in the current financial year preparing for the tax. Their budget estimates for 1993-94 will not be available until next spring.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the cost to date of the consultation exercise for local government reforms in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 27 October 1992]*: The costs incurred to date by the Scottish Office on the current consultation exercise on local government reform amount to approximately £170,000.

Competitive Tendering

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans there are to halt the loss of the jurisdiction of the Commissioners for Local Administration in Scotland following the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering and the provision of local government services by outside agencies.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 27 October 1992]*: Although the commissioner has no jurisdiction over the activities of private companies undertaking local authority services, the ultimate statutory responsibility for the provision of such services rests with local authorities. In such circumstances the powers of the commissioner to investigate complaints by members of the public are not diminished. The Government keep the commissioner's powers under regular review.

Forth Valley Health Board

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will dismiss the chairperson of the Forth Valley health board.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 26 October 1992]*: No.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment and Training

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will state the individual programme costs at constant prices, for each of the years 1987-88 to 1991-92 for employment training and its predecessor programmes youth training and the enterprise allowance scheme and the numbers out of work for each of the years during the same period; and if she will make a statement on the Government's future intentions for Government employment and training measures.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is contained in the tables:

Great Britain training expenditure (cash prices)[1]

£ million

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
YT[2]	1,008	1,020	1,002	844	846
ET[3]	380	615	1,107	1,076	842
Enterprise allowance scheme/business and enterprise support[4]	193	250	212	184	184

[1] The figures quoted are cash prices. The data necessary to adjust these figures for inflation (ie retail prices index—all items) can be found in table 6.4 of the Employment Gazette for April 1992 and in table 26 of the annual supplement to Economic Trends for April of earlier years. These publications are available in the Library.

[2] Youth training includes expenditure on training credits from April 1991.

[3] ET was introduced from September 1988. Figures for the period prior to that date include expenditure on training measures which were replaced by ET, but do not include employment measures such as the community programme.

[4] It is not possible to distinguish expenditure on EAS from other enterprise and business support programmes delivered since 1987-88.

Average seasonally adjusted unemployment figures

Great Britain *Thousands*

	Number
1987-88	2,554·9
1988-89	2,030·4
1989-90	1,599·4
1990-91	1,660·3
1991-92	2,346·8

The Department's employment and training programmes are aimed at supporting economic growth by promoting a competitive, efficient and flexible labour market. Our commitment to helping unemployed people through the opportunities provided will continue to be met through the employment service and through the training and enterprise councils.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of constituencies in Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England has lower percentage unemployment than in June 1987; and what proportion of constituencies that have had coal mines closed in the past six years has lower percentage unemployment now than in June 1987 compared with other constituencies.

Mr. McLoughlin: Unemployment rates are not available below the level of travel-to-work area (TTWA). In September 1992, the latest date for which claimant unemployment figures are available, the proportions of travel-to-work areas that had lower percentage rates of unemployment than in June 1987 were as follows: 100 per cent. in Northern Ireland, 97 per cent. in Wales, 97 per cent. in Scotland and 51 per cent. in England.

Information categorising coal mine closures by their TTWA is currently available only for the past four years; 95 per cent. of TTWAs which have had coal mines closed over the past four years had lower unemployment rates in September 1992 than in June 1987. The corresponding proportion for other TTWAs was 62 per cent.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if she will publish the average percentage rate of unemployment for 1991-92 for each travel-to-work area in the United Kingdom;

(2) if she will publish the average percentage rate of unemployment during the five-year period commencing August 1987 to August 1992 for each travel-to-work area in the United Kingdom.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Disability (Training)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will take steps to make disability equality training a compulsory component of training undertaken by careers advisers, careers officers and teachers responsible for careers information.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Local education authorities are required by statutory guidance given under the Employment and Training Act 1973 to make arrangements to identify the training needs of their careers service staff and make arrangements to meet those needs.

This guidance requires careers officers to obtain the diploma in careers guidance. The diploma covers equal opportunities training, including provision for people with disabilities.

The training of careers teachers is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Education and for Wales as appropriate.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what efforts are currently undertaken by her Department to ensure that all publicity material produced by her Department concerning training programmes relating to disabled people promotes positive images of disabled people.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Employment Department no longer produces national publicity material on training programmes. This is now the responsibility of individual training and enterprise councils (TECs). TECs are responsible for the planning and delivery of training programmes and are contractually bound to ensure equality of opportunity for all trainees.

The Employment Department, however, produces advisory material on a range of issues for TECs, and others. Material concerning people with disabilities is quality checked by a specialist team in the Department.

Fraud

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many people were prosecuted for fraud by her Department in the latest year for which figures are available;

(2) what is the number of whole-time equivalent staff employed by her Department and its agencies to detect and prosecute suspected fraud; and what is the cost of their employment;

(3) how much her Department has saved from the investigation of fraud in the latest year for which figures are available; and what are the targeted savings for the next financial year.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. G. Johnson to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 28 October 1992:

As the Employment service is an Executive Agency, it is the responsibility of Mike Fogden the Agency's Chief Executive to answer Parliamentary Questions about relevant operational matters. In his absence, I am replying to your questions to the Secretary of State for Employment:

i. how many people were prosecuted for fraud by the Department in the latest year for which figures are available,

ii. what is the number of whole time equivalent staff employed to detect and prosecute suspected fraud, and what is the cost of their employment,

iii. how much the Department has saved from the investigation of fraud in the latest year for which figures are available, and what are the targeted savings for the next financial year.

The latest year for which figures are available is that of the financial year ending 31 March 1992 during which a total of 2,265 people were prosecuted for fraud. We currently have 1,300 people, of whom 780 are Inspectors, employed in the detection and prosecution of benefit fraud. The total cost of our fraud operations amounted to £13·34 million. The net savings from our investigations into benefit fraud amounted to £34·34m. We do not set targets for benefit savings accrued from benefit fraud investigation. Our performance is measured by the number of claims withdrawn following investigation by Inspectors and our target is for 58,000 such claims to be withdrawn by the end of the present financial year.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Engineering Construction Industry Training Board

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many appeals by firms against paying the industrial training levy demanded by the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board were heard by an industrial tribunal in *(a)* 1988, *(b)* 1989, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* 1991, respectively; and how many were (i) successful and (ii) unsuccessful.

Mr. McLoughlin: Prior to July 1991, engineering construction was covered by the Engineering Industry Training Board (EITB). That board was re-named the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB) on 23 July 1991 when the engineering manufacturing sector moved its training arrangements to a non-statutory basis.

In 1988 one appeal against the EITB was heard and was successful. No further appeals have been heard against either the EITB or the ECITB.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will place in the Library a list of all the companies who paid the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board levy in *(a)* 1989, *(b)* 1990 and *(c)* 1991.

Mr. McLoughlin: This information is not available to me. It is held only by Engineering Construction Industry Training Board and I have no power to require the board to supply me with such information.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what future plans she has for the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. and learned Friend, the previous Secretary of State, appointed the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board in July 1991 for a three-year period up to 22 July 1994. As with all non-Departmental public bodies, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State shall review the need for its continuance before any decision is made on its reconstitution.

Financial Services

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on trends in employment in the financial services sector between now and the end of 1993.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department does not publish predictions of employment in particular sectors.

Disabled People (Careers Guidance)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what monitoring is currently undertaken by her Department on the quality of careers guidance given to disabled people.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The careers service inspectorate of the Department undertakes inspections of LEA careers services and pays particular attention to the quality of careers guidance given to people with special needs.

"Hard Labour"

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consideration her Department has given to implementing the recommendations of the 1990 report of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, entitled "Hard Labour".

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government have considered the recommendations of this report. We have already announced our intention to introduce legislation to confer additional rights on individual employees, including extending the right to receive written particulars of employment terms to all employees working at least eight hours a week, which is in line with the report's recommendations.

Wages Councils

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will estimate the range of employment effects of abolishing wages councils.

Mr. McLoughlin: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave him on 14 July 1992, *Official Report,* column 626.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many respondents to the 1988 consultation document on the future of wages councils then supported the retention of wages councils, either wholly or in some form; whether the Government have recently contacted these respondents to inquire whether their views have altered; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: In the 1988 consultation 320 respondents favoured the retention of a wages councils system. Over 60 per cent. of employers and employers' organisations, who responded, supported abolition of the councils. There has been no exercise to contact those who responded in 1988, but employers have continued to make clear the damage done by the councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the oral answer of the Minister of State on 7 July, *Offical Report,* column 169, if she will publish evidence to show that two-thirds of the people covered by wages councils are paid more than the minimum wage set by the councils.

Mr. McLoughlin: The estimate is based on an analysis of employers' wage records checked by the wages inspectorate.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list those individuals or organisations who have written to her concerning the proposed abolition of wages councils indicating which are for the proposal and which against.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State received 71 written representations about the future of the wages councils from April to September 1992. Of these, 17 favoured abolition, 50 supported retention and four did not come down clearly on one side or the other. It would not be appropriate for me to publish the names of those who have written to the Department.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is her estimate of the number of people with disabilities whose employment is covered by a wages council order.

Mr. McLoughlin: I regret that the information is not available.

Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list all the names of public appointments that she has made, giving the period for which the appointment was made, relevant qualifications of the appointees, and what remuneration each currently receives.

Mr. McLoughlin: This information is not held centrally within the Department. We will, however, collect the information and my noble Friend Viscount Ullswater will write to the hon. Member.

Youth Training

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many youth training places are currently available in the Doncaster area; and what was the figure *(a)* six months and *(b)* 12 months ago.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is not available in the form requested.

At 13 September 1992 there were 3,865 young people on youth training in the Barnsley and Doncaster area. Six months and 12 months previously, the figure was 3,676 and 4,403 respectively. These figures reflect seasonal fluctuations and the demographic downturn in school leavers.

Barnsley/Doncaster TEC is confident that the Government's guarantee of a training place to eligible young people will be met.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether she will now introduce legislation to remove Crown immunity in respect of infringements of the Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act 1974.

Mr. McLoughlin: No decisions will be made about introducing legislation until the Health and Safety Commission has considered the review of current procedures and put any proposals to Ministers.

Wages Inspectorate

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to increase the enforcement powers of the wages inspectorate.

Mr. McLoughlin: None. The wages inspectorate has adequate powers to enforce wages council orders effectively.

Job Interview Guarantee Scheme

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for each region and for Great Britain as a whole how many agreements have been made with employers to operate the job interview guarantee scheme since it was extended nationally in April 1991; how many unemployed people have taken part in the scheme in each area; and how many participants have secured full-time employment with their sponsoring employer.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its Chief Executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Ms. Clare Short, dated 28 October 1992;

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the Job Interview Guarantee (JIG) initiative. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

You asked for each Region and for Great Britain as a whole how many agreements have been made with employers to operate the job interview guarantee scheme since it was extended nationally in April 1991, how many unemployed people have taken part in the scheme in each area, and how many participants have secured full-time employment with their sponsoring employer.

We no longer ask regions for information on the number of agreements made with employers as we do not require it to monitor the success of the programme.

Information on people taking part in the scheme, and those securing full-time employment is shown at Annex A. The information is broken down by region. At a national level we do not collect information by area.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Annex A

From April 1991 to 2 October 1992

Region	*Unemployed people assisted*	*Unemployed people placed*
Northern	10,484	3,170
Yorkshire & Humberside	11,762	4,027
East Midlands & Eastern	12,704	4,178
London & South East	87,435	27,159
South West	18,910	6,408
Wales	15,121	4,875
West Midlands	24,542	7,379
North West	18,555	7,747
Scotland	25,839	10,665
Total	225,352	75,608

Job Clubs

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for each region and for Great Britain as a whole since April 1991 how many people have joined job clubs, and how many have left; how many leavers got jobs, and how many entered another positive outcome; and if she will give the information broken down by the ethnic origin and gender of participants.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. G. Johnson to Ms. Clare Short, dated 28 October 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, it is the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the Agency's Chief Executive to answer Parliamentary Questions about relevant operational matters. In his absence, I am replying to your question to the Secretary of State for Employment about how many people have attended a Restart Interview since 1 April 1991; and what were the results of those interviews.

Mike Fogden last wrote to you on this subject on 25 February 1992. However we have changed the way we collect some of our statistics which means that although the information on the number of people joining and leaving Jobclubs is available up to September 1992, the breakdown by ethnic origin and gender of participants is only available up to March 1992. The figures for 1992-93 will be collected at the end of the operational year.

Table 'A' attached shows for each region and nationally the numbers who have joined Jobclubs between 1 April 1991 and 27 March 1992 together with the same period of those members leaving. Leavers who are shown as going into other positive outcomes have gone on either to training, full-time education or self-employment.

Table 'B' attached shows the estimated performance between 1 April 1991 and 27 March 1992 for male and female Jobclub members and by ethnic origin separated on a regional basis and for Great Britain as a whole. This has been derived from the quarterly surveys which were carried out during the period.

Table 'C' shows similar statistics to 'A', but covers the period 30 March 1992 to 25 September 1992. On the ethnic background and male/female characteristics of Jobclub leavers is now collected on an annual sample survey basis. As a result of this change, Service programmes and which should improve accuracy, the breakdown of male and female membership and ethnic origin is not yet available for the 1992-93 period.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the *Official Report*. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Table A
Jobclub Entrants & Leavers Information
1 April 1991 to 27 March 1992

Region	*Jobclub entrants*	*Jobclub leavers*	*Leavers into jobs*	*Leavers into jobs Per cent.*	*Leavers into other positive outcomes*	*Leavers into positive outcomes Per cent.*
Northern	12,659	12,379	4,731	38	1,444	50
Yorkshire and Humberside	16,115	15,314	6,463	42	2,349	58
East Midlands	16,807	15,193	7,355	48	2,625	66
London and South East	51,840	46,048	17,826	39	7,253	54
South West	13,034	11,954	5,986	50	1,866	66
Wales	11,165	10,400	5,179	50	1,397	63
West Midlands	19,285	16,931	7,669	45	3,006	63
North West	29,298	28,176	12,576	45	3,468	57
Scotland	19,914	19,745	9,046	46	2,674	59
Nationally	190,117	176,140	76,831	44	26,082	58

Table B
Jobclub leavers information by ethnic group
and male/female characteristics
1 April 1991 to 27 March 1992

National	*Leavers into jobs*	*Leavers into other positive outcomes*	*Total leavers*
White	67,544	21,285	153,167
Black/Afro Caribbean	3,889	1,804	8,856
Indian/Pakistani/ Bangladesh/Sri Lanken	4,170	2,444	10,966
None of the above	816	472	2,196
Preferred not to say	412	77	955
Total	76,831	26,082	176,140
Male	58,853	20,593	140,470
Female	17,978	5,489	35,670
Totals	76,831	26,082	176,140

Table B
Jobclub leavers information by ethnic group
and male/female characteristics
1 April 1991 to 27 March 1992

Northern	*Leavers into jobs*	*Leavers into other positive outcomes*	*Total leavers*
White	4,647	1,393	12,140
Black/Afro Caribbean	12	31	68
Indian/Pakistani/ Bangladesh/Sri Lanken	48	10	114
None of the above	12	0	23
Preferred not to say	12	10	34
Total	4,731	1,444	12,379
Male	3,728	1,249	10,432
Female	1,003	195	1,947
Totals	4,731	1,444	12,379

Table B
Jobclub leavers information by ethnic group
and male/female characteristics
1 April 1991 to 27 March 1992

Yorkshire and Humberside	*Leavers into jobs*	*Leavers into other positive outcomes*	*Total leavers*
White	5,905	2,070	13,883
Black/Afro Caribbean	73	63	219
Indian/Pakistani/ Bangladesh/Sri Lanken	376	216	1,032
None of the above	73	0	141
Preferred not to say	36	0	39
Total	6,463	2,349	15,314
Male	4,972	1,955	12,602
Female	1,491	394	2,712
Totals	6,463	2,349	15,314

Table B
Jobclub leavers information by ethnic group
and male/female characteristics
1 April 1991 to 27 March 1992

East Midland and Eastern	*Leavers into jobs*	*Leavers into other positive outcomes*	*Total leavers*
White	6,710	2,170	13,600
Black/Afro Caribbean	139	202	379
Indian/Pakistani/ Bangladesh/Sri Lanken	491	202	1,088
None of the above	15	51	110
Preferred not to say	0	0	16
Total	7,355	2,625	15,193
Male	5,792	1,969	12,211
Female	1,563	656	2,982
Totals	7,355	2,625	15,193

Table B
Jobclub leavers information by ethnic group
and male/female characteristics
1 April 1991 to 27 March 1992

London and South East	*Leavers into jobs*	*Leavers into other positive outcomes*	*Total leavers*
White	12,241	4,405	31,731
Black/Afro Caribbean	2,941	1,236	6,587
Indian/Pakistani/ Bangladesh/Sri Lanken	1,970	1,221	5,627
None of the above	446	360	1,494
Preferred not to say	228	31	609
Total	17,826	7,253	46,048
Male	12,739	5,344	34,697
Female	5,087	1,909	11,351
Totals	17,826	7,253	46,048

Table B
Jobclub leavers information by ethnic group
and male/female characteristics
1 April 1991 to 27 March 1992

South West	*Leavers into jobs*	*Leavers into other positive outcomes*	*Total leavers*
White	5,705	1,709	11,420
Black/Afro Caribbean	146	13	182
Indian/Pakistani/ Bangladesh/Sri Lanken	90	131	279
None of the above	45	13	73
Preferred not to say	0	0	0
Total	5,986	1,866	11,954
Male	4,670	1,459	9,529
Female	1,316	407	2,425
Totals	5,986	1,866	11,954

Table B
Jobclub leavers information by ethnic group
and male/female characteristics
1 April 1991 to 27 March 1992

Wales	*Leavers into jobs*	*Leavers into other positive outcomes*	*Total leavers*
White	5,018	1,357	10,097
Black/Afro Caribbean	40	27	101
Indian/Pakistani/ Bangladesh/Sri Lanken	67	13	130
None of the above	54	0	72
Preferred not to say	0	0	0
Total	5,179	1,397	10,400
Male	4,132	1,209	8,453
Female	1,047	188	1,947
Totals	5,179	1,397	10,400

Table B
Jobclub leavers information by ethnic group
and male/female characteristics
1 April 1991 to 27 March 1992

West Midlands	*Leavers into jobs*	*Leavers into other positive outcomes*	*Total leavers*
White	6,524	2,264	14,189
Black/Afro Caribbean	310	195	882
Indian/Pakistani/ Bangladesh/Sri Lanken	716	487	1,655
None of the above	95	36	133
Preferred not to say	24	24	72
Total	7,669	3,006	16,931
Male	5,796	2,349	13,332
Female	1,873	657	3,599
Totals	7,669	3,006	16,931

Table B
Jobclub leavers information by ethnic group
and male/female characteristics
1 April 1991 to 27 March 1992

North West	*Leavers into jobs*	*Leavers into other positive outcomes*	*Total leavers*
White	11,910	3,282	26,706
Black/Afro Caribbean	174	37	357
Indian/Pakistani/ Bangladesh/Sri Lanken	376	125	879
None of the above	58	12	110
Preferred not to say	58	12	124
Total	12,576	3,468	28,176
Male	9,740	2,844	23,107
Female	2,836	624	5,069
Totals	12,576	3,468	28,176

Table B
Jobclub leavers information by ethnic group
and male/female characteristics
1 April 1991 to 27 March 1992

Scotland	*Leavers into jobs*	*Leavers into other positive outcomes*	*Total leavers*
White	8,884	2,635	19,401
Black/Afro Caribbean	54	0	81
Indian/Pakistani/ Bangladesh/Sri Lanken	36	39	162
None of the above	18	0	40
Preferred not to say	54	0	61
Total	9,046	2,674	19,745
Male	7,284	2,215	16,107
Female	1,762	459	3,638
Totals	9,046	2,674	19,745

Table C
Jobclub Entrants & Leavers Information
30 March 1992 to 25 September 1992

Region	*Jobclub entrants*	*Jobclub leavers*	*Leavers into jobs*	*Leavers into jobs Per cent.*	*Leavers into other positive outcomes*	*Leavers into positive outcomes Per cent.*
Northern	6,826	7,182	3,018	42	828	54
Yorkshire and Humberside	9,251	9,152	4,383	48	1,359	63
East Midlands	9,468	9,934	4,827	49	1,590	65
London and South East	33,163	31,906	13,273	42	4,708	56
South West	7,683	7,893	3,889	49	1,155	64
Wales	6,324	6,108	3,296	54	842	68
West Midlands	10,877	10,945	4,756	43	1,790	60
North West	15,718	16,086	7,269	45	1,897	57
Scotland	10,683	10,731	5,288	49	1,479	63
Nationally	109,993	109,937	49,999	45	15,648	60

Actively-seeking-work Test

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether claimants or their representatives are entitled to a copy of the UB672 form completed by Employment Service officials when there are doubts about an unemployed person's availability for work or whether they are actively seeking work; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. G. Johnson to Ms. Clare Short, dated 28 October 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, it is the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the Agency's Chief Executive to answer parliamentary questions about relevant operational matters. In his absence, I am replying to your question to the Secretary of State for Employment about whether claimants or their representatives are entitled to a copy of the UB672 form completed by ES officials when there are doubts about an unemployed person's availability for work or whether they are actively seeking work.

Form UB672 is an internal document used by the Employment Service when acting on behalf of the Secretary of State, to refer a claim for benefit to the independent adjudication authorities for a decision on entitlement. As a matter of policy the form is not supplied to a claimant at that stage. If however the claim is disallowed and the claimant appeals against the adjudication officer's decision, a copy of the form would be included in the appeal papers copied to the claimant by the Appeals Tribunal.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the *Official Report*. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Employment Service

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress the employment service has made in meeting the targets outlined in the 1992-93 agency agreement; and if she will show for the latest possible date the *(a)* total unemployed job placings and variance from target, *(b)* long-term unemployed job placings and variance from target, *(c)* people with disabilities job placings and variance from target, *(d)* inner-city job placings and variance from target, *(e)* number of claims not pursued following initial contact and variance from profiled annual reference level, *(f)* number of claimants moved from unemployment benefit to another benefit and variance from annual reference level and *(g)* number of people who withdrew their claim to benefit after contact with fraud investigators and variance from annual reference level.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am informed by the chief executive of the Employment Service that in the period April to June 1992, the Employment Service placed a total of 350,000 unemployed people into jobs, against an annual target of 1·425 million. 24·6 per cent. of these placings were long-term claimants, 2·8 per cent. were people with disabilities and 33 per cent. were unemployed people in inner cities against annual targets of 19 per cent., 2·5 per cent. and 36 per cent. respectively. Over the same period new claims not pursued following initial contact were at the annual target level of 10 per cent. The number of people who withdrew their claim to benefit after contact with fraud investigators was 17,100 against an annual target of 58,000. The number of claimants helped to move from unemployment benefits to a more appropriate benefit is not a reference level under the annual performance agreement for 1992-93.

Unemployment

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action she is taking to reduce long-term unemployment.

Mr. McLoughlin: We have in place a wider than ever range of measures to help unemployed people find jobs as quickly as possible. We are firmly committed to helping long-term unemployed people in particular get back to work, and offer special help for them, including help with finding a job through job clubs and the job interview guarantee, training, and opportunities to undertake temporary work of benefit to the local community.

State Redundancy Fund

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will provide total spending figures from the state redundancy fund for 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. McLoughlin: The redundancy fund was merged with the national insurance fund in February 1991. Total spending under the redundancy and insolvency provisions of the employment protection legislation amounted to £144 million in 1990-91 and £283 million in 1991-92.

HEALTH

Health Service Mergers

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received regarding proposals to merge *(a)* Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale health authority and Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley health authority and *(b)* Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale community health council and Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley community health council; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have received no such representations. Any merger proposals would be the subject of public consultation.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines are laid down by her Department regarding the necessary consultation procedures involved in *(a)* mergers of community health councils and *(b)* mergers of health authorities; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) wrote to regional chairmen last year stating that where district health authorities are being merged regions should not consider merging community health councils (CHCs) without first consulting them and other local community interests. Regions should consider whether maintaining the existing CHCs will help promote better accountability, local sensitivity and local responsiveness and so outweigh any advantages to be gained from merging. Although the region's decision will be final, it is expected to take the CHC's views fully into account.

Where the merger of district health authorities is envisaged, there is agreement that regional health authorities consult, first informally, then if the Secretary of State agrees, formally with all relevant parties. Formal consultation normally runs for about three months, and should provide opportunities for public debate.

Disabled People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will amend community care proposals to allow local authorities to make direct payments to disabled people.

Mr. Yeo: There are no plans to do so.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations he has received from local authorities seeking power to make direct payments to disabled people.

Mr. Yeo: No such representations have recently been received.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what monitoring procedures have been established by her Department to check on the application of section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, by local authority social services departments.

Mr. Yeo: Prime responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the Act rests with local authorities themselves, to ensure that their policies are compatible with their legal obligations. The Department receives regular returns on certain services provided by local authorities under the Act, as well as information from other sources including the social services inspectorate. We follow up specific cases, referred to the Department, where it is alleged that a local authority is in breach of its statutory duties.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will now publish her Department's report on the effect of advertising on tobacco consumption; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The report by the Department of Health's economics and operational research division is being published today as a discussion document. Copies are available in the Vote Office.

The report raises a good many questions which interested parties will want to consider. I am therefore inviting comments on the methodology, analysis and content of the report over the next three months. We shall take all comments into account as we work towards the tough targets for reducing smoking set out in the White Paper "The Health of the Nation".

Information Technology

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the actual and budgeted annual expenditure, by region, on the training of NHS staff in the use of information technology systems in each year since 1989.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many skilled computer staff are employed in each national health service region and in total by the NHS.

Mr. Sackville: Detailed information as requested is not held centrally. Based on sample information of staff receiving automatic data processing allowances, we estimate that there was a total of 3,800 skilled computer staff directly employed in the NHS in Great Britain at June 1992.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to monitor the number of NHS staff receiving information technology training each year.

Mr. Sackville: No.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which pilot projects for hospital information support systems have now been evaluated; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: All hospital information support systems (HISS) projects include a project evaluation framework as part of the standard project management processes. Evaluations are conducted at appropriate project stages. These regular evaluations include a general review of timeliness and budgetary compliance, as well as relevant detailed assessment of, for example, quality and completeness of data capture, adequacy of procedures and training, and system outputs.

No end of project evaluation has as yet been possible, since all sites are still, as planned, in the implementation phase. Mid-stage assessments have been conducted, and have in some instances resulted in changes in scope, phasing or resourcing of the project. The end of implementation evaluations will include assessment of timescales, total costs, benefits already realised, further potential benefits, organisational impact, technical adequacy and lessons learned.

The economics and operational research (EOR) division of the Department of Health is considering some of the work already conducted on evaluation by the three original HISS projects at Darlington memorial hospital, Greenwich district hospital and Nottingham city hospital NHS Trust, with a view to developing national guidance material on project evaluation.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to monitor the expenditure on computer hardware and software and related management salaries and consultancy fees for trust hospitals.

Mr. Sackville: The National Health Service Management Executive does not intend to monitor expenditure on computer hardware and software or associated consultancy fees separately from the general arrangements for accounting for capital expenditure in trusts. Trusts determine their own capital investment strategies but have to make business cases to support them which are reviewed by the NHS Management Executive to ensure they are appropriate and affordable by purchasers. Trusts account for actual capital expenditure in their annual accounts which are subject to audit and published. I am satisfied that these arrangements provide a suitable framework for ensuring that all capital investment by trusts is properly controlled.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total expenditure on consultancy fees in connection with the purchase of information technology systems by each regional health authority in each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of whether the purchasing procedures and audit mechanisms operating in the NHS are adequate to ensure the efficient and effective use of NHS funds for the purpose of purchasing and developing information technology systems; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: All national health service bodies have standing orders and standing financial orders to follow to ensure that they comply with best practice in public procurement policies. To ensure better use of national health service resources for purchasing and developing information technology systems, the existing advice on procurement has been reviewed and updated by NHS Supplies. This thorough assessment has resulted in the development and introduction of new guidelines, procurement of information systems effectively (POISE). These will be issued to those responsible within the NHS for IT procurement and will help hospitals, trusts, units and health authorities match systems accurately to their individual needs in a cost-effective manner. These guidelines, in addition to others encompassing information management and technology, will be launched later this year and will improve further the NHS's utilisation of information technology.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the costs of hardware, software, and consultancy fees for the CARE information system purchased by Guy's hospital in London.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Peter Griffiths, the chief executive of the Guy's and Lewisham NHS Trust.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the costs of hardware, software and consultancy fees for the GIANT information system purchased by Guy's hospital in London.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Peter Griffiths, the chief executive of the Guy's and Lewisham NHS Trust.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the contracts for the supply of information technology systems to the NHS of a value of more than £2 million in each year since 1987-88 by region, title of the project and supplier.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on progress made towards the implementation of the targets for the development of information systems in the NHS established in the document, "Framework for Information Systems: The Next Steps".

Mr. Sackville: Good progress has been made in taking forward the wide ranging objectives set out in "Framework for Information Systems: The Next Steps".

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the anticipated expenditure on computer hardware and software in each NHS region, in each of the years from 1992-93 to 1994-95.

Mr. Sackville: Health authorities are required to produce annual accounts which are submitted to the Department. These accounts do not incorporate details of anticipated expenditure.

The monitoring of health authorities' anticipated expenditure is restricted to broad measures, in which computer expenditure is not separately identified.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many health information support systems projects have been initiated; and what is the cost of each project to date.

Mr. Sackville: A large number of hospital sites have been implementing computer systems that provide integrated facilities. It is estimated that some 40 sites have either procured, or are in the process of procuring health information support systems (HISS) solutions. In addition, there are perhaps another 60 or so sites who have already achieved a degree of integration amongst their operational systems. Often, this reflects regional initiatives, and the situation is therefore localised rather than evenly spread.

Information as to the cost of HISS within the national health service at large is not held centrally. Under EC legislation, however, there is a requirement for all purchases made under competitive tendering rules to be published in the *Official Journal* of the European Community within 48 days of contract award.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on how many occasions since 1985 the purchase of information technology systems by regional and district health authorities and hospital trusts has been the subject of audit inquiries by the district audit service, the National Audit Office or other auditors appointed by Her Majesty's Government or regional or district health authorities for that specific purpose; and whether she will list *(a)* those published and *(b)* those yet to be published.

Mr. Sackville: Auditors selectively review expenditure, including that on information technology, as part of their annual certification process. It is therefore not possible to provide figures on the number of inquiries carried out. Where inquiries by statutory auditors have led to formal reports, these have been recorded centrally. Reports in which procurement of information technology was identified as a main criticism were issued in respect of the following health authorities:

North Western RHA
Tunbridge Wells HA
Wessex RHA
South Western RHA
The former Leeds Eastern HA

The list refers to statutory audit reports issued in respect of financial years 1985-86 to 1991-92. In some cases, the auditor issued more than one report on the same authority. Reports by internal auditors are excluded.

The National Audit Office published a report entitled "Managing Computer Projects in the National Health Services" in November 1990. This included a review of procurement arrangements in a sample of health authorities.

We do not have comprehensive information on matters under examination by statutory auditors.

Wessex Regional Health Authority

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will make a statement on the report of the district audit service on the purchase of the regional information systems plan by the Wessex regional health authority.

Mr. Sackville: The district audit service undertook an investigation of the regional information systems plan at the request of Wessex regional health authority. Its report acknowledged that the regional health authority has taken both comprehensive steps to deal with the consequences of past decisions and remedial actions to improve its budgetary, financial and management arrangements.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the regional health authorities and hospital trusts which have transferred operational responsibility for, information technology systems to private or arm's-length companies.

Mr. Sackville: Five regional health authorities have wholly transferred the operational responsibility for their information technology systems to private or arm's-length companies. They are Northern, Yorkshire, Trent, East Anglian and Wessex. Six regions—North East Thames, South East Thames, South West Thames, South Western, Oxford and North Western have set up separate NHS trading arms to operate their information technology systems. North West Thames, West Midlands and Mersey regions have transferred only part of their operational responsibility to private companies. We do not hold information centrally for NHS hospital trusts.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS staff in each year have been trained in the use of information technology systems since the launch of the NHS training authority strategy in 1989.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures she has taken to remedy the low level of existing information technology skills and knowledge, especially among senior managers in the NHS, which was identified by the National Audit Office in 1990; and if she will make a statement on the level of such skills and knowledge amongst NHS staff.

Mr. Sackville: There are a number of measures currently being taken to address the IT training and awareness needs of national health service senior managers. One example is the information management and technology for managers programme. This has been developed and is now being delivered by the Institute of Health Service Management, the NHS training directorate and the information management group of the management executive, working closely with NHS staff at all levels. The programme is successfully reaching chief executives, general managers and chairs through briefing events, focused learning sets and training courses.

Another example is the development and dissemination of NHS specific computer-assisted learning (CAL) packages designed to equip managerial and clinical staff with knowledge and skills in information management and systems.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to publish the information strategy for the NHS; how much it will cost to implement; and what additional funds will be made available to the NHS to cover the cost of implementation.

Mr. Sackville: The information management and technology strategy for the national health service will be published very soon and follows an extensive period of consultation both within the NHS and with suppliers. The implementation of the strategy will be a local responsibility. A major thrust of the strategy will be to ensure that maximum benefit is gained from existing levels of local investment in information management and technology. The availability of any additional funds to support priority areas is dependent upon the outcome of PES negotiations with Treasury.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether she will list those contracts associated with the Wessex regional health authority/regional information systems plan project which have been identified by the district auditor as having been associated with overcharging, having exploited weaknesses in the management of the Wessex regional health authority, or having undertaken work under contracts which were possibly unlawful or not validly authorised;

(2) how much was the annual expenditure on the Wessex regional health authority/regional information systems plan project in each of the years from 1985-86 to 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Robin Buchanan, the Wessex regional health authority chairman for details.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she is satisfied that Wessex regional health authority has taken all necessary steps to recover funds from all companies which undertook work on the regional information systems plan project and have been identified by the district auditor as having been associated with overcharging, having exploited weaknesses in the management of the Wessex regional health authority, or having undertaken work under contracts which were possibly unlawful and not validly authorised; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I understand that Wessex regional health authority has already concluded an agreement with AT&T (Istel) following legal action and subsequent negotiations. Legal action is under way in respect of the WIS contracts. The authority's legal advisers are examining all relevant material to decide whether further steps should be taken.

Islington and Camden Health Authority

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she proposes to announce the new health authority for Islington and Camden; and who will be the new members of it.

Mr. Sackville: The proposed merger of Bloomsbury and Islington health authority and Hampstead health authority is the subject of a public consultation exercise which ends on 30 November. The Secretary of State will consider the results of this exercise before taking any decision on the proposal. The appointment of a chairman of any new authority is a matter for the Secretary of State; non-executive members of a district health authority are appointed by the appropriate regional health authority.

Unregistered Children's Establishments

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of *(a)* the current number of unregistered children's establishments and *(b)* the number of children placed in such establishments.

Mr. Yeo: Information on the number of children's homes still to be registered has been collected as part of the Children Act monitoring survey, the results of which are due to be the subject of a report to Parliament in the new year. Some information on the numbers of children placed by local authorities in homes which fall to be registered has now been collected and will be available in time for inclusion in the report to Parliament. Information on the number of children in unregistered establishments is not collected centrally.

Tomlinson Inquiry

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the total cost of the Tomlinson inquiry into London's health needs; and what fee has been paid to Sir Bernard Tomlinson and other members of the inquiry.

Dr. Mawhinney: The direct cost of the inquiry by Sir Bernard Tomlinson into London's health services, medical education and research will amount to about £250,000. Within that sum, fees totalling £23,660 will have been paid to Sir Bernard Tomlinson—equivalent to the remuneration of a regional health authority chairman—and fees totalling £8,750 to the team of advisers who have assisted him.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who she plans to consult over the Tomlinson report's proposal to close St. Bartholomew's hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: There will be wide consultation on any proposal for the closure of a hospital site arising from Sir Bernard Tomlinson's report.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what directions she has given to the Tomlinson implementation team regarding ring fencing of moneys saved from hospital closures to community care.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. I have not yet constituted the London implementation group.

Hospice Services

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing the value in cash and percentage terms of the contributions of all NHS purchasing authorities towards the revenue costs of hospice services in 1991-92 and in the current financial year; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 27 October 1992]*: Information is not available in the form requested. The table shows the amounts of central funds allocated to regional health authorities in 1991-92 and 1992-93 for the specific purpose of enabling purchasing authorities to increase their contributions to the revenue costs of hospices for adult patients run by voluntary organisations. Additional sums of £3·2 million in 1991-92 and £5·5 million in 1992-93 were allocated to regional health authorities as part of a trial scheme to enable hospices to obtain drugs for their in-patients free of charge.

Purchasing authorities also contribute to the revenue costs of hospices from their main allocations. For 1991-92, it is estimated that combined Department of Health and NHS funds met 41 per cent. of the revenue costs of adult hospices. We remain committed to reaching a position where the value of health authorities' contributions to hospices' agreed revenue costs matches that of voluntary giving.

Regional Health Authority	*Allocation 1991-92 £ million*	*Allocation 1992-93 £ million*
Northern	1·124	2·052
Yorkshire	1·276	2·409
Trent	1·603	3·109
East Anglian	0·672	1·491
North West Thames	1·263	2·094
North East Thames	1·478	2·332
South East Thames	1·395	2·582
South West Thames	1·102	2·046
Wessex	0·979	2·157
Oxford	0·774	1·462
South Western	1·128	2·493
West Midlands	1·798	3·353
Mersey	0·890	1·551

Regional Health Authority	*Allocation 1991-92 £ million*	*Allocation 1992-93 £ million*
North Western	1·478	2·592
Total	16·960	31·723

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the value of child support for each child in a standard rate tax paying family, expressed in 1992-93 prices, for each year from 1962 to 1992-93.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is in the table. While child benefit helps all families with children, there is a comprehensive range of other social security benefits which can provide additional help for some families according to their circumstances.

Value of child support[1] for each child in standard rate tax-paying families expressed at April 1992[2]

Prices (£)

Date[3]	*Children under age 11*			*Children aged 11 to 15*			*Children aged 16 and over*		
	1st child	*2nd child*	*3rd child[4]*	*1st child*	*2nd child*	*3rd child[4]*	*1st child*	*2nd child*	*3rd child[4]*
April 1962	7·73	10·51	11·34	9·58	12·47	13·19	11·54	14·33	15·15
April 1963	8·69	11·41	12·22	10·50	13·43	14·04	12·42	15·25	16·04
April 1964	8·51	11·19	11·97	10·29	13·16	13·75	12·17	14·94	15·64
April 1965	8·53	11·16	11·72	10·41	12·94	13·60	12·28	14·82	15·48
April 1966	8·24	10·77	11·31	10·05	12·49	13·13	11·86	14·31	14·94
April 1967	7·94	10·46	10·78	9·76	12·13	12·74	11·51	13·89	14·51
April 1968	7·65	9·59	10·18	9·34	11·27	11·78	11·02	12·88	13·46
April 1969	7·26	9·49	10·04	8·85	11·09	11·64	10·45	12·68	13·16
April 1970	6·87	8·99	9·51	8·38	10·49	11·02	9·90	12·00	12·46
April 1971	8·01	10·15	10·63	9·25	11·45	11·94	10·55	12·70	13·18
April 1972	7·53	9·54	10·00	8·70	10·77	11·23	9·93	11·94	12·40
April 1973	6·83	8·56	8·98	8·08	9·75	10·17	9·09	10·76	11·17
April 1974	7·84	9·29	9·65	9·03	10·38	10·78	10·01	11·36	11·76
April 1975	6·87	9·50	9·50	7·84	10·48	10·48	8·70	11·37	11·37
April 1976	7·21	9·45	9·45	8·03	10·27	10·27	8·77	10·99	10·99
April 1977	6·92	7·93	7·93	7·62	8·62	8·62	8·23	9·20	9·20
April 1978	8·25	8·25	8·25	8·90	8·90	8·90	9·43	9·43	9·43
April 1979	10·23	10·23	10·23	10·23	10·23	10·23	10·23	10·23	10·23
November 1980	9·49	9·49	9·49	9·49	9·49	9·49	9·49	9·49	9·49
November 1981	9·36	9·36	9·36	9·36	9·36	9·36	9·36	9·36	9·36
November 1982	9·82	9·82	9·82	9·82	9·82	9·82	9·82	9·82	9·82
November 1983	10·41	10·41	10·41	10·41	10·41	10·41	10·41	10·41	10·41
November 1984	10·45	10·45	10·45	10·45	10·45	10·45	10·45	10·45	10·45
November 1985	10·13	10·13	10·13	10·13	10·13	10·13	10·13	10·13	10·13
July 1986	10·10	10·10	10·10	10·10	10·10	10·10	10·10	10·10	10·10
April 1987	9·89	9·89	9·89	9·89	9·89	9·89	9·89	9·89	9·89
April 1988	9·51	9·51	9·51	9·51	9·51	9·51	9·51	9·51	9·51
April 1989	8·80	8·80	8·80	8·80	8·80	8·80	8·80	8·80	8·80
April 1990	8·04	8·04	8·04	8·04	8·04	8·04	8·04	8·04	8·04
April 1991	8·60	7·56	7·56	8·60	7·56	7·56	8·60	7·56	7·56
October 1991	9·50	7·71	7·71	9·50	7·71	7·71	9·50	7·71	7·71
April 1992	9·65	7·80	7·80	9·65	7·80	7·80	9·65	7·80	7·80

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[1] The combined value of child tax allowance after clawback and family allowance/child benefit.

[2] Based on the movement in the general index of retail prices at April 1992.

[3] Child tax allowance ceased after the 1978-79 tax year and uprating dates are shown from 1979 onwards.

[4] And subsequent children.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the organisations and individuals who responded to the Government's proposals for the child support regulations.

Mr. Burt: The list is as follows:

APACS
Association of Magisterial Officers
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Bar of Northern Ireland
Barnardos
Belfast Law Centre
Bolton Magistrates' Court
Borders Regional Council
British Bankers Association
The Building Societies Association
Cardiff Gypsy Site Group
Catholic Family Care Society
CBI
CBI—Northern Ireland
C Croydon
Chessington Computer Centre
Child Care
Child Poverty Action Group
The Children's Society
Citizen's Advice Bureau
Citizen's Advice Scotland
City of Manchester Welfare Rights Unit
Commission for Racial Equality
The Committee of Scottish Clearing Banks
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Council on Tribunals
P T Dawes
Department of Economic Development—Netherleigh Northern Ireland
DSS—Benefits Agency, Five Ways Complex
DSS—Benefits Agency, Newbury Office
DSS—Benefits Agency, South Gwent and Islwyn District
DSS—Clyde Valley District Office

DSS—Eston Local Office
DSS—Highlands and Islands District Office
DSS—North Tees District
DSS—Nottingham
DSS—West Notts District Office
Dudley Magistrates' Court
Earl Russell
Faculty of Advocates
Families Need Fathers
Family Law Bar Association
The Forum of Private Business
Gillian Cumberlidge—LRO—South Derbyshire District
Gingerbread
Greater Manchester Probation Service
D Green—Solicitor
Hammersmith and Fulham Council for Racial Equality
P Hancock—Benefits Agency, Dudley, West Midlands
Justices Clerks Society
The Law Society
The Law Society of Northern Ireland
Law Society of Scotland
Leicester City Council
Lincolnshire Magistrates' Court Committee
The Lord President of the Courts of Session
The Magistrates' Association
MENCAP
NACAB
NaCOPF
National Council of Women of Great Britain
Northern Ireland Resident Magistrates' Association
Northern Ireland Solicitors Family Law Association
Northumbria Probation Service
Norwich City Council
NSPCC
Office of the Master for the Enforcement of Judgements —Northern Ireland
Payroll Alliance
Peterborough Software
The President of the Social Security and Medical Appeal Tribunals—Northern Ireland
The Principal Registry of the Family Division
Relate
Relate—Northern Ireland
RSSPCC
Scottish Association of Family Conciliation Services
Scottish Child Law Centre
Scottish Council for Single Parents
Scottish Consumer Council
Scottish Women's Aid
A. M. Shelley
Single Parent Action Network
P. Small
Social Security Advisory Committee
Social Security Commissioners—Northern Ireland
South Manchester Law Centre
Dr. D. Spiegelhalter
J. Spragg
Strathclyde Regional Council
T. J. Sullivan
R. P. Tinsdell
TUC
TUS
University of Leicester—Faculty of Law
Wages for Housework Campaign
Women's Aid Federation
Women's National Commission
A. Yates

Mortgage Interest Payments

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of the likely expenditure in 1992-93 on the payment of mortgage interest for households in receipt of income support, the number of households receiving such assistance, and the average monthly payment per household.

Mr. Burt: The latest available information is contained in the Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiry for May 1991. The total amount was £949 million for 411,000 customers. The average weekly amount for those receiving full mortgage interest was £46·34, and for those receiving half mortgage interest (to which payments are restricted during the first 16 weeks of the claim for customers under age 60) was £35·61.

Incomes

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of persons and the percentage of the total population, who were living on incomes less than 60 per cent. of the national average, in *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1990, *(c)* 1991 and *(d)* the current year, respectively, or in those years nearest to these dates where information is available.

Mr. Burt: Such information as is available is taken from the Households Below Average Income series. Households Below Average Incomes does not cover 1985 and, at present, only goes up to 1988-89. The available years closest to those requested are 1981, 1987 and 1988-89. The figures, both before and after housing costs, are in the table.

Number and percentage of people in the United Kingdom with less than 60 per cent. of average income.

	1981	*1987*	*1988-89*
Before housing costs			
Number of people (millions)	10·6	14·6	16
Percentage of people	19	26	29
After housing costs			
Number of people (millions)	11·9	16·2	16·8
Percentage of people	22	29	30

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the mean net disposable income for 1979 and for each of the two years 1988 and 1989, at April 1992 prices, of the richest and poorest 20 per cent. of households, based on the equivalised income data collected for the latest households below average income analysis, distinguishing between the mean and the median.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to her on 16 July 1992, *Official Report*, columns *946-47*.

As recommended in the Households Below Average Income stocktaking report, only the median is used as the average measure for subdivisions of the income distribution.

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 13 July, *Official Report*, column *454*, if he will list the factors which prevent the publication of 1990-91 data from the households below average income analysis before mid-1993; and how much delay is accounted for by each factor.

Mr. Burt: 1991 Family Expenditure Survey data is received by the Department in a form suitable for HBAI data preparation in October 1992. Some four to five months are then needed to set up consistent data files and a further four to five months to produce accurate and robust results, tables and analysis.

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how the full value of free and subsidised school meals affects calculations of the mean, and the median, net disposable income of the poorest 20 per cent. of (i) all households and (ii) households with children in each of the single years 1979 and 1989, using the information collected in the latest housholds below average income stocking report at April 1992 prices.

Mr. Burt: As recommended in the Households Below Average Income stocktaking report only the median is used to represent subdivisions of the income distribution and 1988 and 1989 are always combined. For part (i) of the question I therefore refer the hon. Member to my reply to her on 16 July 1992, *Official Report*, columns 947-48. The table answers part (ii) of the question:

Average equivalised income at April 1992 prices for the bottom 20 per cent. of individuals in households of families with children

	1979 £	*1988-89* £
Before housing costs:		
Excluding free school meals	96	96
Including free school meals	99	98
After housing costs:		
Excluding free school meals	78	74
Including free school meals	82	76

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was, for each type of household in the Family Expenditure Survey, the average disposable income at April 1992 prices, including the value of free and subsidised school meals, of the poorest 10 per cent. and poorest 20 per cent. of households, equivalised for household size and composition, after taking account of housing costs, for each of the two years 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to her on 16 July 1992, *Official Report*, columns 947-48.

Disability

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he can give about trends in the levels of disposable income of the 6 million people with disabilities, taking account of the latest households below average income stocktaking report.

Mr. Burt: The latest and most reliable information about the incomes of people with disabilities is contained in the reports of the OPCS surveys of disabled people carried out between 1985 and 1988, copies of which are in the library.

The Family Expenditure Survey, the principal data source for Households Below Average Income, does not record whether an individual has a disability.

Unemployment

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has for the number of persons seeking employment and not entitled to unemployment benefits in each month during 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Burt: The table shows the Employment Department's seasonally adjusted Great Britain unemployment figures for each month of the financial years 1990-91 and 1991-92, together with the numbers of unemployed claimants for each quarter receiving neither unemployment benefit nor income support.

Month	*Unemployed Persons* *Thousands* *(Seasonally Adjusted)*	*Unemployed Claimants receiving neither Unemployment Benefit nor Income Support* *Thousands* *(See note)*
1990/91		
April	1,498	—
May	1,503	220
June	1,514	—
July	1,527	—
August	1,556	253
September	1,585	—
October	1,628	—
November	1,681	246
December	1,756	—
January	1,796	—
February	1,888	295
March	1,990	—
1991/92		
April	2,067	—
May	2,133	280
June	2,193	—
July	2,262	—
August	2,321	302
September	2,356	—
October	2,375	—
November	2,415	301
December	2,448	—
January	2,503	—
February	2,541	328
March	2,548	—

Note:
Source is the Quarterly Analysis of Unemployed Claimants.
The figures include some persons who had claimed benefit but whose entitlement had not been established on the day of the count.

No details are available of the numbers of job seekers who do not register unemployed, or of their entitlement to unemployment benefit.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total numbers of *(a)* unemployed job seekers eligible to claim unemployment benefit and *(b)* persons seeking employment in each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Burt: The table shows the Employment Department's seasonally adjusted GB unemployment figures for each of the financial years from 1979 to 1991 together with the average numbers of persons receiving unemployment benefit:

Financial year	*Recipients of unemployment benefit* *Thousands*[1]	*Unemployed persons (seasonally adjusted)* *Thousands*
1979-80	480	1,019
1980-81	858	1,501
1981-82	[2]	2,210
1982-83	987	2,518
1983-84	940	2,715
1984-85	[2]	2,840
1985-86	[2]	2,935
1986-87	923	2,950
1987-88	733	2,555
1988-89	540	2,030
1989-90	329	1,599
1990-91	358	1,660

[1] *Source:* Quarterly analysis of unemployed claimants.

[2] Data for more than one quarter not available due to industrial action in these years.

No details are available of the numbers of job seekers who do not register unemployed or whether they are eligible for unemployment benefit.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what were the administrative costs for paying out national insurance unemployment benefits for each year since 1987-88;

(2) what were the administrative costs for paying out social security benefits to unemployed families during each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Burt: Details of the administrative costs of social security benefits, of which unemployed families may be in receipt are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The administrative costs of paying unemployment benefit for the years 1987-88 to 1990-91, the latest year for which figures are available, are as follows:

	£ million
1987-88	166
1988-89	172
1989-90	176
1990-91	182

Disability Allowances

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if applications for mobility allowance and attendance allowance, preceding the introduction of disability living allowance, are dealt with under legislation applicable at the time of application.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 27 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking if applications for Mobility Allowance (MobA) and Attendance Allowance (AA), preceding the introduction of Disability Living Allowance (DLA), are dealt with under legislation applicable at the time of application.

I can confirm that all such claims made before 16 March 1992 were dealt with under the legislation appropriate to those benefits. Claims made on or after 16 March 1992 have been dealt with under the same legislation but using the new adjudication structure for DLA. All claims outstanding at 6 April 1992, regardless of when they were received, were dealt with under the new adjudication provisions, although the MobA and AA criteria apply.

I hope this reply will be of help to you. A copy of this letter will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many applications were refused for *(a)* attendance allowance, *(b)* mobility allowance and *(c)* disability living allowance in 1992, to 30 September;

(2) how many outstanding *(a)* applications, *(b)* reviews and *(c)* appeals were ongoing for attendance allowance on 1 April;

(3) how many outstanding *(a)* applications, *(b)* reviews and *(c)* appeals were ongoing for mobility allowance on 1 April;

(4) how many persons were employed dealing with *(a)* disability living allowance, *(b)* attendance allowance and *(c)* mobility allowance on 1 October;

(5) how many applicants for *(a)* attendance allowance, *(b)* mobility allowance and *(c)* disability living allowance have not received payment for a successful claim six months after their application, from 1 October 1991 to 1 October 1992;

(6) how many persons were employed dealing with *(a)* disability living allowance, *(b)* attendance allowance and *(c)* mobility allowance on 1 April;

(7) how many persons have claimed *(a)* attendance allowance, *(b)* mobility allowance and *(c)* disability living allowance in 1992 to 30 September;

(8) what was the training budget for personnel involved in *(a)* disability living allowance and *(b)* disability working allowance.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability benefits is a matter for Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 27 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Attendance Allowance (AA) and Mobility Allowance (MOBA).

It will perhaps be helpful if I explain a little about the changes which took place with the onset of the new adjudication structure. With the introduction of the DLA from 6 April 1992, all outstanding AA claims, reviews and appeals in respect of people under 65 were transferred to DLA for processing under the new adjudication system introduced at the same time. This was because any award of AA spanning 6 April for people under 65 would automatically become the Care Component of DLA at that time.

Cases in respect of people aged 65 or over would not be subject to the change to DLA, but would continue to receive or apply for AA. The change in the adjudication system which applied to DLA was however also introduced for AA.

Outstanding AA and MOBA claims, reviews and appeals

The major transfer of work to DLA with its introduction in April involved in excess of 70,000 cases.

Of this total there were approximately 23,000 claims to MOBA which were transferred to the DLA Unit for processing under the new rules, with a further 11,500 or so reviews and appeals.

In the region of 20,000 claims to AA from people under the age of 65 were also transferred to the new adjudication structure along with just over 16,000 reviews and appeals.

In addition to those cases which fell to be considered as DLA, there remain those cases from people aged over 65, which are still administered as AA. At the beginning of April, just over 101,000 such claims were outstanding in the DBCs, with around 30,000 appeals and reviews at the Fylde AA Unit.

Number of claims made and refused

I should first explain that claims to DLA are administered by ten Disability Benefit Centres (DBCs) around the country and the DLA Unit at Fylde. Claim forms are specially designed to direct customers to return the claim to the DBC nearest their home address. The Centre is then responsible for the claim, obtaining any other relevant information and making the decision on entitlement.

In addition there are also applications from people currently getting either AA or MOBA but who may also be entitled to an additional amount under the DLA rules. These applications, known as "Top-up" claims, are dealt with at a special unit at Preston.

The following table shows the number of claims received and the number refused from February to September:

	AA	*DLA*	*Top-up*
Number of claims made	386,000	303,000	195,000
Refusals	88,000	86,000	23,000

Staffing and Training

As part of the preparation for the launch of DLA and the introduction of the revised adjudication structure for AA, there was a major comprehensive training programme in 1991-92. Manpower costs for this programme were in the region of £2 million. For Disability Working Allowance, the comparative figure was just below £200,000.

Although the Agency had expected the initial launch of the new benefits to generate large numbers of claims in the early months, the success of the advertising campaign and the widespread interest from disabled people meant that the numbers we received in total, exceeded our expectations in the early stages.

This sudden surge coupled with the extensive recruitment and training programme, for staff who were still adjusting to the new benefit processes, meant that a backlog of cases built up in the weeks following the launch.

In direct response to this situation, extra staff have been deployed, and overtime is being worked to a considerable extent. The staff in post numbers for all DLA and AA operations at the Fylde and DBC offices have therefore been increased from around 3,300 in April to over 4,600 at the beginning of October. These figures include all AA staff for dealing with claims reviews and appeals etc. from people over age 65 and work for MOBA and AA (below 65) which of course were subsumed within DLA from its introduction.

Delays in payment

You asked about the numbers of applicants who have not received payment for a successful claim six months after their application. This information is not available in the format you requested. I should explain, however, that payment authorization is despatched within 24 or 48 hours of the decision on the case being recorded.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what response his Department makes to a complaint from an applicant concerning failure to respond to an application for mobility allowance or disability living allowance, where the applicant gives notice that he or she will contact his or her hon. Member if no response is received within 28 days.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Alun Michael dated 27 October 1992.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the response made to a customer who gives notice that they will contact their honourable member if their claim for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Mobility Allowance is not processed within 28 days.

I wrote to all MPs on 19 October explaining in detail the significant problems encountered with the launch of DLA and the measures introduced to deal with the backlog which resulted.

The extent and speed of the response to the launch of the new benefit has meant that we have been unable to process claims as quickly as we would have liked. In order to keep customers informed of any delays we automatically send notification of progress 6 weeks after the claim is registered. I understand that customers may sometimes feel that contacting their MP will help to speed up the processing of their claim and whilst we appreciate their frustration, it is our policy always to deal with claims as quickly as possible.

I regret that customers are experiencing delays and I am by no means complacent about the number of applications still to be processed. I am currently monitoring the situation closely and I am confident that we will have reached a steady state shortly for new claims and by the end of November for "top-up" claims.

I hope you will find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the number and percentage of requests for a medical examination by people claiming *(a)* disability living allowance and *(b)* attendance allowance since the introduction of the new self-assessment claiming system;

(2) when he expects the target clearance rate for new disability living allowance claims to be met; what targets have been set for reviews of decisions on *(a)* new disability living allowance, *(b)* outstanding mobility allowance or *(c)* attendance allowance; and when he expects each of these targets to be met;

(3) what was the total number and percentage of claims for disability living allowance where the adjudicating officer required further evidence; and what were the number and percentage requiring *(a)* an EMP report, *(b)* evidence other than an EMP report and *(c)* both;

(4) how many requests for reviews of disability living allowance have been received by his Department; and what number and percentage of these *(a)* resulted in an increase in the amount of benefit payable, *(b)* resulted in an original award being maintained, *(c)* resulted in a reduction in benefit and *(d)* remain outstanding;

(5) what is the number and percentage of *(a)* new claims and *(b)* top-up claims for disability living allowance to date that have either (i) resulted in an award or (ii) been rejected, broken down by whether (1) EMP evidence was provided and (2) the claim was decided solely on the statement of disability evidence provided by the claimant;

(6) how many *(a)* new and *(b)* top-up claims for the disability living allowance have been received by his Department to date; if he will provide a breakdown by (i) the number and percentage of these that resulted in an award, (ii) the number and percentage of these that were refused broken down by grounds for refusal and (iii) the number and percentage of these that are awaiting a decision; and if he will provide totals for the country as a whole and by each of the regions covered by the 10 disability benefit centres;

(7) what are the national average clearance times for *(a)* new and *(b)* top-up claims for disability living allowance for (i) each month since February and (ii) the period from the beginning of April to September inclusive; and if he will provide a breakdown by disability benefit centre.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability benefit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 27 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about claims to Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and requests for review of DLA and Attendance Allowance (AA) claims. I will deal with each of your points in turn:

Numbers and percentage of requests for a medical examination by people claiming DLA and AA

One of the primary aims of the introduction of DLA and AA for people aged 65 or over was to reduce the need for medical examinations. New self assessment procedures place more reliance on information provided by customers. The DLA and AA claim packs do not direct applicants to request an examination. The information you require as to the number of cases where people have opted to undergo a medical examination is therefore not available.

Claims adjudicated upon on receipt and those requiring further medical evidence

From February to the end of September almost 190,000 decisions on new claim were made, over 117,000 of the decisions made were awards with around 72,000 unsuccessful. A breakdown of the numbers of decisions based upon the information provided on the claim form and those requiring further medical evidence or opinion is at Annex 1.

Number of claims made, decided and outstanding

You asked for the number of new claims and "top-up" claims that have been made to DLA, together with the number and percentage of awards and refusals. A breakdown of claims received, decided and the numbers outstanding at each of the Disability Benefit Centres (DBCs) is given at Annex 2. I should explain that it is not possible to show the figures for "top-up" claims in the same format as new claims as they are processed at a special unit in Preston. Figures for "top-up" claims are shown at Annex 3.

National average clearance times

The Benefits Agency introduced a standard performance measure across benefits some time ago. This is expressed in terms of clearance targets days rather than average clearance times as was previously the case.

Since the launch of DLA in February 1992 the performance to date has shown a 31% clearance rate against the primary target of 30 days. The latest performance for the month of September also shows 31% of claims cleared within 30 days. The table at Annex 4 shows the clearance times for each DBC between February and September inclusive for new DLA claims, but not those made under the special rules, for both the primary target (60% in 30 days) and secondary target (95% in 55 days). The clearance of "top-up" claims is shown at Annex 5.

The success of the advertising campaign and the policy initiatives surrounding the launch of the benefits, attracted a much larger number of applicants in the early stages than was expected. Backlogs of work arose as a result and this has undoubtedly affected our ability to meet the clearance targets which are intended to represent the on-going situation.

Significant inroads have now been made into these backlogs and whilst there will always be a certain number of cases in action at any one time, I would expect this to reduce to manageable proportions shortly.

Reviews of decisions on DLA, and outstanding MobA and AA.

You asked how many requests for review of DLA have been received, the outcomes of those determined, and the numbers still outstanding. Since the benefit's launch in February, just over 18,000 requests for review have been received, with less than 15,000, which represents approximately 80%, remaining outstanding at the end of September.

I should explain, however, that over 6,500 were received in September alone. These review requests relate to decisions on new DLA/AA and MobA claims and to requests for reviews of existing MobA and AA awards. The targets for clearance of all types of reviews are to clear 60% in 55 days and 95% in 75 days. For the continuing AA scheme, the comparable figures are 60% in 61 days and 95% in 81 days. Reliable information is not yet available about the outcome of applications for reviews. These targets are intended to represent the situation in stable running; currently much effort is being channelled into clearing these unadjudicated cases outstanding at April 1992. As I said in my letter of 19 October to all Members, these cases will be cleared by the end of December, and I would expect that clearance times of applications for reviews will improve thereafter.

All figures quoted are provisional and may therefore be subject to amendment.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Annex 1

Claims adjudicated upon on receipt and those requiring further evidence

	Total number of decisions made	*Decision based on claim pack*	*Reflected as a percentage of total*	*Decision based on medical examination*	*Reflected as a percentage of total*	*Decision based on other evidence*	*Reflected as a percentage of total*
New claims							
Awards	117,300	61,100	52	23,200	20	33,000	28
Rejections	72,500	29,600	41	14,600	20	28,400	39
Top-up claims							
Awards	98,000	78,000	80	12,000	12	8,000	8
Rejections	21,100	15,600	74	2,200	10	3,300	16

Annex 2

Analysis of adjudication officer decisions on new claims (February to September)

Figures rounded to nearest hundred

	Total received	*Total awards*		*Rejections*				*Total rejections*		*Total adjudication officer decisions*		*Total cleared*		*Number outstanding*	
				Medical grounds		*Lay grounds (1)*									
		Number	*As a percentage*	*Number*	*As a percentage*	*Number*	*As a percentage*	*Number*	*As a percentage*	*Number*	*As a percentage*	*Number*	*As a percentage*	*Number*	*As a percentage*
Edinburgh	36,300	10,300	28	7,200	20	1,300	4	8,500	23	18,800	52	18,500	51	17,800	49
Newcastle	19,800	7,500	38	8,100	41	700	3	8,800	44	16,300	82	16,000	81	3,800	19
Leeds	34,900	16,700	48	8,600	25	1,400	4	10,000	29	26,700	77	26,900	77	8,000	23
Manchester	24,300	8,500	35	9,900	41	900	4	10,800	45	19,300	79	19,500	80	4,800	20
Bootle	26,400	11,100	42	6,000	23	900	3	6,900	26	18,000	68	17,700	67	8,800	33
Birmingham	46,000	17,000	37	7,400	16	1,400	3	8,800	19	25,800	56	25,200	55	20,800	45
Bristol	17,800	9,200	52	4,300	24	800	5	5,100	29	14,400	81	14,400	81	3,400	19
Cardiff	24,400	11,000	45	6,900	28	900	4	7,700	32	18,700	77	18,500	76	5,800	24
Wembley	36,100	18,000	50	7,400	21	1,800	5	9,200	26	27,300	76	26,800	74	9,200	26

	Total received	*Total awards*		*Rejections*											
				Medical grounds		*Lay grounds (1)*		*Total rejections*		*Total adjudication officer decisions*		*Total cleared*		*Number outstanding*	
		Number	*As a percentage*	*Number*	*As a percentage*	*Number*	*As a percentage*	*Number*	*As a percentage*	*Number*	*As a percentage*	*Number*	*As a percentage*	*Number*	*As a percentage*
Sutton	31,400	14,400	46	7,900	25	1,600	5	9,400	30	23,800	76	23,800	76	7,600	24
All regions[1]	297,400	123,700	42	73,800	25	11,500	4	85,300	29	209,000	70	207,300	70	90,100	30
Great Britain	303,400	126,100	42	74,300	24	11,900	4	86,200	28	212,000	70	213,800	70	89,700	30

[1] Figures differ from national due to business conducted at North Fylde.

Annex 3
Analysis of adjudication officer decisions on top-up claims (February to September)

	Figures rounded to nearest thousand
Total received	195,000
Total awards	98,000
as percentage	61
Total rejections[1]	23,000
as percentage	12
Total AO decisions	121,000
as percentage	62
Total cleared	137,000
as percentage	70
Number outstanding	58,000
as percentage	30

[1] These are almost all medical; 108 for other reasons.

Note:

No regional figures available since all conversion done at North Fylde.

Annex 4
Performance indicators for new claims by DBC (Percentage)

	Days	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*	*Overall*
Edinburgh	30	99	96	42	14	9	10	12	22	19
	55	99	99	98	78	33	34	28	41	44
Newcastle	30	99	96	67	25	19	26	20	35	37
	55	99	99	99	87	56	50	48	63	69
Leeds	30	99	98	78	37	6	7	30	44	33
	55	99	99	99	90	42	55	64	66	66
Manchester	30	90	95	58	23	11	25	26	38	32
	55	99	99	99	88	54	52	53	60	62
Bootle	30	99	97	44	9	10	7	18	27	21
	55	99	99	99	76	31	28	52	52	51
Birmingham	30	99	98	69	29	12	17	19	21	25
	55	99	99	99	83	47	38	41	39	49
Bristol	30	99	97	75	38	17	6	11	32	31
	55	99	98	98	91	64	22	50	69	62
Cardiff	30	99	97	63	13	13	13	27	34	30
	55	99	99	99	82	62	44	56	60	63
Wembley	30	99	97	70	34	23	36	34	36	44
	55	99	98	98	85	65	66	63	63	73
Sutton	30	99	97	78	36	19	28	35	33	40
	55	99	98	99	92	57	57	58	59	66

Annex 5
Performance indicators for top-up claims conversion unit (percentage)

Days	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*Sept*	*Overall*
55	99	99	95	55	14	6	6	15	21
70	99	99	98	92	43	17	12	22	35

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what were the average fees paid by his Department to doctors for *(a)* mobility allowance and *(b)* attendance allowance claims; what was the total amount spent by his Department on payment of such fees to doctors; and what were the numbers of cases involved in each of the previous three years;

(2) how many doctors are currently employed by his Department for dealing with disability and attendance allowance claims; and how many doctors were employed by his Department for dealing with mobility and attendance allowance claims in each of the previous three years;

(3) what is the average fee paid by his Department to doctors for an examination required by a claim for disability living allowance or attendance allowance; and in how many cases an examination has taken place and the total amount spent on such fees to date.

Mr. Scott: The use of doctors to examine claimants and the cost of gathering medical evidence for social security benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Bichard to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 27 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security concerning doctors employed by the Department who are dealing with claims for Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Attendance Allowance (AA) and Mobility Allowance (MobA). I will answer each of your points in turn.

Average fees paid to doctors for MobA and AA claims.

The average fees paid for combined MobA/AA examinations including an average for travelling expenses is as follows:

	Over 2·5 hours £
1989	88
1990	81
1991	75

The total amount spent on fees in 1991-92 was £27 million. It is not possible to identify the specific administrative costs incurred in paying these fees. Similarly, the figures for the number of cases involved in each of the last three years are not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Average fees paid to doctors for examinations on DLA or AA claims.

The average fee paid for DLA/AA65+ examinations is £83 per 3·5 hours which includes an average for travelling expenses.

To date the total amount spent on such fees is £4 million and examinations have occurred in approximately 52,000 cases.

Number of doctors employed

There are currently 66 doctors employed by the Agency for DLA/AA65+ claims. The number of doctors employed for AA/MobA claims at the end of each of the previous three years is as follows:

	Number
1989-90	39
1990-91	39
1991-92	41

The reason that full-time Medical Officer requirements increased for DLA/AA65+ was partly due to the higher workload forecast compared to AA/MobA, and partly by the use of full-time Medical Officers instead of fee paid doctors. I should explain that this has resulted in a net saving of £865,000.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what number and percentage of all inquiries received by the benefits inquiry line related to disability living allowance and attendance allowance in each month since February; and how many calls were recorded but not able to get through on this line over the same period.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance and attendance allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 27 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what number and percentage of all enquiries received by the Benefits Enquiry Line related to Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance in each month since February; and how many calls were recorded but not able to get through on this line over the same period.

The information requested is shown below:

Month	*Number of times subject covered in calls*		*Percentage of total subjects*		[1]*Number of calls abandoned*
	Disability living allowance	*Attendance allowance*	*Disability living allowance*	*Attendance allowance*	
February	49,431	8,249	66	11	37,943
March	55,230	7,247	68	9	11,474
April	57,455	20,983	52	19	11,370
May	33,133	16,159	45	22	10,438
June	45,917	20,350	45	20	11,019
July	30,233	10,979	44	16	11,551
August	25,010	9,065	44	16	9,290
September	23,460	8,880	40	15	8,793

[1] The number of abandoned calls are relevant to the whole service provided by the Benefit Enquiry Line.

I hope you find the reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what additional resources, excluding any redeployment of existing resources the Benefits Agency has at its disposal, have been made available to the Benefits Agency to enable it to clear the backlog of disability living allowance claims and reviews and any outstanding reviews and renewal claims for mobility allowance and attendance allowance.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 27 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what additional resources are available to clear the backlog of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) claims and reviews and any outstanding reviews and renewals claims for Mobility Allowance (MobA) and Attendance Allowance (AA).

The Agency launched DLA in February, with an extensive publicity campaign. As part of this campaign, we wrote to all existing MobA and AA beneficiaries, in the region of 1 million, explaining the changes and, where appropriate, inviting them to claim extra money under the new DLA rules. In the meantime other take up campaigns were being run outside the organisation to encourage claims.

We had expected the initial launch of the new benefit to generate large numbers of claims in the months surrounding the benefit's introduction, and we calculated that around 2,000 staff would be required to process the claims for DLA. However, whilst we had planned for some increase in applications, the success of the advertising campaign and the widespread interest from disabled people, attracted a much larger number of applications in the early stages than was expected. There was also a huge increase in the numbers of claims to AA during the same period.

This sudden surge coupled with extensive recruitment and training programmes of 2,000 staff who were still adjusting to the new benefit processes meant that a backlog of cases built up in the weeks following the introduction of DLA. The transfer of outstanding MobA and AA renewal claims, reviews and appeals from 6 April to a completely new adjudication structure, was in itself, a major exercise.

As a result, over 800 extra staff have been recruited and trained and are now in place dealing with DLA and AA. There has been extensive overtime working across the ten Disability Benefit Centres and the DLA Unit at Fylde. As I am only given the resources to cope with the forecast workload, and this has in total been exceeded, I have had to find these resources from elsewhere in the Agency.

In addition the backlog of cases has generated further enquiries from customers seeking advice and information about their claim. Extra staff have therefore been taken on to handle telephone enquiries received at the DLA Central Enquiry Handling Service at Fylde.

As a result of these and other measures, significant inroads have been made into the backlog of work. Of course, there will always be a certain number of cases in action at any one time, but I am now confident that this will shortly have reduced to manageable proportions.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims to date for the disability living allowance have been completed *(a)* with the assistance of telephone calls and *(b)* with the assistance of visits made by the forms completion service staff in the disability benefits centres.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 27 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many claims to date for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) have been completed *(a)* with the assistance of telephone calls and *(b)* with the assistance of visits made by the forms completion service staff in the Disability Benefit Centres.

Since the launch of the benefit on 3 February until 25 September 1992, nearly 43,000 claims were completed with the assistance of telephone calls and approximately 1,650 visits had been made by the Forms Completion Staff in the Disability Benefit Centres.

This information differs from that I provided in my letter to you of 13 July 1992.

I hope that you will find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will hold an inquiry into the extent to which the administrative delays experienced by applicants for mobility allowance, attendance allowance and disability living allowance are incompatible with the citizens charter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: No. The chief executive of the Benefits Agency is responsible for the assessment of claims, reviewing entitlements to and arranging payments of social security benefits. He wrote to all hon. Members on 6 July and again on 19 October setting out the progress that has been made in this area by the agency.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what additional capital resources have been made available to introduce disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: The provision of capital resources for the Benefits Agency is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 27 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what additional capital resources have been made available to introduce Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

A total of £19m has been made available for the introduction of DLA. This sum takes account of expenditure on the purchase of computer equipment, telecom equipment, office machines and furnishings and the refurbishment or redevelopment of the ten locations throughout the country within which are housed the staff administering DLA.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Agoraphobia

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what arrangements are made for those who suffer from agoraphobia to apply for sickness benefit provided they satisfy the benefit eligibility rules; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The administration of sickness benefit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Max Madden, dated 27 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what arrangements are made for those who suffer from agoraphobia to apply for sickness benefit providing they satisfy the benefit eligibility rules.

There are no specific arrangements for dealing with customers who are agoraphobic. Existing procedures allow for claims to Sickness Benefit to be dealt with through the post, although home visits can be made upon request. Every effort is made to make home visits to those customers who, for one reason or another, are unable to leave their homes. Any customer who is agoraphobic should receive a home visit from one of our staff if requested.

Customers who are agoraphobic normally need to complete a self certificate (form SC1) which can be obtained from Benefits Agency offices by post, or from their doctors' surgery. If they need to obtain a Doctors' statement, then they will need to arrange to see their Doctor in the normal way.

I should explain that it is the aim of the Agency to identify and respond, wherever possible, to its customers' needs. Our Customer Charter states that we want to make it easier for our customers to contact us, whether they choose to call in at one of our offices, phone or write. The Charter states that "Where it is necessary for you we can visit you at home".

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Deaf Claimants

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidance has been issued, or is planned to be issued to the Benefits Agency in respect of provision of appropriate communication support/technical device to assist deaf and hard of hearing claimants attending local benefit offices.

Mr. Scott: The provision of service in local benefit offices for deaf and hard of hearing customers is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Keith Bradley, dated 27 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security concerning guidance in respect of provision of appropriate communication support/technical devices to assist deaf and hard of hearing claimants attending local benefit offices.

The Agency is committed to an equal opportunities policy. For our customers with disabilities, this means that wherever possible we will ensure that their dealings with us should not be limited by reason of their disabilities. Training packages on customer care take account of awareness of the needs of disabled people.

We have set up an effective liaison with the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, and we are looking at a number of their services with a view to publicising them through our network of District Information Officers and Customer Service Managers in local benefit offices. For example, we hope staff will be able to make use of the RNID's Deaf Awareness Courses.

We are compiling a database of customer service initiatives, and this will be made available to all local offices. For example, some offices have sent staff on training courses to learn sign language. In one office nine members of staff have completed a 20 week course (two hours a week), and refresher meetings have been arranged. The scheme has been so successful that a further seven volunteers have come forward. The office has informed all local welfare groups and advice centres about the initiative. In another office, two volunteers have attended a local school for the deaf, while some offices have run their own training sessions about sign language.

The Manchester South District, which falls within your constituency, has made particular progress in this area; all the receptionists have attended night school classes in signing.

Other initiatives are being taken forward at a local level to improve service to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. For example, many offices—including those in the Manchester South District—have installed induction loop systems. This provides a link between the interviewer and the customer, and eliminates background noise. Most hearing aids can easily be switched over to the loop.

The Agency subscribes to the Sympathetic Hearing Scheme, and information packs have been distributed to all offices. Some offices have an electronic visual display unit which, sited in the reception area, has proved useful for getting messages over to the hard of hearing. Others use a portable terminal with a display screen and a memory facility for creating and storing messages.

We have issued a video for the deaf and hard of hearing giving information about benefits.

We are also interested in the Minicom system, although this is only available at present in a small number of offices, together with our freephone Benefit Enquiry Line service for disabled customers. The RNID advocate Super-tel, an advanced Minicom system. As a long term aim, we would like to be able to offer this facility at local offices, although clearly resources are a factor.

Research is currently under way into the service and information needs of disabled customers. The findings and recommendations will be fed into our overall equal opportunities strategy.

As the Agency's Customer Charter makes clear, we are committed to providing a service which is accessible for all our customers. We recognise that disabled people may have particular needs and we will continue to look for ways to make our service easier to use.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Benefits, Newham

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the latest annual figures for the London borough of Newham for the number of recipients of income support, direct payments, social fund, child support and housing benefit; and what were the comparable figures for each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Ron Leighton, dated 27 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security, asking what were the latest annual figures for the London Borough of Newham for the number of recipients of Income Support, Direct Payments, Social Fund, Child Support and Housing Benefit; and what were the comparable figures for each of the past 10 years.

The complete range of information is not available except at a disproportionate cost. This is because statistics of a local nature are destroyed at regular intervals in accordance with standing instructions.

I have listed below the information available on each subject requested.

Housing Benefit

The administration of Housing Benefit is a matter for Local Authorities. The tabled information shows the number of cases in receipt of Housing Benefit in the London Borough of Newham. The data has been obtained from the Housing Benefit Management Information System. The figure for February 1990 includes 2,877 customers in receipt of a rate rebate which altered to Community Charge Benefit by February 1991.

Number of recipients of Housing Benefit

February 1990	February 1991	February 1992
32,000	28,193	30,139

Income Support

The figures quoted are for the areas covered by the

Plaistow, Canning Town and Stratford offices, which make up the Benefits Agency's Newham District. It is not possible to provide a more detailed breakdown because the District boundary does not correspond with that of the Borough of Newham.

	February 1991	*February 1992*
Recipients of income support	37,692	41,628
Direct payments made from benefit to third parties	3,116	5,132

Social Fund

Social Fund statistics relate to the number of applications made rather than the number of actual applicants.

	March 1991	*March 1992*
Number of applications	1,156	2,282
Number of awards	709	1,235

Child Support

Child support statistics relate to the number of Income Support cases in which there may be a liability to child support rather than the actual numbers where child support is actually in payment.

February 1991	2,752
February 1992	3,225

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Benefits Agency

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what efficiency savings were made by the Benefits Agency during its first year of operations; and what target for savings has been set for the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Burt: The achievement of efficiency savings in the Benefits Agency is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Bichard to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 27 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the efficiency savings made by the Benefits Agency during its first year of operation; and what target for savings has been set for the financial year 1992-93.

The Benefits Agency made a total of £116m of efficiency savings in 91-92, mainly through the implementation of our computerisation programme. This, together with £80m carried forward from previous years, made a cumulative total of £196m compared with the target of £182m set for the Agency.

The Agency has been set a target of £53·7m for 92-93 which we expect to achieve, again, mainly through computerisation.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Fraud

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how much his Department has saved from the investigation of fraud in the latest year for which figures are available; and what are the targeted savings for the next financial year;

(2) what is the number of whole time equivalent staff employed by his Department to detect and prosecute suspected fraud; and what is the cost of their employment;

(3) how many people were prosecuted for fraud by his Department in the latest year for which figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe: The investigation of social security fraud is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 27 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the investigation of social security fraud.

You asked how much has been saved from the investigation of fraud and how many people were prosecuted for fraud in the latest year for which figures are available; what are the targeted savings for 1992-93; and what is the number and cost of whole time equivalent staff employed to detect and prosecute fraud.

In the year ending 31 March 1992 the estimated savings that accrued from the investigation of fraud totalled £427 million. During the same period there were 4,379 people prosecuted by the Agency which led to 3,916 convictions.

The number of staff employed to detect and prosecute fraud in the year ending 31 March 1992 was 2,873 at a cost of £62.5 million.

The targeted savings from the investigation of fraud for the year ending 31 March 1993 is £460 million.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Terminal Illness

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what advice he has issued to doctors, required to identify persons under special rules payments, who have not advised their patients of a terminal condition, or duration of a terminal condition.

Mr. Scott: The administration of special rules payments is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 27 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about advice given to doctors in connection with claims made under the special rules procedures.

As you know, the term "Special Rules" refers to the arrangements under which persons who are terminally ill can claim Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA). The procedures ensure that people with a limited life expectancy of six months or less are automatically awarded the highest rate of the care component of DLA or the higher rate of AA.

A claim for payment under the special rules procedures may be made by the sick or disabled person or by a third party on their behalf. The claim form requires the person applying for the benefit to indicate that the claim is being made under Special Rules procedures and to ask their local doctor to complete a form DS1500, which provides factual medical evidence in order to streamline the process and avoid delays in payment.

Doctors were advised of these arrangements when they were introduced. The DS1500 report is brief and easy to complete asking only three questions, it does not mention terminal illness nor does it ask for an opinion on prognosis. No specific advice is given to the doctor about what he should tell his patients about their illnesses. This must be a matter for his own judgment.

It is appreciated that this is an area which causes considerable distress to patients when they realise that Special Rules apply to people with a limited life expectancy. It is also difficult and distressing for the relatives and the doctor involved. The Benefits Agency in consultation with the Department has accordingly tried to make the claims process as easy and as sensitive as possible within the necessary legal constraints.

In order for Special Rules cases to be recognised at the outset and therefore processed quickly it is essential that the claim form identifies that the claim is made under these Rules and is accompanied by a DS1500 from the doctor treating the terminally ill person. If the claim has not come in as a Special Rules claim, or in some cases, a Special Rules claim is not accompanied by a form DS1500, it is necessary to contact the doctor concerned to obtain confirmation as to whether or not the patient is terminally ill and whether they are claiming under Special Rules.

I can assure you that the aim of both medical and lay staff is to deal with these cases in a caring and prompt manner.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of the reply will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 29 October 1992

TRANSPORT

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many foreign fishing vessels are currently applying to be registered as British.

Mr. Norris: Twelve.

M25

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement regarding his plans for the widening of the M25.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Implementation of the general strategy announced on 6 September 1991 is continuing. Announcements of progress with the development of individual schemes for widening the existing carriageway to dual four-lane standard within existing boundaries are made at appropriate stages. Proposals for link roads between junctions 12 and 15 are the subject of public consultation. Decisions on the need for and feasibility of supplementary carriageways on other sections of the route remain to be taken when the studies are completed.

Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all the names of public appointments that he has made, giving the period for which the appointment was made, relevant qualifications of the appointees and what remuneration each currently receives.

Mr. Norris: Details of public appointments made by my right hon. Friend since 10 April 1992 are set out in the table.

Name of appointee	*Body to which appointed and remuneration*		*Period of the appointment*
Mr. A. H. C. Broadbent[1]	Dover Harbour Board		1 May 1992—30 April 1995
Mr. A. Worthington	Deputy Traffic Commissioner	—£172 per day	18 May 1992—17 May 1994
Mrs. M. Kendrick[1]	Acting Conservator of the River Mersey	—£8,223 pa	1 June 1992—31 May 1993
Mr. K. Brown[1]	London Transport	—£9,150 pa	29 June 1992—28 June 1994
Mrs. H. Robinson[1]	London Transport	—£9,150 pa	29 June 1992—28 June 1994
Mrs. M. K. Davies	Port of Tyne Authority		1 July 1992—30 June 1995
Mr. R. D. Peters	Dover Harbour Board		27 July 1992—30 April 1993
Sir Peter Baldwin[1]	Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (unpaid)		1 August 1992—31 July 1993
Mr. J. S. Fair[1]	Dundee Port Authority		1 September 1992—31 December 1994
Mr. B. G. Duncan[1]	Dundee Port Authority		1 September 1992—31 December 1994
Dr. A. K. Watkins	London Transport	—£100,000 pa	1 October 1992—30 September 1997
Mr. M. J. Bealing	Ipswich Port Authority		1 October 1992—30 June 1994
Mr. J. Stephenson[1]	Deputy Traffic Commissioner	—£172 per day	1 October 1992—31 March 1994
Mr. R. W. A. Cake	Poole Harbour Commission		1 November 1992—31 October 1995

[1] Reappointments.

Remuneration of port authority appointees is a matter for the authorities themselves. It is not considered practicable or appropriate to list the many and varied qualifications of individual appointees, but my right hon. Friend will have satisfied himself as to their relevance before making the appointments.

M27

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made on his Department's study into the widening of the M27.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Final decisions on the timing of an invitation to consultants to submit bids to undertake this commission have yet to be taken.

Dangerous Substances

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what level of consultation he has undertaken with representatives of emergency services and trades unions concerning European harmonisation governing labelling and safety codes of dangerous substances;

(2) what response he has given to proposals for European harmonisation of United Kingdom hazchem regulations;

(3) what meetings he has had with emergency services' chief officers concerning EEC directives for harmonising current regulations governing the carriage of dangerous goods by road and rail;

(4) if he will make a statement on the implications of the new European agreement concerning the movement of dangerous substances;

(5) what response he has made to concerns expressed by the Fire Brigades Union regarding the replacement of the United Kingdom hazchem system with ADR;

(6) if European harmonisation of hazchem will exclude current domestic safety codes and procedures for the protection of fire brigade personnel and the general public;

(7) if ADR will be achieved without undermining the current system of labelling dangerous substances within the United Kingdom;

(8) if the introduction of ADR, as a replacement of the United Kingdom hazchem system, satifies current safety criteria for civilian evacuation;

(9) what effect ADR introduction will have on risk minimisation within the operation of emergency services.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There are no EC directives requiring the harmonisation of road and rail regulation for the transport of dangerous goods. However, our intention is that United Kingdom regulations for the domestic transport of dangerous goods by road will be harmonised with the European agreement concerning the international carriage of dangerous goods by road—ADR—from 1 January 1995. This should result in no lowering of existing safety standards. The regulations will be drafted by the Health and Safety Executive which will consult all interested parties.

As a result of representations from the Fire Brigades Union and others, the United Kingdom is currently negotiating the inclusion of United Kingdom emergency action codes in the hazard warning panel requirements of ADR for road tankers carrying dangerous goods. These codes give an immediate indication to the emergency services of how they should react at the scene of an incident and whether evacuation of people nearby is advisable.

Travellers Charter

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, as part of his quality of service objectives, he will require the publication of the responses of all bodies consulted in the preparation of the travellers charter.

Mr. Freeman: The Central Transport Consultative Committee, the statutory consumer body which represents the users of British Rail services, were consulted in the course of the preparation of the passengers charter. Its comments on the charter are summarised in the committee's annual report for 1991-92, published on 4 August. A copy of the report has been placed in the Library.

Preserved Railways

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress of his consultations concerning implementation of the Transport and Works Act 1992 in so far as they relate to preserved railways.

Mr. Freeman: We have consulted widely on all the rules, regulations and orders needed to implement part I of the Transport and Works Act. The many responses received, including those from the railway preservation movement, have been taken into account in finalising subordinate legislation.

Schedule 7 of the Applications and Objections Procedure Rules will set out the table of fees for applications for orders under part I. The proposed fees for transport projects, such as preserved railways, which do not involve the compulsory acquisition of land are:

£750 where the area of the proposed works does not exceed 1 hectare;

£750 plus £250 for each 0·5 hectares (or part thereof) in excess of 1 hectare.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if, as part of his quality of service objectives, he will require the publication of all reports relating to the numbers of people eligible for legal aid commissioned since 1985 using public money.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Estimates of numbers of people eligible for civil legal aid were contained in the document "Review of Financial Conditions for Legal Aid: Eligibility for Civil Legal Aid: a Consultation Paper" which was issued in June 1991. There is no fixed upper financial eligibility limit for criminal legal aid.

Asylum

Mr. Allen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the totals of individuals in each relevant category in the past year for which figures are available who have used their right to appeal against refusal in cases for which the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill would require a mandatory refusal.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Immigration and Asylum Appeal Bill does not require mandatory refusal of any immigration-related applications. It follows that in the last year no appeals can have been lodged on any such refusals.

Clause 10 of the Bill removes the right of appeal in those cases where dismissal of the appeal is mandatory. No separate records are kept of such mandatory dismissals and details of such cases could only be obtained at disproportionate expense.

Clause 9 of the Bill, however, removes existing rights of appeal against refusal of entry clearance in the case of visitors, short-term and prospective students and their dependents. In the year ending 30 September 1992 there were a total of 12,643 appeals registered against refusal of entry clearance for temporary purposes of all kinds except those by husbands, wives and fiancé(e)s. No breakdown is made of the types of appeal falling within this category, but by applying proportions obtained from a sample of cases approximately 9,607 visit visa and 1,712 student visa appeals were included in the total.

Criminal Justice Act 1991

Mr. Michael: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what guidance the Judicial Studies Board will be offering to judges and magistrates on the interpretation of sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Judicial Studies Board has already issued guidance on the Criminal Justice Act 1991 to both the professional and the lay judiciary. Judges of the Court of Appeal and the High Court were given a briefing in the Lord Chief Justice's court. Judges, recorders and assistant recorders sitting in Crown courts received an 81-page guide to the sentencing provisions of the Act as part of the "Crown Court Bench Book on Sentencing" and attended conferences at which there were lectures and discussion on the Act. The board produced an 18-page introduction to the Act and a copy of this document was sent to each magistrate. A comprehensive training pack was also produced to assist those, usually the justices clerks, who train the magistrates.

Duress

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proposals he has for reforming the law relating to the defence of duress in criminal cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

We have no proposals for reforming this area of the criminal law.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 29 October.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 29 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Cells

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many convicted prisoners and how many remand prisoners are currently being held in police cells in England; and how many of these are in the north-west region;

(2) what steps he is taking to ease the problem arising from holding convicted and remand prisoners in police cells; and when he expects a reduction in the numbers of such prisoners;

(3) what steps he has taken to alleviate problems caused to families and legal representatives in gaining access to prisoners held in police cells; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 26 October, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 497 prisoners in police cells in England. Of these 346 were in police cells in the north-west, as shown in the table.

Police force	*Number of prisoners in police cells on 26 October 1992*
Cheshire	1
Cumbria	1
Greater Manchester	233
Lancashire	37
Merseyshire	74
Total	346

Information collected centrally does not differentiate between remand and convicted prisoners, but surveys have confirmed that most such prisoners are on remand. There has been a very substantial reduction in the number of prisoners being held in police cells. On 31 March, 1,882 prisoners were held in this way in England and Wales as a whole. The total number on 26 October was 524. A new joint initiative involving close co-operation between the police and prison service management has proven to be very effective in achieving reductions in police cell use against the background of a fall in the total population in custody.

The police are aware of the importance of legal and family visits for prisoners in police cells. The vast majority of legal visits take place without difficulty, although practical constraints may arise at individual police stations from time to time. Liaison prison governors are available to advise the police. Facilities for family visits at some police stations are limited, and there may also be special security considerations which have to be taken into account. Guidance to the police provides that preference should be given to unconvicted prisoners to receive visits more frequently than convicted prisoners if a choice has to be made.

Domestic Violence

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, following the retrial and subsequent release of Kiranjit Ahluwalia, he will arrange for a similar process to apply in the cases of women victims of domestic violence currently in prison for killing their partner; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I understand that Mrs. Ahluwalia was released following a retrial ordered by the Court of Appeal as a result of her original appeal to that court.

My right hon. and learned Friend had no involvement with any of these proceedings. He is always ready to consider representations that in a particular case there has been a miscarriage of justice, and to take such action as may be appropriate including, where something new appears to touch the safety of a conviction, using his power under section 17(1)*(a)* of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 to refer a case to the Court of Appeal; but he has no plans to initiate a general review of the cases of women who have been imprisoned after conviction for the murder of their partner.

Animal Experiments

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will apply the code of practice for the Housing and Care of Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 to breeding establishments;

(2) if he will bring forward proposals for stricter controls of the standards for the housing and care of animals in breeding, supply and research establishments.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We have no current plans for amending the Home Office code of practice for the housing and care of animals used in scientific procedures or for applying the code as it stands to breeding and supplying establishments. However, we are considering whether the guidelines issued by the Laboratory Animal Breeders Association, currently used by the Home Office inspectorate in respect of breeding and supplying establishments should, updated as necessary, be given a more formal basis in the context of the operation of the 1986 Act.

Immigration Appeals

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the rights of appeal which apply to visitors, settlers and asylum seekers to the United Kingdom and other categories of applicant; and what information he has on the comparable provisions in each EC country;

(2) if he will list the current rights of appeal which apply to visitors, settlers, asylum seekers and other immigration and nationality department categories; and what changes he proposes.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Part II of the Immigration Act 1971 confers rights of appeal against virtually all categories of adverse immigration decisions. The main rights of appeal which apply to visitors and persons seeking to settle in the United Kingdom are against refusal of an entry clearance at a British post abroad; refusal of leave to enter at a United Kingdom port—a person refused leave to enter is not entitled to appeal until he has left the United Kingdom unless he holds a current entry clearance or work permit—and refusal to vary a person's limited leave in the United Kingdom—provided that the application was made during the currency of the limited leave. The rights of appeal available to asylum seekers currently depend on their immigration status at the time of their application.

The Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill contains provisions that would give unsuccessful asylum seekers specific new rights of appeal to a special adjudicator, exercisable while in the United Kingdom. The Bill also provides that persons seeking entry as visitors, students enrolled on courses of six months or less, and prospective students would no longer be entitled to appeal against a refusal of entry clearance, or against the refusal of leave to enter if they do not hold an entry clearance; and that persons refused entry clearance, leave to enter or a variation of leave on the grounds that they do not meet certain mandatory requirements of the immigration rules would also no longer be entitled to appeal.

The Bill does not affect the rights of appeal of persons refused entry clearance for settlement, or in categories leading to settlement; of persons refused leave to enter when in possession of an entry clearance or work permit; or of illegal entrants or persons subject to deportation decisions.

Rights of appeal in other member states of the European Community are a matter for the Governments concerned. I understand, however, that no other member state has a specialised system of immigration appeals.

Correspondence

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether Mr. Aame-Diga Aakpa's file has been located; and when the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford can expect to receive a reply to her letter of 8 October 1991.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Mr. Aakpa's file has not yet been located. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as it is possible to take a decision.

DNA

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will introduce legislation to give a DNA profile the same status as a fingerprint for the purpose of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984; and what response he intends to make to the comments made by the registrar in his annual report on DNA profiles.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Royal Commission on criminal justice has been asked to examine the issues surrounding the collection, storage and use of DNA material obtained by the police during the course of an investigation. My right hon. and learned Friend will consider the need for legislation in the light of the royal commission's recommendations.

The retention of DNA profiles for research purposes by the Metropolitan police, which the Data Protection Registrar refers to in his report, is a matter for the Commissioner.

Primary Purpose Rule

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 30 June, *Official Report*, column *524*, to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), how many spouses have been admitted to the United Kingdom under the primary purpose rule.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information is the number of persons accepted for settlement as a spouse under the immigration rules, given in table 3 of the Home Office statistical bulletin issue 29/92 "Control of Immigration: Statistics—First and Second Quarters 1992", a copy of which is in the Library.

Drug Prevention Initiative

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of state for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to draw on the successful elements of the 20 drug prevention projects currently sponsored by his Department under the drug prevention initiative in order to make adequate provision of such services in each town and city in England and Wales which has a drugs problem.

Mr. Jack: The work of the 20 local drugs prevention teams and of the central drugs prevention unit is being evaluated. Given the innovative nature of this work, it is at present too early to consider a possible broadening of the drugs prevention initiative.

Probation Committees

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what additional resources his Department has provided for the probation service in England and Wales and to each probation committee to meet the costs of new responsibilities under the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

Mr. Jack: The Home Office annual report published in February set out the actual and projected resources for the Probation Service in England and Wales as follows:

	1990-91 (actual)	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*1994-95*
Central Government support (£ million)	228	272	290	314	338
Total staff provision	12,851	13,641	14,234	14,713	15,100

Resources, which are now subject to cash limits, are allocated to the 55 individual probation areas through an agreed formula and the overall increase of 25·7 per cent. for 1992-93, compared with 1990-91 outturn, was not spread evenly because the allocation formula adjusted the proportion of national provision allocated to each area according to objective indicators of need and work load. The lowest increase was 20·8 per cent. while the highest was 30·3 per cent.

Prisoners (Licences)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many additional prisoners will be supervised on licence as a result of changes contained in the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

Mr. Jack: We are expecting a gradual build-up of cases as offenders are sentenced and released from prisons under the Act and a corresponding decrease in the numbers released under the former parole arrangements. Current best estimates are that when the transitional period comes to an end in 1996, some 5,500 more ex-prisoners will be supervised on licence. Extra probation officer resources have been provided to allow for the increased caseload and to enable longer and more intense periods of supervision with offenders on licence. The numbers under voluntary supervision are expected to fall sharply.

Voting

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will conduct a national survey into the accessibility of polling stations to disabled people with the aim of identifying problems which they encounter;

(2) if he will take steps to ensure that all electors who wish to vote at their polling stations have the ability to do so.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A national survey would not be a good use of our resources in this area, which are better directed towards providing financial support. Councils have a statutory obligation to designate as polling places, wherever practicable, only places which are accessible to disabled people. We have provided guidance for returning officers to remind them of their obligations, and shall continue to do so. It is our long-term aim that all polling stations should be accessible to disabled electors but, where it is not possible to use a building affording easy access, we make grants available towards the cost of providing temporary ramps.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what local government funding is earmarked for the implementation of the Representation of the People Act 1983 towards disabled persons access to the voting system.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Details of local authority spending on access for the disabled to the electoral process are not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment has been undertaken to identify the number of disabled people who failed to vote in the 1992 general election; and if he will conduct an inquiry into potential obstructions presented to the disabled at polling stations and by alternative voting methods.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the number of electors who are disabled is not collected centrally. We are conducting a full review of electoral law and practice in the light of experience at the general election in April. That review will include all aspects of access for disabled people to the electoral process.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to review the postal vote system;

(2) if he will simplify postal vote application forms and review the timetable for postal voting.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A full review of all aspects of postal voting procedures is being conducted in the light of experience at the general election. We have held preliminary meetings with the political parties and the local authority associations. A working group of Home Office officials and local authority representatives to look at absent voting arrangements will begin work shortly. Another working group will look at forms.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how he will ensure that disabled voters have equal privacy to able-bodied voters when exercising their right to vote at polling stations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Returning officers are required to provide each polling station with a sufficient number of compartments in which electors can vote screened from observation. A number of manufacturers provide compartments or polling screens which are suitable for people in wheelchairs. We provide 80 per cent. grants towards the purchase of special polling screens.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what expenditure was devoted to publicising the right of elderly and disabled people to obtain a postal or proxy vote, during the last available financial year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We spent £11,210 in 1991-92 on a poster and leaflet campaign to let elderly and disabled people know about their right to an absent vote. In the period leading up to the general election we also spent about £1·5 million on television and newspaper advertising to tell people how to obtain an absent vote.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many disabled people are reliant on the postal vote system.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the number of disabled people on the postal voters list is not collected centrally.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many electors, in the 1992 general election, voted by postal vote; and how many persons lost their vote due to late return of ballot papers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the number of people voting by post will be published in the "Return of the Expenses of each Candidate at the General Election" later this year. Information on the number of postal ballot papers returned after the close of the poll is not collected centrally.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how the number of disabled persons voting at national and local elections has altered since the 1979 general election.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the number of disabled people voting at national and local government elections is not collected centrally.

Asylum

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers have applied for asylum; how many have had their applications accepted; how many have been granted exceptional leave to remain; and how many have been returned to safe third countries, giving the figures in each case since 1985, by year.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on asylum applications and decisions in 1985-90 is given in table 1.2 of Home Office statistical bulletin issue 12/92 "Asylum Statistics United Kingdom 1990-91", a copy of which is in the Library. Figures for refusals on safe third country grounds are not separately identifiable prior to 1991. For information for 1991 and the first three quarters of 1992 I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 20 October 1992, at columns *261-62*.

1. Summary Tables

Table 1.2 Applications received for asylum in the United Kingdom, decisions and percentages, 1981 to 1991

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	[1]*1989*	[1][2]*1990*	[1][2]*1991*
Excluding dependants											
Applications received[3]	—	—	—	2,905	4,389	4,266	4,256	3,998	11,640	22,000	44,840
Decisions											
Total	—	—	—	1,431	2,635	2,983	2,432	2,702	6,955	4,015	4,685
Grants of asylum[4]	—	—	—	453	574	348	266	628	2,210	900	420
Grants of exceptional leave	—	—	—	631	1,559	2,102	1,531	1,578	3,860	2,400	1,860
Refusals[5]	—	—	—	347	502	533	636	496	890	710	2,410
Percentage of total decisions											
Total	—	—	—	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Grant of asylum	—	—	—	32	22	12	11	23	32	22	9
Grants of exceptional leave	—	—	—	44	59	70	63	58	55	60	40
Refusals[5]	—	—	—	24	19	18	26	18	13	18	51
Applications withdrawn	—	—	—	175	201	164	200	281	350	360	500
Including dependants[6]											
Applications received[3]	2,425	4,223	4,296	4,171	6,156	5,714	5,863	5,739	16,776	30,315	—
Decisions											
Total	2,358	2,942	2,950	2,011	3,802	4,045	3,479	3,888	10,270	6,265	—
Grants of asylum[4]	1,473	1,727	1,185	689	915	543	464	975	3,335	1,510	—
Grants of exceptional leave	278	311	939	802	2,156	2,815	2,229	2,289	5,840	3,900	—
Refusals[5]	607	904	826	520	731	687	786	624	1,095	850	—
Percentage of total decisions											
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	—
Grants of asylum	62	59	40	34	[illegible]	13	13	25	32	24	—
Grants of exceptional leave	12	11	32	40	57	70	64	59	57	62	—
Refusals[5]	26	31	28	26	19	17	23	16	11	14	—
Applications withdrawn	211	234	217	227	261	209	252	360	435	405	—

[1] Provisional figures rounded to the nearest 5, percentages rounded to the nearest whole per cent.

[2] 1990 figures may understate and 1991 decision figures are likely to be incomplete because of delays in recording.

[3] See footnotes 2 and 3 to Table 2.1.

[4] Excluding South East Asian refugees: see Tables 3.1 and 9.1.

[5] Includes refusals on third country grounds, and those under paragraph 101 of the Immigration Rules: see footnote 1 to Table 3.3.

[6] Including dependants who applied with the principal applicant and those who arrived subsequently but before the principal application was decided.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what circumstances he uses his discretion to allow asylum applications in the country of the applicant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The 1951 convention relating to the status of refugees defines a refugee as someone who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such a fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. Where a person falls within this definition and has such close ties with the United Kingdom as to make it the most appropriate country of refuge for them, we are prepared to grant entry clearance for the purpose of their applying for asylum in the United Kingdom. Entry clearance for this purpose would not normally be granted to a person who remained within their own country and did not, therefore, fall within the definition of a refugee.

Colombia

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what dates he visited Colombia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The visit between 8 and 11 September took place in an itinerary over 6 to 14 September which also included Venezuela and Peru.

It was principally concerned with drugs and had three main objectives: to see local problems at first hand; to explore the scope for further effective bilateral co-operation; and to consider the implications for policy in the United Kingdom.

In each of the three countries, I discussed with the President and senior Ministers the many aspects, domestic and international, of the drugs problem. In Colombia, I was able to see for myself some of the valuable results of our programme of assistance to the Colombian Government in their fight against drugs. In Peru, in addition to drugs issues, I took the opportunity to raise other matters such as human rights and the forthcoming elections.

Police Inquiry

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what salary, per diem, or other emoluments the chairman and other members of the inquiry into the role of the police officer will be entitled to receive as a consequence of the membership of the inquiry committee.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The chairman and other members of the inquiry into police responsibilities and rewards are entitled to receive fees in accordance with the appropriate daily rate set by HM Treasury. But the chairman and each of the members of the inquiry have waived their entitlement to remuneration.

Immigration

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many short-term and would-be students refused *(a)* entry clearance and *(b)* entry to the United Kingdom, by country, have lodged appeals against refusal in each quarter since January 1991; and in each category how many such appeals were (i) withdrawn, (ii) granted and (iii) dismissed;

(2) how many visitors refused *(a)* entry clearance and *(b)* entry to the United Kingdom by country, have lodged appeals against refusal in each quarter since January 1991; and in each category how many such appeals were (i) withdrawn, (ii) granted and (iii) dismissed.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This subject is a matter for the Lord Chancellor's Department; my hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, will write to the hon. Member.

Ireland (Travel Documents)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has put to the European Commission for amending the common travel area between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom under the single market from next year; whether EC nationals will be required to show their passports and to submit to spot checks prior to entry into Great Britain; whether all travellers from the Republic of Ireland into the United Kingdom will be required to carry passports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We have made no proposals for amending the common travel area arrangements.

Squatting

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of the consultations on changes to the law on squatting; and when he expects to introduce legislation to change the law.

Mr. Jack: As my hon. Friend knows, the Government have a commitment to strengthen and improve the law against squatting, and the Home Office published a consultation paper on this subject last October. We are still considering the best way forward in the light of the responses received and we will announce our conclusions in due course.

Sheehy Inquiry

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the paid employments of members of the Sheehy committee of inquiry into the role of the police officer.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Sir Patrick Sheehy, chairman of the inquiry into police responsibilities and rewards, is chairman of BAT Industries. The other members of the inquiry are Mr. John Bullock, joint senior partner of Coopers Lybrand, Professor Colin Campbell, vice-chancellor of the University of Nottingham, Mr. Eric Caines, director of personnel for the national health service and Sir Paul Fox, lately managing director of BBC Television.

EDUCATION

Hertfordshire College of Art and Design

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make an order under section 16 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 to incorporate Herefordshire college of art and design into the new further education sector on 1 April 1993.

Mr. Forman: Herefordshire college of art and design will be among the colleges joining the new further education sector on 1 April 1993. A corporation will be established for the college by means of an order under section 16 of the Further and Higher Education Act as soon as possible. A draft order was issued for consultation on 26 October.

WALES

Public Footpaths

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to offer financial compensation to farmers who are actively involved in improving public footpaths through their land.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Responsibility for the maintenance of public rights of way rests with county highway authorities, not with my right hon. Friend. Farmers have certain duties in relation to the maintenance of paths which cross their land and are entitled to grant assistance from the highways authorities for fulfilling part of those duties. The Countryside Council for Wales is, however, piloting projects in Wales which include an incentive payment to farmers to undertake maintenance of footpaths where it is in the public interest and it is cost effective to do so.

Education Reform

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received from district councils in Wales to date concerning the proposed changes in education; and how many representations *(a)* expressed objection to the extension of grant-maintained status for schools and *(b)* expressed objections to changes proposed for the Welsh Joint Education Committee.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Representations have been received from 12 district councils and from the Council of Welsh

Districts. Of these, five commented on our proposals for grant-maintained status and three referred to the proposals relating to the Welsh Joint Education Committee.

Disabled Trainees

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the training providers within each training and enterprise council in Wales, indicating the number of training places offered, and the number of disabled trainees currently granted placement;

(2) if he will list the large company unit schemes offering training within each training and enterprise council area in Wales indicating the number of trainees on each scheme, and the proportion of disabled trainees on each scheme.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not available centrally. Local training provision is the responsibility of individual training and enterprise councils which are under contract to make sufficient suitable places available to meet the demand from disabled persons.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the total numbers of disabled trainees currently on *(a)* employer led training schemes and *(b)* voluntary sector training schemes within each training and enterprise council area in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not collected centrally. The type of training provision made available locally is the responsibility of individual training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the total number of trainees on youth training schemes within each training and enterprise council in Wales; how many disabled trainees there are within each area; and if he will indicate the numbers of disabled trainees according to training occupational classification.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The number of trainees on youth training at 13 September in each TEC area in Wales is set out in the table.

Information on the numbers of disabled young people in training and their occupational routes is not collected separately but over the six months to September, 1·2 per cent. of those commencing youth training were disabled.

Numbers on youth training on 13 September 1992

TEC	*Number in training*
Gwent	2,456
Mid Glamorgan	2,548
South Glamorgan	1,685
North East Wales	1,355
North West Wales	1,851
Powys	533
West Wales	3,803
WALES	14,231

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of the 1989-90 and the 1990-91 trainee intake on to youth training placements within each training and enterprise council area in Wales are currently in full-time employment; and what proportion of disabled trainees over the same period are currently in full-time employment.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information as requested is not available.

Education Funding

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will set out the basis of his policy to support differential funding for different sectors of the education service in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Government's policies for the support of the education service are set out in the joint Department for Education and Welsh Office education White Paper, "Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools", Cm. 2021, published on 28 July, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Hospital Catering

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 19 October, *Official Report*, column *150*, what consultations he has had with the South Glamorgan health authority concerning the suspension of redundancy notice consultations to in-house catering; when he expects to confirm decisions on the legal issues raised between the health authority and the catering workers' trades unions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: South Glamorgan health authority has asked the Department for its views on the legal issues arising and these are now under consideration. A reply will be sent as soon as possible.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 19 October, *Official Report*, column *150*, what guidance was given by his Department to Gardner Merchant by way of clarification of tender procedures and on the minimum service standards relative to previously achieved standards required to comply with *(a)* the terms of the contract and *(b)* relevant European Community law.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Department gave guidance on two specific points only in clarification of tender procedures—first, that the authority had amortised redundancy costs over the period of the contract in accordance with current guidelines; secondly, that information provided to all contractors must be accurate and current and sufficient to enable the submission of realistic tenders, that is, that all necessary details should be made readily available.

Visual Impairment

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will conduct a review into the supply and cost of low vision aids to visually impaired children and the provision of training on the use of aids within health authorities in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: At present, my right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue guidelines to social services departments in Wales concerning advising parents of visually impaired children on adequate lighting provision in the home.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: General guidance on services for people with disabilities was issued in 1990. It specifically mentioned the possible need to advise the visually disabled, or their carers, about lighting equipment. Local authority social services departments' rehabilitation officers are available to provide advise about lighting requirements appropriate to the individual circumstances of those who are visually impaired.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the local authorities in Wales which have appointed a social services officer with specific responsibility for visually impaired people.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: All social services authorities in Wales have such officers.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what efforts are currently undertaken by his Department to ensure that health authorities are fulfilling their statutory responsibility of providing information to parents of a visually impaired child concerning possible sources of assistance from other statutory agencies and voluntary organisations.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Existing guidance on services for people with disabilities draws attention to their information needs. It encourages the training of staff to give clear and accurate advice on how services provided by other agencies can be obtained. It is for health authorities where appropriate to reflect that guidance in their local strategies for health which are submitted to the Department for approval.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue guidelines to health authorities in Wales on the issuing of information, medical advice, and counselling to parents following the discovery of visual impairment in their child.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: General guidance on services for people with disabilities was issued in 1990, as was the report of the working group on co-ordinating services for visually handicapped people. In 1991, the Welsh Health Planning Forum issued advice to the NHS in Wales on physical and sensory disability in the form of a protocol on health gain.

Disabled People (Housing)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of new build local authority and housing association dwellings have been built to appropriate standards for people with disabilities in Wales in each year between 1979 and 1991.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The percentage of new local authority and housing association dwellings built for people who are chronically sick or disabled is shown in the table. Figures for 1979 are not available.

Year	*Percentage*
1980	0·7
1981	1·2
1982	3·0
1983	7·6
1984	7·2
1985	4·8
1986	6·7
1987	21·8
1988	6·5
1989	1·9
1990	3·8
1991	4·1

Local Education Authorities

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what aspects of responsibility currently held by local education authorities in Wales will be transferred to the proposed funding agency.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Details of the duties of the proposed Schools Funding Council for Wales are contained in the White Paper "Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

NHS Employees

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to protect the right of free speech in relation to employees of the national health service concerning the quality of patient care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Department has recently issued, for consultation, draft guidance which clarifies the rights and duties of NHS employees in raising matters of concern about patient services and the responsibilities of local management. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Community Care

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the local authorities in Wales whose draft community care plans include references to services for multiple-disabled people.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Although all local authorities' social care plans include services for physically and/or sensorially disabled people, only West Glamorgan makes specific reference to people with multiple disabilities.

Education White Paper

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will set out the evidence on which he based the proposals set out in the White Paper, "Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools", that a greater quality of educational provision in Wales will result from a greater diversity of type of school.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The reforms that we have already implemented—more parental choice, rigorous testing, external inspection of standards in schools, local management of schools, grant-maintained schools, and the national curriculum—are helping to shape a more open, a more responsive, and a more demanding system of education. The White Paper seeks to build on these solid foundations.

Central Control of Schools

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new central powers he will gain over the direct control of schools when the new arrangements for education governance are in place.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The White Paper, "Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools" is not about increasing the powers of the Secretary of State but about rationalising certain arrangements to ensure best use of limited resources for the benefit of children and the education service generally. There are no proposals to give the Secretary of State new powers with regard to direct control of schools.

Electronics Companies

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate his Department has made of the percentage of components purchased by electronics companies in Wales which are produced in Wales; and what information he has in respect of individual companies.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not collated by my Department. Information held on individual companies is commercially confidential.

Nurses

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made of the number of nurses who have achieved state registered nursing qualifications in 1992 to the latest available date within the Merthyr Tydfil and Cynon health district; and how many have been employed by the health districts.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: So far this year, 38 student nurses from the Merthyr Tydfil and Cynon Valley health district have qualified. Of these, 26 have subsequently been employed by the Mid Glamorgan health authority; information about the remainder is not available.

Diabetes

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the estimated cost of *(a)* a visit by a health visitor to administer insulin to a diabetic and *(b)* self-administration using a Novopen, including the cost of the Novo needle.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on the cost of a visit by a health visitor is not held centrally. The cost of a Novopen and needle is commercial-in-confidence. However, many diabetics use disposable syringes to inject themselves with insulin and these are already prescribable. The use of injection pens and needles entails a real additional cost to the taxpayer. This factor has to be taken into account when considering whether to authorise their prescribing by general practitioners.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make it his policy that Novo needles shall be available on prescription for people who suffer from diabetes and require insulin treatment.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: We are continuing to consider the case for authorising general practitioners to prescribe both insulin injection pens and needles, and a final decision will be reached bearing in mind all other priorities.

Unitary Councils

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will set out in detail the costs of establishing the new unitary councils in the areas of *(a)* personnel including recruitment and relocation, *(b)* property costs, *(c)* transference to new information technology systems and *(d)* shadow councils and extra election costs;

(2) if he will set out in detail the one-off costs of setting up the new unitary councils in the Principality.

Mr. David Hunt: I have engaged Touche Ross management consultants to advise me on the nature and magnitude of transitional costs which might arise in moving to a structure of unitary authorities in Wales. I will publish the consultants' report when it is available.

Deeside Industrial Park

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency concerning the earliest likely date on which permanent employment on the Deeside industrial park will reach 10,000.

Mr. David Hunt: I regularly meet the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency to discuss a wide range of issues.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received in relation to the proposed Severn bridge toll increase in January 1993 *(a)* generally and *(b)* in relation to future validity of books of season tickets available for sale at the present time.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None.

Pit Closures

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what duties of policy co-ordination he has given to the relevant training and enterprise councils in Wales in relation to job creation in the areas affected by proposed pit closures.

Mr. David Hunt: I have agreed with the chairmen of the TECs affected by coal closures that they should produce action plans or contingency plans as appropriate and that these plans should cover not only labour market issues but, in conjunction with the Welsh Development Agency, proposals for job creation.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the Association of Welsh Training and Enterprise Councils in relation to funding earmarked for additional training and enterprise operations in areas affected by proposed pit closures in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I met the chairmen of Mid Glamorgan, West Wales and North East Wales TECs on 19 October 1992 to discuss the situation regarding colliery closures. I have informed the chairmen that £4·8 million is being made available over the next 18 months for retraining and other services and support for enterprise in the areas affected.

I am awaiting proposals from the chairmen on the most effective use of these resources.

Steel

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his statement on 21 October, *Official Report*, columns 527-28, in relation to the closure of Shotton steelworks heavy end in 1980, what is his most up to date estimate of the numbers of people employed in premises at the Deeside industrial park in each year since 1985, the numbers permanently employed at British Steel Corporation Shotton *(a)* prior to the 1980 heavy end closure announcement, *(b)* in 1985, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* at the most recent convenient date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Information on employment numbers at Deeside industrial park is not collected by my Department.

Butetown Link Road

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received, and what consultations he has had, concerning the funding of the annual maintenance costs of the Butetown link road.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No such representations have been received.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Longford Hall

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he has taken to ascertain that Longford hall, Stretford is being maintained in a way which does not prejudice its status as a listed building; when a physical inspection of this property was last conducted; and what were the conclusions.

Mr. Brooke: Officials of the Departments concerned have been in regular touch with the owners, Trafford metropolitan borough council, about the state of the building. I understand that, pending decisions on the building's long term future, the council has authorised the carrying out of repairs, and tenders are due to be submitted by 30 October.

Computer Projects

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish a table setting out for the period since 9 April *(a)* each tender issued by his Department for projects requiring the supply of (i) computer hardware and (ii) computer software, *(b)* a description of the services required, *(c)* the number of companies who were invited to tender, *(d)* the number of companies who submitted a bid without prior invitation by his Department, *(e)* which company was awarded the contract, *(f)* the value of each contract and *(g)* the length of period over which the contract will run.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 27 October 1992]*: The information requested is as follows:

(a) My Department has not yet issued any significant tenders for the supply of computer hardware and software. However, it has advertised a single major requirement in the Official Journal of the European Communities and is currently evaluating proposals. It has also purchased a number of personal computers to meet urgent interim needs.

(b) The services required are:

- (i) the supply, configuration, installation, implementation and maintenance of hardware and software to support the office-based functions of the Department;
- (ii) the provision of services including system operation and administration, user support and training, system design and development and migration of existing systems.

The Department plans to implement an integrated information system network, which will provide staff with desk-top access to a variety of services, will support specific business applications and will allow communications with external facilities.

(c) All companies that expressed an interest by the advertised due date were invited to submit proposals in response to an "operational requirement".

(d) Not applicable.

(e) and (f) The contract has not yet been awarded.

(g) 18 months with an option to extend and amend.

Gambling

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will estimate the level of *(a)* satisfied and *(b)* unsatisfied unstimulated demand for gambling.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

Net consumer expenditure—estimated at about £3 billion in 1991-92—provides the best indication of the level of satisfied demand for gambling. By its nature, it is not possible to estimate the level of any unsatisfied demand.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the names of public appointments that he has made, giving the period for which the appointment was made, relevant qualifications of the appointees and what remuneration each currently receives.

Mr. Curry: The information is not held centrally in the form requested. However, summary details of appointments made by my right hon. Friend the Minister, including details of remuneration, are contained in "Public Bodies" published annually by the Cabinet Office. A copy of the 1991 edition is available in the Library of the House.

Genetically Engineered Food

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce legislation to ensure that all food which contains items that have been genetically engineered are so labelled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Not at present. The Food Advisory Committee—FAC—which is one of the Government's committees of independent advisers, considers the need for special labelling of foods produced using genetic modification on a case-by-case basis taking account of advice from the advisory committee on novel foods and processes and the committee on toxicity of chemicals in food, consumer products and the environment.

The FAC committee has developed a set of guidelines for the labelling of food produced using genetic modification that are used to assist it in deciding whether special labelling is required. These guidelines are currently being reviewed by the committee and the results of this review will be made public.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the exact ages in years and months of BSE-infected cattle, both clinically diagnosed and confirmed histologically, in the period 1 June to 30 September.

Mr. Soames: During the period 1 June to 30 September 1992, a total of 17,528 cattle were slaughtered or died while clinically suspected of having BSE. Of these, 8,621 have been confirmed at histopathological post-mortem examination and the results of 2,334 are not yet available. The dates of birth and dates of clinical onset of disease of these animals are collected on-farm as part of the ongoing epidemiological study of the disease.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the tissues involved in the cow itself as the infective agent for BSE migrating from the intestine after ingestion to the brain.

Mr. Soames: More than 50 different tissues have been collected from confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathies and are being assayed for infectivity by mouse inoculation. Infectivity has so far been detected only in brain.

The following tissues have given negative results:

Spleen, semen, buffy coat, musculus diaphragma, musculus semitendinosus, bone marrow, placenta, prefemoral lymph nodes, milk and udder, supramammary lymph nodes, mesenteric and carcase lymph nodes.

Other results are awaited.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the amount of infective material required to be eaten to cause BSE in cattle.

Mr. Soames: A study is in progress to address this question.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on new types of BSE identified during the current year.

Mr. Soames: No new types of BSE have been identified in the current year following the histopathological examination that is applied to all confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the age at which BSE-infected cattle first show infectivity in the brain or in any other tissue.

Mr. Soames: A study is in progress to indicate when infectivity can be first detected in the brain and possibly in other tissues.

GATT

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what requests have been received by the Agricultural Council of the European Community from the European Commission concerning its negotiating activities as representing the Community in the general agreement on tariffs and trade; what consultations the Commission has had with the Council on these matters; and what was the last date when they provided the Commission with a negotiating mandate.

Mr. Curry: The Agriculture Council regularly discusses the GATT negotiations. At the Council on 26 and 27 October, the Commission reported that it was continuing to work within guidelines approved by member states, including in particular those laid down by Heads of Government at Birmingham earlier in the month.

Beef (Import Restrictions)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many countries place restrictions on imports of cattle, calves, or beef from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: Certification of health status is a normal requirement for international trade in animals and animal products. Recommended standards are agreed by the Office International des Epizooties, which publishes the international health code.

Scrapie

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on experiments designed to determine whether vertical transmission of the scrapie agent can occur in sheep.

Mr. Soames: Evidence published in the early 1970s confirmed that the foetal membranes collected from scrapie-affected ewes were capable of transmitting infection to sheep and goats following oral challenge. Observations of scrapie incidence in well recorded flocks demonstrate a strong familial pattern of cases in female lines.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Fuel Supplies

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with the EC Energy Commissioner in regard to the implications for European Community fuel supply and energy policy of his pit closure programme.

Mr. Eggar: I have discussed this matter with Commissioner Cardoso e Cunha informally on several occasions.

British Coal

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received in regard to the extent to which British Coal has applied the citizens charter to its operations.

Mr. Eggar: I have received no specific representations on this point. British Coal aims to act in accordance with the principles of the citizens charter by providing all its customers with cost-effective, clean and convenient products and services.

Nuclear Reprocessing

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what plans the Government have for the building of nuclear power stations in Britain which are able to use as fuel the plutonium recovered in reprocessing;

(2) to what uses the plutonium recovered in reprocessing spent fuel from British nuclear power stations at the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield will be put; and whether any will be exported.

Mr. Eggar: It is expected that the material will ultimately be burnt in reactors to generate electricity. This could involve fast reactors, as and when they are needed, or plutonium could be used as mixed oxide fuel in conventional reactors—especially light water reactors such as Sizewell B. Studies are continuing as to whether plutonium fuels could be used economically in advanced gas-cooled reactors. While it is not axiomatic that United Kingdom civil plutonium needs to be burnt in United Kingdom reactors, this material will be transferred overseas only if Her Majesty's Government are satisfied that it will not be misused. The conditions for this include the application of safeguards and assurances covering peaceful use, physical protection and controls on re-transfer.

It is not envisaged that fast reactors will be needed for a number of years. Nuclear Electric will not be granted capital expenditure approval for any new nuclear power stations beyond Sizewell B pending the outcome of the 1994 review of the prospects for nuclear power.

Coal Mines (Ministerial Visits)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the deep mine coal pits he and other Ministers in his Department visited during the recent parliamentary recess; and how many coal faces were visited in those pits.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend the Minister for Energy visited Whitemoor colliery on 17 July when he saw one production face and one development face. My right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Denton, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Consumer Affairs and Small Firms, visited Silverwood colliery on 28 August when she saw one production face.

Orimulsion

Mr. Pike: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will review urgently the use of orimulsion by PowerGen and proposed use of that fuel by National Power at Padiham and Peabroke for the generation of electricity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The use of orimulsion must meet the requirements set by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. The review announced by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will, in considering the energy policy implications of the prospects for the pits concerned, need to examine the economic implications of importing fuel for electricity generation.

Coal Imports

Mr. Madden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations have been made by the European Commission to him concerning complaints of the dumping of Colombian coal in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Following the standard practice for anti-dumping complaints the Commission consulted member states including the United Kingdom as to whether they should open an investigation into British Coal's complaint, which concerns imports from Colombia, the United States and China. The Government have told the Commission that we have no objection to their doing so.

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give figures for the average price of imported coal *(a)* prior to 15 September and *(b)* currently; and what is the percentage change.

Mr. Eggar: The latest available information on the average price of imported coal is for August 1992, when the average price was £28·4 per tonne, including the cost of insurance and freight. Figures for September and October will not be available until the publication of the monthly overseas trade statistics by the Central Statistical Office on 12 November and 11 December respectively.

Parcelforce

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what level of VAT will be charged to customers of the Post Office's Parcelforce business following privatisation.

Mr. Leigh: Following my right hon. Friend's announcement on 15 July of his intention to privatise Parcelforce, VAT is one of the many issues which is being looked at.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what amount his Department took into account of the likely effects of the loss of value added tax exempt status before announcing plans to privatise Parcelforce; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: My right hon. Friend's announcement to the House on 15 July was of his intention to privatise Parcelforce and took account of the key issues involved in that decision. Detailed work is now under way to establish the best way to privatise Parcelforce.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received on the competitive framework for Parcelforce following privatisation.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 28 October 1992]:* As would be expected with a planned privatisation, a number of interested parties have made their views known to the Department on a wide range of issues. All such points are being given full consideration in the current study into the method of timing of sale.

Miners Pension Fund

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the average pension paid out by the miners pension fund; and if the Government will ensure that the surplus in that fund is used for the benefit of the miners.

Mr. Eggar: These are matters for the trustees of the miners pension fund.

Electricity

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken, pursuant to his undertaking of 19 October, *Official Report*, column 236, to

place in the public realm his memorandum of 9 June containing his response to the conclusions and recommendations in the report of the Fourth Select Committee on Energy (HC 113 of 1991-92) and the associated memorandum of the Director General of Electricity Supply.

Mr. Heseltine ***[holding answer 26 October 1992]:*** **These Memoranda are already in the public domain. They were announced by parliamentary question, placed in the Library of the House and released to the press on 9 June, and have been made available to the public on request by my Department and the Office of Electricity Regulation.**

Coal Exports

Mr. Madden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will arrange for consideration to be given to the potential for the sale and supply of United Kingdom coal to generate electricity in the Republic of Ireland and elsewhere in the European Community; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will undertake discussions with appropriate Ministers representing the Government of the Republic of Ireland regarding the sale and supply of United Kingdom coal to generate electricity in the Republic of Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar ***[holding answer 27 October 1992]:*** **Sales of coal by British Coal are a matter for the corporation. I understand that British Coal exported some 175,000 tonnes of coal to Eire in 1991-92.**

Departmental Tenders

Mr. Pendry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table setting out for the period since 9 April ***(a)*** **each tender issued by his Department for projects requiring the supply of (i) computer hardware and (ii) computer software,** ***(b)*** **a description of the services required,** ***(c)*** **the number of companies who were invited to tender,** ***(d)*** **the number of companies who submitted a bid without prior invitation by his Department,** ***(e)*** **which company was awarded the contract,** ***(f)*** **the value of each contract and** ***(g)*** **the length of period over which the contract will run.**

Mr. Eggar ***[holding answer 2[illegible] October 1992]:*** **The Department undertakes a wide range of computer projects, some of which may result in single purchases of low value off the shelf products and others requiring major procurements following EC/GATT procedures, possibly involving development of software as well as purchase of goods.**

The provision of a tabulation covering all tenders for administrative computer systems and software cannot be made available within the existing cost limits for answering parliamentary questions. However, a more limited tabulation covering tenders for purchases exceeding £20,000 is set out as follows. For reasons of commercial sensitivity contract values are not shown. Procurement procedures do not allow for bids to be considered unless in response to an invitation or EC Journal advertisement. All contracts are for supply only except where stated.

Project number	*Type of services*	*Number of companies invited to tender*	*Company awarded contract*	*Duration of contract*
1	**Hardware**	3	**Satelcom UK Ltd**	—
2	**Software**	2	**Ingres Ltd**	—
3	**Hardware and software**	3	**Computacenter Ltd**	—
4	**Hardware and software**	3	**Computacenter Ltd**	—
5	**Hardware and software**	4	**Digital Equipment Company Ltd**	—
6	**Hardware and software**	5	**ESRI (UK)**	—
7	**Hardware**	1	**Satelcom UK Ltd**	—
8	**Software**	2	**Ingres Ltd**	—
9	**Hardware**	1	**Satelcom UK Ltd**	—
10	**Software**	4	**Not yet awarded**	—
11	**Software**	9	**Cedar Data PLC**	—
12	**Hardware and maintenance**	4	**Sequent UK**	**3 years maintenance**
13	**Hardware and software**	6	**Not yet awarded**	—
14	**Hardware and software**	12	**Not yet awarded**	—
15	**Hardware**	5	**4 GL Computing Ltd**	—
16	**Hardware, software and maintenance**	3	**Digital Equipment Company Ltd**	**3 years maintenance**
17	**Development of applications software**	1	**AMP Systems Ltd**	**12 months plus 6 years maintenance**

Agencies and Trading Funds

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 19 October, ***Official Report*****, columns** ***276-77*****, if he will state the final outturn figures for 1991-92 for the agencies and trading funds responsible to his Department.**

Mr. Eggar ***[holding answer 27 October 1992]:*** **Annual reports and accounts containing full financial details for 1991-92 for the agencies for which my Department is responsible have been published and copies have been placed in the Library of the House. Some financial details are also available in the Department's appropriation accounts 1991-92—volume 4: classes IV and V—trade and industry and energy. I shall be preparing a consolidated table of their results in the next trade and industry expenditure plans report, which is due for publication in February 1993.**

Postal Services

Mr. Bowis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce legislation to clarify the application of article 13a(1)(a) of the EC sixth VAT directive to private and privatised postal services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 28 October 1992]*: It is not apparent that such legislation is necessary. If required, it would be a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

NATIONAL FINANCE

European Central Bank

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to article 30 of the protocol to the Maastricht treaty on European central banks what is the maximum sum in pounds sterling that the United Kingdom would be requested to contribute to the European central bank, under present conditions, under article 30 of the protocol to the Maastricht treaty on European central banks.

Mr. Nelson: No contribution of foreign reserve assets would be made unless the United Kingdom were to participate in stage 3 of economic and monetary union. The United Kingdom share of any initial contribution if we did participate could only be calculated nearer the time, under articles 30.1 and 29.1. This amount could also be increased subsequently under article 30.4.

Executive Bodies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to paragraph 161 of the Treasury Minute Cm 2074, what proposals he has for amending the statutes of those executive non-departmental public bodies, where the Comptroller and Auditor General does not have the primary duty of audit nor a reserve duty of regularity and propriety audit, in order to provide such rights.

Mr. Dorrell: Establishing inspection rights for the Comptroller and Auditor General in such cases need not involve the amendment of statutes. Sponsor Departments will use their best endeavours to secure such rights by agreement.

Business Expansion Scheme Lettings

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many new lettings from investments under the business expansion scheme there were in *(a)* 1990-91 and *(b)* 1991-92 in (i) the south-east and (ii) the United Kingdom; and what percentage these figures represent of (1) all privately rented property and (2) all rented property.

Mr. Dorrell: Provisional estimates for new lettings under the business expansion scheme in 1990-91 and 1991-92 are as follows. A reliable estimate of the proportion of new lettings in south-east England in 1991-92 is not available.

	Total number	*New lettings as a percentage of: all privately rented property per cent.*	*all rented property per cent.*
1990-91			
South East England	2,500	0·42	0·11
United Kingdom	5,700	0·33	0·07
1991-92			
United Kingdom	8,500	0·49	0·11

Balance of Payments

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the annual balance of payments position of each Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development country at the last available date.

Mr. Portillo: Data on OECD countries' current account balances for 1991 are in the OECD's "Economic Outlook", June 1992.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the United Kingdom's balance of payments position on manufacturing goods in each year since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: Information on the balance for manufactured goods is published in the Central Statistical Office's "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics" and is also available on the Central Statistical Office databank which may be accessed through the Library of the House.

Computer Projects

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table setting out for the period since 9 April *(a)* each tender issued by his Department for projects requiring the supply of (i) computer hardware and (ii) computer software, *(b)* a description of the services required, *(c)* the number of companies who were invited to tender, *(d)* the number of companies who submitted a bid without prior invitation by his Department, *(e)* which company was awarded the contract, *(f)* the value of each contract and *(g)* the length of period over which the contract will run.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 27 October 1992]*: The Treasury has completed three tender exercises since 9 April 1992. Some of these were started before 9 April but were awarded after that date. The table does not include tenders that were let by CCTA on Treasury's behalf or tenders let by CCTA and Chessington computer centre for their own purchases. These tenders will be part of the Office of Public Service and Science's reply to this question.

Tender subject	*Number of tenders*	*Winning company*	*Approximate value £*	*Years*
Supply of microcomputers	68	Tandon/Compstand	800,000	3
Asset Management System	2	Ground Modelling Systems	80,000	1
Sun Computer System	6	Productivity Computers	30,000	1

In all these tenders, the companies that submitted a bid were invited to tender.

Parcelforce

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how he intends to ensure that Parcelforce, when privatised, will be on an equal value-added tax footing with its competitors.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 28 October 1992]:* The various options for achieving the privatisation of Parcelforce are still under consideration. One of these considerations is the desirability of achieving greater parity of VAT treatment between competitors in the postal sector.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the value-added tax status of Parcelforce following privatisation.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer [illegible] October 1992]:* My right hon. Friend has received no direct representations on this subject, but I have received representations from the Association of International Courier and Express Services proposing that the privatised Parcelforce should be "fully registered" for VAT.

Postal Services

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had or intends to have with EC finance Ministers and the Commission on article 13 a (1) *(a)* of the EC sixth VAT directive on exemption to public postal services; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 29 October 1992]:* My right hon. Friend has had no discussions with EC Finance Ministers or the Commission about the VAT exemption for public postal services. Although the EC Commission, like the Government, is currently considering the impact of this exemption on competition within the postal sector, it is too early yet to say if and when any discussions at ministerial level will take place.

Magnetic Tape (VAT)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what rate of VAT applies to the supply of magnetic tape and related apparatus to the Royal National Institute for the Blind, the National Listening Library and other similar charities.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 28 October 1992]:* Supplies to the Royal National Institute for the Blind, the National Listening Library and other similar charities, of specially adapted magnetic tape, related apparatus, and special pre-recorded tapes for use by the blind and severely handicapped are zero-rated for VAT.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to encourage businesses to provide information on tape for use by the blind or severely handicapped by ensuring that such tapes are taxed in the same way as the supply and production of such information in printed form.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 28 October 1992]:* There is already a wide measure of VAT zero-rating relief for the purchase of specialised equipment for use by blind and severely handicapped people. In addition, supplies of pre-recorded tapes to the Royal National Institute for the Blind, the National Listening Library and other similar charities are zero-rated.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the names of public appointments that he has made, giving the period for which the appointment was made, relevant qualifications of the appointees, and what remuneration each currently receives.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The details requested are as follows:

Public appointments

Public body and Name	*Appointment expires*	*Remuneration*
Anglo-Irish Encounter		
Sir David Goodall, GCMG	Indefinite	Nil
D. M. S. Cape, CMG	Indefinite	Nil
Commonwealth Foundation		
Dr. J. B. Wood	1993	Nil
Commonwealth Institute		
Mr. Stephen Cox	1996	£45,000 pa
Mr. R. A. Fyjis-Walker	1993	£15,000 pa
Sir Mark Russell	1992	Nil
Mr. D. A. Thompson	1992	Nil
Mr. Stuart Maclure	1994	Nil
Mr. Cy Grant	1994	Nil
Mr. G. Oakes	1995	Nil
Mr. C. Shepherd	1994	Nil
Dr. Ann Robinson	1995	Nil
Miss Diane Warwick	1993	Nil
Sir Victor Garland	1993	Nil
Hon. David Douglas-Home	1993	Nil
Lady Reid	1993	Nil
Dame J. Barrow	1992	Nil
Mr. James Lemkin	1992	Nil
Diplomatic Service Appeal Boards		
Sir Derek Day	1994	Per diem expenses
Mr. Frank Trew	1995	Per diem expenses
Sir David Calcutt	1993	Per diem expenses
Sir Mark Russel	1995	Per diem expenses
Mrs. Jacqueline Dyson	1995	Per diem expenses
Government Hospitality Fund Advisory Committee for the Purchase of Wine		
Sir William Harding, KCMG CVO	1993	Nil
Major John Surtees, OBE, MC	1995	Nil
Mr. David Cossart	1994	Nil
Mr. Anthony Hanson	1994	Nil
Mr. Mark Savage	1995	Nil
Imperial War Museum		
Sir E. Jackson	1993	Nil
Mr. I. Smart	1994	Nil
Irish Pensions Appeals Tribunal		
Dr. Gregg	Indefinite	£145 per diem
Mr. R. J. Tierney	Indefinite	£151 per diem
Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission		
Sir Donald Tebbit, GCMG	Indefinite	Nil
Miss Sheila Browne, CB	1993	Nil
Prof. Sir James Ball	1993	Nil
Prof. H. T. Dickinson	1994	Nil
Sir Roger Bannister, CBE	1994	Nil
Ms. Sue MacGregor	1995	Nil
Sir Arthur Bryan	1994	Nil
Dr. K. J. R. Edwards	1993	Nil
Prof. Christine Bolt	1995	Nil
Prof. Lord Desai	1995	Nil

Public body and Name	*Appointment expires*	*Remuneration*
London University School of Oriental and Arician Studies		
Lord Wilson of Tillyorn	1997	Nil
Sightsavers		
Mr. A. R. Rushford	1997	Nil
Westminster Foundation for Democracy		
Sir James Spicer	Indefinite	Per diem expenses
Mr. George Robertson, MP	Indefinite	Per diem expenses
Sir Russell Johnston, MP	Indefinite	Per diem expenses
Mr. Tony Clarke	Indefinite	Per diem expenses
Mrs. Margaret Ewing, MP	Indefinite	Per diem expenses
Prof. Peter Frank	Indefinite	Per diem expenses
Mr. Timothy Garton-Ash	Indefinite	Per diem expenses
Lady Howe, JP	Indefinite	Per diem expenses
Mr. Gavin Laird	Indefinite	Per diem expenses
Mr. Ralph Land, OBE	Indefinite	Per diem expenses
Mr. Patrick Nicholls, MP	Indefinite	Per diem expenses
Dr. Michael Pinto-Duschinsky	Indefinite	Per diem expenses
Mr. Ian Taylor, MP	Indefinite	Per diem expenses
Miss Carol Tongue, MEP	Indefinite	Per diem expenses
Wilton Park Academic Council		
Mr. Michael Kaser	1995	Nil
Mr. John Drew	Ex-officio	Nil
Mr. John Scates	Ex-officio	Nil
Dr. Connie Martin	Ex-officio	Nil
Prof. Jack Spence	Ex-officio	Nil
Dr. Janet Morgan	1995	Nil
Mr. Bruce George, MP	1995	Nil
Mr. John Lyons, CBE	1995	Nil
Mrs. Liliana Archibald	1995	Nil
Miss Norvela Forster	1992	Nil
Mr. Robert MacLennan, MP	1992	Nil
Dr. Edwina Moreton	1992	Nil
Mr. John Pinder, OBE	1992	Nil
Mr. Peter Temple-Morris, MP	1993	Nil
Sir Julian Bullard, GCMG	1993	Nil
Ms. Brenda Dean	1994	Nil
Wilton Park Departmental Board		
Miss Valerie Le Moignan	1995	Nil
Miss Ruth Watts Davies	1995	Nil
Commonwealth Scholarship Commission		
Sir Michael Caine	1993	Nil
Dr. A. Sloman	1993	Nil
Prof. R. A. Howie	1994	Nil
Prof. B. Clayton	1993	Nil
Prof. J. G. G. Ledingham	1995	Nil
Mrs. D. L. Wadderburn	1994	Nil
Prof. S. Marks	1995	Nil
Prof. Gillian Beer	1993	Nil
Dr. C. Booth	1995	Nil
Dr. R. O. Iredale	Ex-officio	Nil
Dr. P. Parsloe	1992	Nil
Prof. A. Little	1993	Nil
Prof. D. Jennings	1993	Nil
Mr. R. Francis	Ex-officio	Nil
Prof. A. Diplock	1994	Nil
Overseas Service Pension Scheme		
J. V. Kerby	Ex-officio	Nil
D. S. Fish	Ex-officio	Nil
C. D. Stenton	Unspecified	Per diem expenses
Miss D. R. Phillips	Unspecified	Per diem expenses
D. H. Loades	Unspecified	Per diem expenses
Indian Family Pension Scheme		
D. S. Fish	Ex-officio	Nil
Maj. Gen. D. T. T. Horsford	Unspecified	Per diem expenses
Major R. J. Henderson	Unspecified	Per diem expenses
Lt. Col. P. Kemmis-Betty	Unspecified	Per diem expenses
Major R. Mottram	Unspecified	Per diem expenses
R. V. Fenton	Unspecified	Per diem expenses
J. M. Phelps	Unspecified	Per diem expenses
J. P. C. Coventry	Unspecified	Per diem expenses
G. E. D. Walker	Unspecified	Per diem expenses
Commonwealth Development Corporation		
Sir Peter E. Leslie	1995	£12,000
Sir Michael Caine	1994	£5,001-£10,000 band
Mrs. A. E. Wright, JP	1994	£1-£5,000 band
Prof. M. L. O. Faber	1994	
Mr. M. McWilliam	1992	
Mr. E. B. Waide	1992	
Prof. I. D. Carruthers	1995	
J. B. Zochonis	1995	
Crown Agents[1]		
Mr. D. H. Probert	1993	£30,000
Dr. A. I. Lenton	1993	£5,001-10,000 band
P. F. Berry	1994	£65,100[2]
Mrs. D. Miller, MBE, JP	1993	£5,000-£10,000 band
Miss K. Mortimer	1993	
Mr. A. K. Stewart-Roberts	1993	
Mr. F. Cassell, CB	1994	
Mr. J. D. Andrews	1995	
Mr. F. I. Sumner	1995	
ODA Advisory Committee on Economic and Social Research Overseas		
Mr. J. B. Wilmshurst	Ex-officio	Nil
R. Allen, MA	Ex-officio	Nil
Dr. S. Conlin	Ex-officio	Nil
Dr. R. Thomas	Ex-officio	Nil
Ms. C. Coppard	Ex-officio	Nil
Mr. A. Hall	Ex-officio	Nil
Prof. the Reverend Roland Moss	1995	Per diem expenses
Dr. C. O. N. Moser	1995	Per diem expenses
Prof. A. W. Rew	1995	Per diem expenses
Dr. F. Stewart	1992	Per diem expenses
Prof. J. F. J. Toye	1995	Per diem expenses
Dr. H. Afshar	1995	Per diem expenses
Prof. P. Blaikie	1995	Per diem expenses
Prof. K. Davey	1995	Per diem expenses
Ms. D. Elson	1995	Per diem expenses
Dr. J. Heyer	1995	Per diem expenses
Prof. N. Stern	1995	Per diem expenses

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[1] When members are appointed to this board they are also appointed to the Crown Agents Holding and Realisation Board.

[2] Excluding pension contributions.

Note: For Crown Agents and Commonwealth Development Corporation, figures are taken from 1991 published accounts.

Information on the exact period for which each appointment was made and the relevant qualifications of the appointees is not held centrally.

There are five appointments vacant across three committees.

Entry Clearance

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) when a decision is to be taken on an entry clearance application made by Noreen Akhtar, born 7 February 1974 (Ref. IMM/B1438), at the post in Islamabad;

(2) when a decision is to be taken on an entry clearance application made by Azhar Iqbal, born 1 January 1968 (Ref. IMM/93512), at the post in Islamabad.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the absence of any information about these cases, I have asked the high commission in Islamabad for a full report. I shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a substantive reply from the migration and visa correspondence unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as soon as possible.

European Parliament

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate has been made of the cost of the European Parliament not having a single seat.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Clearly the costs of the present arrangements for the European Parliament are higher than they would be if it had a single seat. We are not, however, aware of any single, official estimate.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he is making to the proposal of the hon. Member for Northampton, North for the provision of independent scrutiny of the Government's proposed leaflet on the Maastricht treaty before its publication.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. The Government's pamphlet will set out in objective fashion the benefits of Community membership, how the Community operates and the changes introduced by the Maastricht treaty.

Caribbean

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the outcome of the review of policy and management of the Caribbean dependent territories.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have reviewed our policy towards, and the management of, our business with the Caribbean dependent territories—Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Montserrat and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Our record in assisting the economic development of these territories is good, but their economies are weak. They need to attract more sound private investment, and to develop their infrastructures, so as to stand more securely on their feet. Sustained economic progress will only come through the strengthening of good government.

I have decided that we should make changes in our existing arrangements for these territories. As the Minister responsible, I will chair a ministerial board of management for the territories to bring together those Government Departments and agencies which have a part to play in the territories' affairs to improve co-ordination within Whitehall. A new secretariat for the territories will be set up in the region to co-ordinate all official funding programmes and provide on-the-spot support and advice for Governors and territory Governments.

We wish to encourage the elected Governments of the territories to work closely with us in a spirit of partnership and common enterprise. Our Governors will play a vital part in achieving that aim.

I also propose to introduce jointly agreed country policy plans for each aid-receiving territory. The Governments of the territories will have an important say in drawing up these plans, in discussions with governors and the regional secretariat. Together they will agree the priorities for development and improvements needed in the administration of the territories over a three-year period, to be reviewed annually. These plans will represent a joint public commitment by the British and dependent territory Governments to the future development and good government of the territory.

I believe that these measures will significantly strengthen our ability to assist the Caribbean dependent territories in their efforts to develop their economies and societies in an increasingly challenging environment.

Solo Greenpeace

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken to secure the release of Helena Sierakowski and the other crew members of the NV Solo Greenpeace ship arrested by Russian authorities in the Kara sea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 22 October 1992]*: The Greenpeace ship Solo was intercepted by the Russian authorities in the sea of Kara on 12 October. The ship's dinghy had allegedly entered Russian jurisdiction. The Solo was escorted into a naval bay north of Murmansk, arriving on 18 October. In accordance with Russian law, the ship was held for three days while the Russians decided whether to press charges. On 21 October, the ship was released with all crew members on board. No charges were laid.

The Netherlands consular representative was the only consular official permitted to board the vessel, which was registered in the Netherlands and captained by a Netherlands national. He did so on 18 October, and reported to the British consulate general in St. Petersburg that all crew members were safe and well.

European Economic Area

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when it is intended that the European economic area agreement signed on 2 May will come into force.

Mr. Heseltine: I have been asked to reply.

The agreement establishing the European economic area provides for it to come into force from 1 January 1993. Before it comes into force it will require ratification by all the EC and EFTA member states and the assent of the European Parliament. To this end the Government introduced a Bill to the House of Lords on 22 October. Subject to parliamentary progress, the Government intend to ratify the EEA as soon possible.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Public Bills

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many amendments have been proposed to public Bills in Committee this session by *(a)* the Government and *(b)* the Opposition; and how many have been agreed to.

Mr. Newton: This information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Payroll Giving

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many hon. Members currently take advantage of the payroll giving scheme by deduction from their Parliamentary salaries.

Mr. Newton: There are currently 41 Members who have authorised deductions from their parliamentary salaries under the payroll giving scheme.

ENVIRONMENT

Groundwater Protection

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to encourage the widening of the scope of the proposed European Community directive on groundwater protection to include management of water catchments.

Mr. Maclean: The EC ministerial declaration at the Hague in November 1991 invited the Commission to elaborate proposals to improve the management and protection of groundwater in the Community. These proposals are awaited.

EC Environment Policy

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if, during the United Kingdom's presidency of the European Community, he will seek to encourage the European Community to take environmental considerations into account in its structural funds monitoring procedure; and if he will introduce a new article into the structural fund regulations guaranteeing freedom of information;

(2) if he will make it his policy during the United Kingdom's presidency of the EC to encourage the European investment bank to integrate environmental assessment into its decision-making process;

(3) if he will make it his policy to promote the amendment of structural fund regulations so that *(a)* any actions affecting land use and resource consumption must promote conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in order to receive funding and *(b)* payments under the fund are cancelled where there is clear evidence that EC laws have been breached;

(4) if he will make it his policy during the United Kingdom's presidency of the EC to secure *(a)* the establishment of a European environmental agency *(b)* evaluation by environmental audit of each directorate general *(c)* environmental assessments of all new EC initiatives and regulations, with regulations to be accompanied by an environmental statement and *(d)* rapid progress with the proposed directive on environmental assessment for programmes and plans;

(5) if he will take steps to ensure that the European Community's fifth action programme on the environment addresses fishery issues;

(6) what efforts will be undertaken by his Department to ensure that the EC's fifth action programme on the environment *(a)* addresses trade issues and *(b)* contains clear targets and timetables, including targets for transports.

Mr. Maclean: In the EC, the fifth action programme itself, as well as the initiation and enforcement of measures such as the structural fund regulations are primarily a matter for the Commission. It has undertaken, in putting forward proposals, to assess their environmental impact and the Community as a whole will promote sustainable growth which respects the environment. As presidency, we are playing our part in giving effect to the treaty obligation that environmental protection shall be a component of the EC's other policies. We are doing this through, for example, a Council resolution on the fifth action programme which will highlight the importance of the integration of the environment into other policies and of the need for effective review; in our approach to the revision of the structural fund regulations; and through discussion of the environment in a number of other policy areas. We are also seeking the early establishment of the European environment agency. The Community as a whole is committed to greater openness.

10 Downing Street

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the cost of the refurbishment currently being carried out at No. 10 Downing street; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: There is no refurbishment currently being carried out at No. 10 Downing street. Works to improve security at Nos. 10, 11, and 12 Downing street are nearing completion. Their cost is estimated at £7·6 million.

EC Habitats Directives

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action is being undertaken to accelerate the designation of protection areas under the European Community birds directive; and if he will bring forward legislation to implement the European Community habitats directive during the United Kingdom's presidency of the European Community.

Mr. Maclean: The Department and the statutory nature conservation bodies are affording high priority to the designation of special protection areas for birds and are working together on an accelerated designation programme. As a result, 21 special protection areas have been designated in the past 12 months, bringing the United Kingdom total to 61 sites. The Government are currently considering the measures necessary to implement the habitats directive; the legal framework for which is required to be in place by June 1994.

EC Habitats Directives

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has made to the EC to secure that agro-environmental schemes utilised by the EC are interlinked with the objectives laid out in the birds and habitats directives.

Mr. Maclean: My Department and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food worked together closely in pressing for the integration of agricultural and environmental objectives within the common agricultural policy during the recent reform negotiations. The reform package includes an agri-environment measure that requires all member states to operate programmes to encourage environmentally friend farming. The preamble to the agri-environment regulation—Council regulation EEC No. 2978/92—says that measures must contribute towards certain specific environmental goals set out in Community legislation, while article 4.5 provides a link between agri-environmental aid schemes and other Community provisions.

Government Cars

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who won the tender to supply vehicles for the Government's secure car scheme fleet; how many organisations submitted tenders; and when the tender will next be advertised.

Mr. Baldry: The Government car service vehicles are generally purchased through Government call-off contracts with the vehicle manufacturers concerned. The advertising of the tenders for these contracts is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of vehicles by make and type that are currently in the Government's secure car scheme fleet.

Mr. Baldry: The GCS car fleet comprises some 180 vehicles which is made up of the following car makes and types:

Car makes and types	*Number*
Jaguars	14
Rover 800 Series	47
Ford Sierra Sapphire 2.0 litre	33
Rover Montego 2.0 litre	23
Rover 400 Series	48
Range Rover	1
Daimler Limousine	2

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for the last 12 months the number of times a vehicle from the Government's secure car scheme fleet has been used by Government Ministers for private use.

Mr. Baldry: Ministers, except where it is justified on security grounds, do not normally use GCS cars for private purposes. For private use of a non-security nature, Ministers would be charged for the use of the car by their own Department. No central record is maintained.

Renovation Grants

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the actual amount spent in each region on mandatory renovation grants in 1991-92; and what is the expected outturn by region on mandatory renovation grants for 1992-93.

Mr. Baldry: Expenditure by local authorities on mandatory grants in each standard region of England for 1991-92 under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 is shown in the table.

Mandatory grants: Final payments 1991-92
(Under Local Government and Housing Act 1989)

£ million

Region	*Renovation grants*	*All mandatory grants*[1]
North	16·3	18·4
Yorkshire and Humberside	17·1	24·6
East Midlands	18·5	22·2
East Anglia	7·7	9·5
Greater London	15·0	19·8
Rest of South East	26·6	35·4
South West	20·1	25·3
West Midlands	25·5	31·7
North West	37·9	44·8
England	184·6	231·6

Source: As reported by local authorities on the housing statistics return P1D.

Note:

[1] Total of mandatory renovation, Houses in Multiple Occupation, common parts and disabled facilities grants.

Information about mandatory grants paid under the previous system, under the Housing Act 1985, is not available.

Estimates from this year's HIP2 forms, which include local authorities' expected outturns for 1992-93, have not yet been finalised.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what funds were allocated in each region for mandatory renovation grants in the years 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Baldry: Resources are not allocated to local authorities in each region solely for expenditure on mandatory renovation grants. Each authority receives an overall allowance for specified capital grant, as part of its annual housing investment programme—HIP—allocation, to support private sector renewal work, including house renovation grants. This covers the Exchequer contribution towards the expenditure—75 per cent. in the case of grants. Allocations of specified capital grant to local authorities in each region for 1991-92 and 1992-93 are set out in the HIP allocation tables for local authorities in England for those years, copies of which are available in the Library.

Housing Associations

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to representations from the National Federation of Housing Associations about the retention of the £2 billion grant for housing associations; and if he will make it his policy that no cuts in expenditure will be made to the budget for the west midlands.

Mr. Baldry: The chairwoman of the National Federation of Housing Associations wrote to my right hon. Friends, the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, on 7 September.

In replying on their behalf, my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning said that the Government could not comment on the discussions that are currently taking place about future public expenditure.

Next year, as this, resources will be allocated to the Housing Corporation's regions in accordance with the housing needs indicator.

Drinking Water

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, for each water company supplying water to domestic customers in England, the supply zones where one or more drinking water inspectorate sample in 1991 exceeded 10 micrograms of lead per litre of water; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The information is not readily available in the form requested and could be made available only at disproportionate cost. However I draw the hon. Member's attention to "Drinking Water 1991", the second annual report by the chief drinking water inspector, and to the document, "Nitrate, Pesticides and Lead, 1989 and 1990", published by the drinking water inspectorate in July 1992. These reports contain considerable information about lead concentration in water supplies. I regret that the hon. Member has misinterpreted information from these documents in his report "Poison in the Pipeline?"

Local Government Finance

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to respond to representations concerning local government finance made to him by Sefton borough council on 13 August.

Mr. Robin Squire: I replied to Sefton borough council's letter on 21 October.

Radioactive Waste (Aquatic Life)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research his Department has undertaken in order to evaluate effects of low-level radioactive waste on aquatic life.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 28 October 1992]:* This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Somalia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 21 October, *Official Report*, column *320*, where in Somalia the 19,100 tonnes of British food aid and 105,000 tonnes of EC food aid were delivered; to whom the aid was delivered and on what dates; and what were the commodities.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Information on United Kingdom food aid for Somalia is given in the table. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman with details of EC food aid to Somalia when we receive the relevant information, which we have requested from the European Commission.

United Kingdom aid to Somalia

Tonnes	*Agency*	*Town-area*	*Period of distribution*
(Rice) 12,000		Kisimayo region	30 January to 28 February 1992
		Liboi	2 May to 29 May 1992
(Lentils) 1,250	ICRC	Mogadishu region	6 March to 5 June 1992
(vegetable oil) 850		Merca	10 March to 5 June 1992
14,100			
(wheat) 5,000	WFP	Berbera	Late August 1992
19,100			

DEFENCE

Royal Navy Supertanker

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if it is planned to replace or install a command and control system in the Royal Navy supertanker Fort Victoria in 1996; what arrangement for command and control will endure during the intervening period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The ship is designed to be fitted with a command system at a later date. The exact nature of this will depend upon the finally approved equipment fit. The ship will be able to operate its existing weapons in the interim period.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Royal Navy supertanker Fort Victoria was designed to be equipped with the Sea Wolf defence system; if this will now be installed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The ship has been designed to be fitted with the vertical launch Sea Wolf system at a later date, if necessary. The operational requirement to fit the system is currently under review, but no decision has yet been taken.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what protection and computerised control systems will have been installed when the Royal Navy supertanker Fort Victoria goes into service.

Mr. Aitken: The machinery control and surveillance system for the computerised control of the ship and its machinery will be fully operational when the ship enters full service with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. The ship is designed to be fitted with a command system at a later date.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the original budget for the Royal Navy supertanker Fort Victoria; what is the current budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The original contract for Fort Victoria was valued at £127·2 million at 1985-86 prices. A final settlement has not yet been reached; our estimate of the cost is commercially confidential.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the original expected delivery date of the Royal Navy supertanker Fort Victoria; what it is now; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The original in-service date for Fort Victoria was 1990. Because of problems experienced by the contractor, it is now forecast that the ship will be fully accepted into service in 1993.

Diversification Agency

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now make it his policy to evaluate the benefits of establishing a defence diversification agency to protect jobs in companies currently involved in military equipment and armament production.

Mr. Aitken: No.

European Fighter Aircraft

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the amounts of money which have been and are estimated to be spent on *(a)* developing and *(b)* producing the European fighter aircraft for each financial year, by each country involved in the project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken: It is not my Department's policy to give details of estimated project expenditure, derived from the long-term costing, which is designed for internal planning purposes. Expenditure by the United Kingdom each year since the beginning of the European fighter aircraft project is as follows:

Financial year	*Expenditure £ million revalued to 1992 economic conditions*
1984-85	2
1985-86	3
1986-87	30
1987-88	68
1988-89	127
1989-90	151
1990-91	208
1991-92	366
[1]1992-93	162

[1] The figures for 1992-93 is expenditure to date.

We do not maintain records of the progress of expenditure by our partners. The total cost to the four partner nations of developing EFA is estimated at about £8·5 billion, of which the United Kingdom share is about £2·7 billion.

Sea Training

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will indicate the number of *(a)* Royal Navy ships and *(b)* NATO ships that undertake a period of sea training at Portland on an annual basis; and what level of income is generated by these arrangements.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In 1991-92, a total of 43 Royal Navy, 17 Royal Fleet Auxiliary, and 12 ships from NATO nations undertook a period of sea training at Portland. Over this period cash receipts for training to foreign navies amounted to some £0·1 million. Some nations provide services in support of sea training rather than cash.

Defence Commitments

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the estimated attributable costs of defence commitments for 1992-93 for *(a)* strategic nuclear deterrent, *(b)* defence of home base including Northern Ireland, *(c)* defence of central fronts, including (i) British Army of the Rhine, (ii) RAF Germany and (iii) Berlin and *(d)* maritime operations including (1) eastern Atlantic, (2) channel, (3) amphibious capability, (4) Allied Command Europe mobile force, (5) United Kingdom mobile force, (6) Belize, (7) Cyprus, (8) Falkland Islands, (9) Gibraltar, (10) Hong Kong and (11) operational HQ costs.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is no longer possible to provide the information in the form requested. Table 1.3 of "Defence Statistics 1992" shows a breakdown of the defence budget by programme for the years up to 1991-92, but in order to reflect the way in which defence expenditure is now controlled under the new management strategy, this table has been superseded by table 1.3A showing how the defence budget is distributed among top and high level budget holders.

Naval Bases

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all those who are being consulted about the review of United Kingdom naval bases, including both national and international bodies, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There is no single review of United Kingdom naval bases. A number of measures potentially affecting particular bases are being examined as part of continuing work to match support to a smaller front line. Other Government Departments are consulted as necessary. The trades unions will be consulted on any proposals, and local authorities will have the opportunity to give their views so that all relevant factors can be considered before final decisions are announced.

The provision of support facilities is a national responsibility. NATO authorities are, however, aware of our strategy for ensuring cost-effective support of the Royal Navy.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disability

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will amend the therapeutic earnings rule to enable people undertaking a specified and limited amount of voluntary work to continue obtaining invalidity benefit or severe disablement allowance.

Mr. Scott: People receiving invalidity benefit or severe disablement allowance may undertake work, including work for a voluntary organisation, if it is likely to benefit their health; and as long as their earnings do not exceed £40·50 a week. We have no plans to amend these conditions.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what arrangements he intends to implement to reduce the number of occasions on which responses are unavailable on an application for disabled living allowance because the file has been lost.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. Alun Michael, dated 28 October 1992.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about what arrangements he intends to implement to reduce the number of occasions on which responses are unavailable on an application for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) because the file has been lost.

I regret that there have been occasions when telephone enquiries could not be answered because the file has been unavailable but I am sure you will appreciate that when vast numbers of cases are being handled it may sometimes be difficult to locate a particular file. When files have been temporarily mislaid, a special search is instigated as soon as possible so that the enquiry can be answered.

The measures we have introduced to clear the backlog of DLA claims have already reduced the number of outstanding cases and location of files should be more straightforward in future. There will always be a steady volume of outstanding work, for instance where further enquiries have to be made, but with the clearance of the backlog this will reduce to manageable proportions.

I hope you will find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration his Department has given to implementing the recommendations of the 1990 report of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, entitled "Hard Labour".

Mr. Scott: The Department considered this report in full and replied in detail to the national association explaining how existing and planned procedures addressed the report's concerns.

Income Support Claimants

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether an unemployed person claiming income support may participate in a part-time education or training course; what conditions they have to satisfy; whether people leaving employment training or employment action can immediately take advantage of the 21-hour rule concession; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Unemployed income support recipients can participate in part-time education or training courses provided that the supervised study element of the course does not exceed 21 hours a week and they are prepared to give up the course if a suitable job vacancy becomes available. In order to take advantage of this people have to be aged 18 or older and satisfy the following conditions:

(a) they must have been unemployed and in receipt of unemployment or sickness benefit or income support because of unemployment or sickness, or participating in Youth Training for three months, or at least three months in the previous six if they have been in temporary employment between spells of unemployment, after the terminal date for Child Benefit and before they start the course; and

(b) the course is defined as part-time and does not consist of more than 21 hours a week (based solely on periods of supervised study and course requirements); and

(c) the course is an education course run by a college, school or equivalent recognised institution or is a training course analogous to one for which a training allowance is payable; and

(d) they are prepared to leave the course immediately a suitable vacancy becomes available; and

(e) they continue to actively seek work while attending the course.

People who leave the employment training or employment action programme have to satisfy the qualifying conditions before they can take advantage of the 21-hour rule concession.

Unemployment

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what level of income support payments were made to unemployed families in each year since 1990-91.

Mr. Burt: Expenditure on income support to unemployed families for the years 1990-91 is shown in the table. Statistics for 1992 are not yet available.

	Annual expenditure £ million	*Average weekly payment £*
1990	899	77·94
1991	1,319	84·04

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the administrative cost for benefit payments to unemployed families, for each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 28 October.

Benefits Expenditure

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total benefit payment expenditure, for each social security benefit, for each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Scott: The information is published in the Government expenditure plans for the relevant years, copies of which are in the Library.

Industrial Injury

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many miners, having been diagnosed as suffering from bronchitis and emphysema, have been refused compensation for industrial injury; and how many of them would be entitled to claim if it was recognised as an industrial injury.

Mr. Scott: Since bronchitis and emphysema are not in the list of diseases prescribed for industrial injuries disablement benefit—IIDB. No information on diagnoses is held. The number of potential recipients of IIDB is not known.

Maxwell Pensions

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the latest position over what moneys have been paid out to former employees, now retired, of Maxwell companies; and what further sums are to be paid out.

Miss. Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 26 October, at column *492*. Further grants totalling £393,000 are being made from the £2·5 million emergency funding to assist with payment of November pensions. In addition, state additional pensions are being paid and will continue to be paid to members of Maxwell pension schemes who have been brought back into the state earnings-related pension scheme. The Maxwell Pensioners Trust, which is chaired by Sir John Cuckney, has so far made payments of some £17,000 to 47 ex-employees of Maxwell companies who are not members of Maxwell-linked pension schemes. The trustees are considering how best to provide this particularly vulnerable group with long-term financial security.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Fair Employment

13. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to meet the chairman of the Fair Employment Commission to discuss progress on fair employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: As the responsible Minister, I meet the chairman of the Fair Employment Commission every six months to review the implementation of fair employment legislation and the work of the Commission. I last met the chairman on 22 June 1992; the date of the next meeting has not yet been fixed.

Education Costs

14. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated cost per capita for education of a child in *(a)* secondary and *(b)* primary schools in the Province; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: In the 1990-91 financial year £1,179 was the cost of a primary school child and £1,852 for a secondary school child.

Constitutional Talks

15. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent discussions he has had regarding new political initiatives from Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

19. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current talks.

20. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current circumstances surrounding the all-party talks on Northern Ireland.

27. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in resolving the United Kingdom dimension of the constitutional problems of Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I refer hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Members for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick).

Small Firms

16. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has further to boost the small firms sector.

Mr. Atkins: LEDU, the small business agency, is currenty implementing its strategy for the period up to 1994 and has introduced recently a number of new programmes which are aimed at improving competitiveness and growth in the small firms sector. In December it will launch a further major initiative in the business growth and development programme.

Special Needs Education

17. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many pupils in Northern Ireland schools have been statemented.

Mr. Hanley: At January 1992, 6,365 children were receiving special educational provision in Northern Ireland. Normally I would expect such children to have statements of special education needs. However, a recent report in Great Britain claimed that numbers of children attending special schools in some local education authorities did not have statements. I have therefore asked the five education and library boards for detailed information on the position in Northern Ireland and I will write to the hon. Member when this information has been received.

Cross-border Security

18. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on cross-border security.

Mr. Mates: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend).

Job Creation

21. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many new jobs need to be created in 1992-93 in Northern Ireland to provide jobs for school leavers in 1993.

Mr. Atkins: About 9,000 school leavers are expected to enter the labour market in 1993. Some of these will take newly created jobs and some will find jobs vacated by others, for example people retiring, changing employment, or moving from Northern Ireland. Those 16 and 17-year-olds who do not find a job immediately are guaranteed a place on the youth training programme.

Abortion

22. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent representations he has received about abortion in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: In the past six months 30 representations have been received from individuals and bodies, of which four were in favour of the extension of the Abortion Act 1967 to Northern Ireland and 26 were opposed to any reform of the existing laws on abortion in the Province.

Drugs Prevention Week

23. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what initiatives he plans for the Province in support of European Drugs Prevention Week between 16 and 22 November.

Mr. Hanley: The range of initiatives planned for Northern Ireland in support of European Drugs Prevention Week include an open forum on solvent misuse to be held on 16 November followed by a conference entitled Young People and Drugs on 17 and 18 November. The opportunity will also be taken during the week to publish a booklet for parents on solvent misuse, to issue fresh guidance to doctors on the clinical management of drug misuse and to announce the findings of a youth health survey on the attitudes amongst young people to drugs.

Belfast Airport

24. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on future plans for Belfast international airport.

Mr. Atkins: On 20 November 1991, my predecessor announced the Government's plans to sell the publicly-owned company which operates Belfast international airport. Legislation is being prepared to give effect to the privatisation and a draft order will be published in May 1993. The timetable envisages the order being made in the spring of 1994 with the sale of the company taking place during the summer of that year.

Security

25. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Since my predecessor answered a similar question on 26 February 1992 there have been 36 deaths as a result of the security situation in Northern Ireland, including 30 civilians, four soldiers, and two RUC officers.

I am sure the whole House will join me in condemning the continuing terrorist crimes. The Government will continue to give their full support to the police and armed forces in upholding the rule of law, striving to protect the community from terrorism, and bringing those who commit terrorist crimes to justice. Up to the end of September this year some 310 people have been charged with terrorist related offences, including 83 with murder or attempted murder.

Tourism

26. **Mr. Nicholls:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what growth in the level of tourism he projects for 1992-93.

Mr. Atkins: Firm estimates for 1992 are not yet available but the Northern Ireland tourist board estimates, at this stage, an increase for 1992 of 3 per cent. in total visitors above the record 1991 level of 1·186 million.

Transport Links

28. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had with the EC Commission on surface transport links between Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Mr. Atkins: None.

Security

29. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the cost of security operations to counter terrorism in Northern Ireland during the current financial year.

Mr. Mates: The cost of security operations to counter terrorism in Northern Ireland could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Undergraduates

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many new undergraduates have been enrolled at *(a)* the Queen's university of Belfast and *(b)* the university of Ulster for the academic year 1992-93; how many of these at each of the two universities come from (1) Northern Ireland, (2) Great Britain, (3) Republic of Ireland and (4) other European countries.

Mr. Hanley: Final undergraduate enrolment figures are not yet available for 1992-93. However, it is estimated that:

(a) 2,670 new full-time and 240 new part-time undergraduates have enrolled at Queen's university, Belfast and

(b) 4,092 new full-time and 1,085 new part-time undergraduates have enrolled at the university of Ulster.

The country of domicile for new full-time and part-time undergraduates at each of the universities is estimated as follows:

Country of domicile	*Full-time undergraduates New entrants*	*Part-time undergraduates New entrants*
(a) Queen's University Belfast		
(1) Northern Ireland	2,343	229
(2) Great Britain	76	1
(3) Republic of Ireland	170	2
(4) Other European countries	15	8
(b) University of Ulster		
(1) Northern Ireland	3,215	1,024
(2) Great Britain	126	0
(3) Republic of Ireland	508	61
(4) Other European countries	212	0

Terrorism

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has investigated recent allegations of army involvement with terrorists in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mates: The inquiry conducted by Mr. John Stevens into allegations of collusion between loyalist paramilitaries and members of the security forces concluded that, while such collusion had occurred, it was neither widespread nor institutionalised. The Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland asked for a report from the Chief Constable of the RUC following the "Panorama" programme on 8 June, and that this is awaited.

Belfast Institute

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many administrative staff were employed in the former Belfast colleges; how many are employed in the new merged institute; and, of these three how many are former teaching staff who were channelled into administrative duties.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 27 October 1992]:* The number of administrative staff in the former Belfast colleges was 130. The number in the new institute is 128. No former teachers have been channelled into administration posts in the institute.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the *(a)* time allowance and *(b)* travelling expenses of staff travelling between the different sites of the Belfast Institute.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 27 October 1992]:* This information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the principal differences between the duties informed by the three vice-principals of the former separate colleges and the duties carried out by the deputy directors of the Belfast Institute.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 27 October 1992]:* The senior management structure of the new institute is very different to that at each of the three former colleges. Deputy directors have wider ranging responsibilities, encompassing the duties of the five former vice-principals as well as other duties associated with such a large organisation. The three deputy director posts cover, respectively, corporate services, learning programmes and cross-curricular support.

Computer Projects

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table setting out for the period since 9 April *(a)* each tender issued by his Department for projects requiring the supply of (i) computer hardware and (ii) computer software, *(b)* a description of the services required, *(c)* the number of companies who were invited to tender, *(d)* the number of companies who submitted a bid without prior invitation by his Department, *(e)* which company was awarded the contract, *(f)* the value of each contract and *(g)* the length of period over which the contract will run.

Mr. Mates *[holding answer 27 October 1992]:* The business development science (BDS) of the Department of Finance and Personnel, acting as agent for the Northern Ireland Government Departments, purchased the bulk of the information technology equipment acquired by those Departments during the period in question. Details of these projects are given in table 1. In addition some Departments purchased equipment either directly or via the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency in Norwich. Details of these projects are given in table 2. A number of low value items have been excluded since they could be produced in the requested format only at disproportionate cost.

No companies were permitted to submit bids without prior invitation.

All hardware contracts awarded contained a 12 month on-site warranty provision and consequently no service contracts were entered into.

Table 1: Contracts awarded directly by departments

Department	*Project*	*Suppliers invited to tender*	*Awarded to*	*Contract period*	*Cost £'000*
Environment	Replacement equipment in Ordnance Survey	2	Sys Scan UK	2 months	128
Agriculture	Office Automation System	8	Sybex	7 months	350
Health and Social Services	Mainframe Backing Store	1	ICL	3 weeks	11
	Provision of Epic Licences	1	Planning Sciences	2 weeks	8
	Provision of PCs and Server	3	PC Consultants	3 weeks	14
	Specialist Software	1	Sybex	3 weeks	44
	Provision of PCs and Printer	4	PC Consultants	2 weeks	16
	Provision of Windows and Database Software	3	Software Paradise	2 weeks	11
Education	Change Control for McDonnell Douglas Software	1	McDonnell Douglas	3 weeks	28
	Provision of an Asset Register System	6	Britannia Software	6 weeks	6
	Rates Collection Agency Specialised Software Requirement	1	Occam	6 weeks	100
	Ordnance Survey Accounting System	6	Micro[illegible]	6 weeks	23
	Ordnance Survey—Word Processing System	9	Digital Equipment Company	1 week	11
	Water Services CAD Project	8	Photonic	3 months	188

Department	*Project*	*Suppliers invited to tender*	*Awarded to*	*Contract period*	*Cost £'000*
Finance and Personnel	Stormont Castle—Upgrade of Microvax	4	Digital Equipment Company	7 weeks	27
	Provision of Notebook PC's for social Research interviews	11	Crown Computers	2 weeks	46
	Valuation and Lands Office—Registry System	7	Digital Equipment Company	8 weeks	9
Health and Social Services	Replacement Word Processing Equipment	9	Advec	2 weeks	63
	Cabling—Royston House	3	ICL	4 weeks	10
	Estate Services Directorate—Networking	3	ICL	10 weeks	21

Note: The contract period is defined at the time from the award of the contract to the date of acceptance of the equipment by the customer.

Table 2:
Contracts awarded by Department of Finance and personnel on behalf of the Northern Ireland Government Departments
Period 9 April 1992 to 23 October 1992

Department	*Project*	*Suppliers invited to tender*	*Awarded to*	*Contract period*	*Cost £'000*
Economic Development	Replacement equipment-Typing Service—DED HQ	5	Data General	3 weeks	38
	Supply of Terminal Servers	10	ICS	2 weeks	30
	Supply of SCO Unix Systems	9	Siemens Nixdorf	3 weeks	26
	Call off contract for PC's and Terminals	24	ICL and Siemens Nixdorf	12 months	[1]43
Environment	Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency—Data Capture	7	ICL	2 weeks	12
	Supply of Unix Development Machine to the Information Systems Unit	9	Data General	4 weeks	61
	Works Design Project	7	AMT	6 weeks	41
	Highway Modelling Project	6	AMT	4 weeks	49
	Supply of Equipment to DOE Training Branch	8	Siemens Nixdorf	2 weeks	12

[1] To date after 3 months.

SCOTLAND

Solvent Abuse

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females have been referred to the reporter to the children's panel in each local authority in Scotland under the Solvent Abuse (Scotland) Act 1983 in each year since the Act came into effect.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The table details the number of solvent abuse referrals to reporters by local authority area.

A breakdown by sex is only available for the years 1988 to 1991. The number of children referred is unavailable and the referrals may include some children referred more than once in the year.

Number of solvent abuse referrals to reporters by local authority area (1983-1991)

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*		*1989*		*1990*		*1991*	
	Total	*Total*	*Total*	*Total*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Berwickshire	4	—	—	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ettrick and Lauderdale	—	—	1	6	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	2	—
Roxburgh	—	2	—	11	2	—	2	—	—	—	—	4	1
Tweeddale	—	1	—	1	—	1	—	3	—	—	—	—	—
Borders total	4	3	1	20	3	1	2	3	—	1	—	6	1
Clackmannan	1	8	8	12	2	5	—	1	1	3	—	—	—
Falkirk	—	18	31	11	11	33	—	2	—	5	5	5	1
Stirling	3	4	8	4	1	5	—	4	—	1	—	6	—
Central total	4	30	47	27	14	13	—	7	1	9	5	11	1

	1983 Total	1984 Total	1985 Total	1986 Total	1987 Total	1988 Male	1988 Female	1989 Male	1989 Female	1990 Male	1990 Female	1991 Male	1991 Female
Annandale and Eskdale	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Nithsdale	—	6	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—
Stewartry	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wigtown	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway total	—	6	3	1	2	—	—	1	—	1	—	2	—
Dunfermline	6	5	11	8	3	3	—	—	—	4	—	2	1
Kirkcaldy	2	18	14	9	7	3	1	2	—	3	—	1	2
North East Fife	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fife total	8	24	26	17	10	6	1	2	—	7	—	3	3
Aberdeen (City of)	12	8	32	12	4	3	2	2	3	12	—	8	4
Banff and Buchan	5	14	31	15	3	—	—	3	—	11	5	9	4
Gordon	3	2	—	1	1	—	1	—	—	2	—	2	1
Kincardine and Deeside	—	—	—	—	2	3	1	—	—	4	1	—	1
Moray	—	—	—	2	2	5	2	—	—	11	—	14	2
Grampian total	20	24	63	30	12	11	6	5	3	40	6	33	12
Badenoch and Strathspey	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Caithness	—	—	1	3	9	—	—	1	1	—	—	7	—
Inverness	9	18	8	—	1	6	—	5	—	1	—	3	—
Lochaber	1	—	—	4	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Nairn	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ross and Cromarty	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	5	—	—	5	—
Skye and Lochalsh	—	—	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Sutherland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Highland total	12	21	14	7	13	7	1	7	6	1	—	16	1
East Lothian	2	4	11	8	2	5	2	5	1	1	2	—	—
Edinburgh (City of)	22	59	12	10	9	9	—	5	—	4	3	7	2
Midlothian	4	3	1	5	4	5	3	8	2	7	2	3	—
West Lothian	—	3	5	6	2	2	—	4	—	7	1	6	3
Lothian total	28	69	29	29	17	21	5	22	3	19	8	16	5
Orkney total	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland total	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—
Argyll and Bute	—	4	2	1	1	2	—	1	1	—	—	12	2
Bearsden and Milngavie	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—
Clydebank	—	1	—	10	10	3	—	2	3	5	2	3	—
Clydesdale	—	—	—	—	8	3	—	6	—	7	1	7	1
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	—	1	3	—	8	1	2	3	—	1	—	—	—
Cumnock and Doon Valley	—	5	10	7	3	—	—	5	—	—	—	4	6
Cunninghame	—	21	18	4	20	15	4	11	—	10	6	8	3
Dumbarton	—	2	5	2	17	—	2	4	—	1	—	5	—
East Kilbride	—	2	5	1	1	—	—	1	—	3	—	1	1
Eastwood	—	3	—	1	2	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Glasgow (City of)	10	258	206	227	170	87	9	70	3	56	21	55	12
Hamilton	—	26	6	10	3	5	3	19	1	1	2	7	—
Inverclyde	5	43	45	22	23	11	3	11	1	2	1	1	2
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	—	14	8	36	3	3	—	—	3	1	—	8	3
Kyle and Carrick	—	6	6	10	4	1	—	13	1	5	3	8	3
Monklands	—	5	6	5	3	3	—	—	—	2	—	5	—
Motherwell	—	9	5	9	8	13	1	3	1	11	1	16	3
Renfrew	2	55	60	46	45	11	1	10	2	29	10	18	—
Strathkelvin	—	3	1	—	—	—	—	2	2	1	4	4	2
Strathclyde total	17	458	386	391	329	158	25	161	18	138	51	162	38
Angus	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	3	—	5	—	3	1
Dundee (City of)	9	34	20	6	9	1	1	11	6	4	7	15	1
Perth and Kinross	—	3	7	3	—	1	—	6	—	10	—	—	—
Tayside total	9	37	31	9	9	2	1	20	6	19	7	18	2
Western Isles total	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many young males and females and adult males and females have died in each local authority in Scotland in each year since 1982 as a result of abusing solvents.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The figures requested are given in the tables.

Deaths from solvent abuse, by age, sex and Region and Health Board Area, Scotland, 1982-91[1]

Aged under 16

Area	*Sex*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Scotland	M	3	4	3	12	3	4	8	6	3	6
	F	1	—	1	2	4	1	—	1	2	4
Borders Region & HBA	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Central Region (Forth Valley HBA)	M	—	2	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dumfries & Galloway Region & HBA	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fife Region & HBA	M	—	1	—	1	—	1	1	—	1	—
	F	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Grampian Region & HBA	M	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	2	—	—
	F	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Highland Region & HBA	M	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lothian Region & HBA	M	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	2
	F	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
Strathclyde Region	M	1	1	3	6	3	3	4	4	2	3
	F	1	—	—	—	3	1	—	—	2	2
Tayside Region & HBA	M	1	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Orkney Islands Area & HBA	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland Islands Area & HBA	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Western Isles Island Area & HBA	M	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Strathclyde Health Areas											
Argyll & Clyde HBA	M	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Ayrshire & Arran HBA	M	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	1	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Greater Glasgow HBA	M	—	—	3	2	2	1	—	1	1	2
	F	1	—	—	—	2	1	—	—	—	2
Lanarkshire HBA	M	1	1	—	3	—	1	3	1	1	1
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—

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[1] Includes those deaths coded to the WHO International Classification of Diseases (9th Revision) codes 304.6, E860-E869, E891 and E951 and where the death was due to vapour inhalation.

Aged 16-17

Area	*Sex*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Scotland	M	4	3	—	4	3	7	2	5	4	3
	F	—	—	1	1	—	1	1	—	—	—
Borders Region & HBA	M	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Central Region (Forth Valley HBA)	M	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	1	1
	F	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Dumfries & Galloway Region & HBA	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fife Region & HBA	M	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grampian Region & HBA	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	F	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Highland Region & HBA	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lothian Region & HBA	M	—	1	—	1	1	—	1	1	2	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Strathclyde Region	M	2	2	—	—	2	3	1	2	1	1
	F	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	—	—	—
Tayside Region & HBA	M	—	—	—	2	—	2	—	1	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Orkney Islands Area & HBA	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland Islands Area & HBA	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Western Isles Island Area & HBA	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Strathclyde Health Areas											
Argyll & Clyde HBA	M	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	1	—	—

Area	Sex	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ayrshire & Arran HBA	M	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Greater Glasgow HBA	M	2	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—
	F	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—
Lanarkshire HBA	M	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	1
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—

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[1] Includes those deaths coded to the WHO International Classification of Diseases (9th Revision) codes 304.6, E860-E869, E891 and E951 and where the death was due to vapour inhalation.

Aged 18 and over

Area	Sex	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Scotland	M	6	3	4	5	3	4	9	1	1	6
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Borders Region & HBA	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Central Region (Forth Valley HBA)	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dumfries & Galloway Region & HBA	M	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fife Region & HBA	M	—	1	1	—	—	1	—	1	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grampian Region & HBA	M	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Highland Region & HBA	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lothian Region & HBA	M	2	1	—	3	—	1	1	—	—	2
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Strathclyde Region	M	2	1	1	1	2	1	5	—	1	1
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tayside Region & HBA	M	1	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	2
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Orkney Islands Area & HBA	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland Islands Area & HBA	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Western Isles Island Area & HBA	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Strathclyde Health Areas											
Argyle & Clyde HBA	M	—	1	1	—	1	—	1	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ayrshire & Arran HBA	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Greater Glasgow HBA	M	2	—	—	1	1	1	1	—	—	1
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lanarkshire HBA	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	1	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

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[1] Includes those deaths coded to the WHO International Classification of Diseases (9th Revision) codes 304.6, E860-E869, E891 and E951 and where the death was due to vapour inhalation.

All ages

Area	Sex	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Scotland	M	13	10	7	21	9	15	19	12	8	15
	F	1	—	2	3	4	2	2	1	2	4
Borders Region & HBA	M	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Area	*Sex*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Central Region (Forth Valley HBA)	M	—	2	—	2	—	—	1	1	1	3
	F	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Dumfries & Galloway Region & HBA	M	1	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	1
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fife Region & HBA	M	1	2	1	1	—	3	1	1	1	—
	F	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Grampian Region & HBA	M	—	—	2	1	—	—	—	2	—	—
	F	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Highland Region & HBA	M	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lothian Region & HBA	M	2	2	—	6	1	1	2	1	2	4
	F	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	1	—	1
Strathclyde Region	M	5	4	4	7	7	7	10	6	4	5
	F	1	—	—	1	3	2	1	—	2	2
Tayside Region & HBA	M	2	—	—	3	1	2	2	1	—	2
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Orkney Islands Area & HBA	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland Islands Area & HBA	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Western Isles Island Area & HBA	M	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Strathclyde Health Areas											
Argyll & Clyde HBA	M	—	1	1	—	2	2	3	2	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Ayrshire & Arran HBA	M	—	—	—	1	2	—	1	1	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Greater Glasgow HBA	M	4	1	3	3	3	3	1	1	2	3
	F	1	—	—	1	2	2	—	—	—	2
Lanarkshire HBA	M	1	2	—	3	—	2	5	2	2	2
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—

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[1] **Includes those deaths coded to the WHO International Classification of Diseases (9th Revision) codes 304.6, E860-E869, E891 and E951 and where the death was due to vapour inhalation.**

Tertiary Education

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans there are to extend the principles of the citizens charter to cover tertiary education.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Market research has been commissioned to sample the views of students, potential students and people in the wider community in respect of further and higher education in Scotland. The results will inform our ideas on the contents of a charter covering further and higher education.

Post-graduate Awards

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many post-graduate students received an award from the Scottish Education Department for study outwith Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In Session 1992-93 to date, the Scottish Office Education Department has offered 324 awards under the postgraduate students' allowances scheme and 67 awards under the Scottish studentship scheme to students studying outwith Scotland.

Scottish Universities

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Scots are attending Scottish universities; how many students attending Scottish universities are from other parts of the United Kingdom; and if he will list the regions that all students attending Scottish universities are from.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested on students attending the eight traditional Scottish universities in the academic year 1991-92 is given in the table.

Students attending Scottish universities in academic year 1991-92

Domicile of student	*Full-time students* *Post-graduate*	*Under-graduate*	*Total*	*Part-time students* *Post-graduate*	*Under-graduate*	*Total*	*GRAND TOTAL*
TOTAL (all domiciles)	8,539	49,989	58,528	5,549	1,299	6,848	65,376
SCOTLAND	3,388	31,741	35,129	4,162	1,140	5,302	40,431
Borders	54	599	653	44	7	51	704
Central	129	1,783	1,912	180	159	339	2,251
Dumfries and Galloway	52	752	804	40	11	51	855
Fife	189	2,028	2,217	227	49	276	2,493
Grampian	349	3,099	3,448	409	231	640	4,088
Highland	70	1,180	1,250	58	16	74	1,324
Lothian	711	4,978	5,689	1,023	119	1,142	6,831
Strathclyde	1,522	14,271	15,793	1,879	471	2,350	18,143
Tayside	271	2,627	2,898	286	71	357	3,255
Islands	41	423	464	16	5	21	485
Not known	—	1	1	—	1	1	2
OTHER UK	1,848	13,425	15,273	568	46	614	15,887
England	1,649	11,200	12,849	534	39	573	13,422
Wales	71	295	366	13	3	16	382
Northern Ireland	128	1,930	2,058	21	4	25	2,083
OVERSEAS	3,303	4,823	8,126	819	113	932	9,058

Woodlands

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total woodland area planted in Great Britain in 1991; and what were the comparable figures for the previous 20 years.

Sir Hector Monro: The total area of woodland planted or grant-aided by the Forestry Commission in the year to 31 March 1992, including woodland replanted after felling, was 33,237 hectares. Of this, 11,259 hectares were planted by the Commission and 21,978 by the private sector. This total is close to the average of the previous 20 years, as shown in the table.

Total area of woodlands planted or grant-aided by the Forestry Commission

(hectares)

Year to 31 March	*Forestry Commission*	*Private sector*	*Total*
1972	26,235	24,010	50,245
1973	23,158	23,774	46,932
1974	21,723	22,790	44,513
1975	23,155	21,347	44,502
1976	20,511	12,241	32,752
1977	18,703	9,156	27,859
1978	17,192	8,299	25,491
1979	15,409	10,799	26,208
1980	21,499	11,167	32,666
1981	16,648	11,399	28,047
1982	16,488	15,912	32,400
1983	14,684	15,629	30,313
1984	15,135	19,740	34,875
1985	11,021	19,095	30,116
1986	11,630	23,358	34,988
1987	13,380	23,618	36,998
1988	13,129	28,675	41,804
1989	12,580	29,942	42,522
1990	11,946	21,531	33,477
1991	11,137	22,542	33,679
20-year average	16,768	18,751	35,519

Arts and Crafts

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what plans he has to provide further assistance to graduate artist craftsmen and women in Scotland;

(2) what policy the Government have for the promotion of the applied arts in Scotland; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will consider making funds available to organisations which could provide advice for young graduate artist craftsmen and women in Scotland;

(4) if he will list schemes available to assist graduate artist craftsmen and women in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 26 October 1992]*: Through Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise we have established Made in Scotland Ltd. which provides marketing support for the crafts sector. In addition, graduate artist craftsmen and women may qualify for any of the business support, training or employment measures available through the enterprise bodies. Details and advice on these can be obtained from local enterprise companies.

These arrangements are kept under review, but we have no plans to extend support in this area meantime.

Water and Sewerage

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the capital benefit allocation by the Government for water and sewerage services to each of the regional and island councils in every year since 1979, in cash and in constant 1991-92 prices.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 21 October 1992]*: Water and sewerage services form the major part of authorities' water and sewerage programmes which also include flood prevention and coast protection. Allocations to regional and islands councils for their capital programmes in cash and adjusted to constant 1991-92 prices are given in the tables.

Capital Allocations for Scottish Water and Sewerage Programmes

£ thousand

Year	Borders Cash Prices	Borders 1991-92 Prices	Central Cash Prices	Central 1991-92 Prices	Dumfries & Galloway Cash Prices	Dumfries & Galloway 1991-92 Prices
1979-80	1,600	2,893	3,000	5,425	1,700	3,074
1980-81	1,500	2,129	3,800	5,394	1,900	2,697
1981-82	1,700	2,313	4,900	6,668	2,200	2,994
1982-83	1,800	2,475	5,000	6,875	2,500	3,438
1983-84	1,800	2,501	5,200	7,225	2,300	3,196
1984-85	1,800	2,475	4,400	6,050	2,500	3,438
1985-86	2,000	2,640	4,630	6,112	3,160	4,171
1986-87	2,200	2,792	5,000	6,346	3,250	4,125
1987-88	2,300	2,785	4,800	5,813	3,400	4,117
1988-89	2,500	2,946	4,600	5,421	4,000	4,714
1989-90	2,700	2,874	5,000	5,323	4,800	5,110
1990-91	3,500	3,726	7,200	7,665	5,500	5,855
1991-92	4,500	4,500	7,800	7,800	7,000	7,000

Capital Allocations for Scottish Water and Sewerage Programmes

£ thousand

Year	Fife Cash Prices	Fife 1991-92 Prices	Grampian Cash Prices	Grampian 1991-92 Prices	Highland Cash Prices	Highland 1991-92 Prices
1979-80	4,500	8,137	13,000	23,507	3,400	6,148
1980-81	5,000	7,097	10,700	15,187	4,200	5,961
1981-82	7,000	9,526	15,000	20,412	5,300	7,212
1982-83	6,800	9,350	14,000	19,250	5,000	6,875
1983-84	6,100	8,476	15,500	21,537	4,900	6,808
1984-85	5,400	7,425	15,900	21,863	4,500	6,188
1985-86	5,500	7,260	17,100	22,572	4,700	6,204
1986-87	6,200	7,869	17,800	22,592	5,250	6,663
1987-88	7,300	8,840	17,300	20,950	5,700	6,903
1988-89	7,700	9,075	15,300	18,032	6,800	8,014
1989-90	8,800	9,368	15,500	16,500	7,500	7,984
1990-91	9,500	10,113	16,000	17,032	8,500	9,048
1991-92	11,500	11,500	18,500	18,500	10,000	10,000

Capital allocations for Scottish water and sewerage programmes

£ thousand

Year	Lothian Cash prices	Lothian 1991-92 prices	Strathclyde Cash prices	Strathclyde 1991-92 prices	Tayside Cash prices	Tayside 1991-92 prices
1979-80	17,500	31,644	27,500	49,726	5,700	10,307
1980-81	17,500	24,839	31,000	44,000	6,000	8,516
1981-82	15,300	20,821	33,000	44,907	7,800	10,614
1982-83	13,200	18,150	29,500	40,563	6,900	9,488
1983-84	14,500	20,147	31,000	43,074	7,800	10,838
1984-85	11,000	15,125	29,500	40,563	9,000	12,375
1985-86	11,860	15,655	30,000	39,600	10,300	13,596
1986-87	12,400	15,738	33,400	42,392	9,850	12,502
1987-88	12,900	15,622	35,200	42,628	10-100	12,231
1988-89	13,200	15,557	37,600	44,314	10,400	12,257
1989-90	15,800	16,819	45,000	47,903	11,000	11,710
1990-91	17,000	18,097	53,000	56,419	12,000	12,774
1991-92	19,500	19,500	65,000	65,000	14,800	14,800

Capital allocations for Scottish water and sewerage programmes

£ thousand

Year	Orkney Cash prices	Orkney 1991-92 prices	Shetland Cash prices	Shetland 1991-92 prices	Western Isles Cash prices	Western Isles 1991-92 prices
1979-80	600	1,085	2,100	3,797	700	1,266
1980-81	700	994	1,900	2,697	700	994
1981-82	800	1,089	1,100	1,497	1,200	1,633
1982-83	1,000	1,375	1,000	1,375	700	963
1983-84	1,000	1,389	900	1,251	900	1,251
1984-85	700	963	700	963	900	1,238
1985-86	520	686	700	924	1,050	1,386
1986-87	880	1,117	860	1,092	1,240	1,574
1987-88	1,000	1,211	800	969	1,200	1,453
1988-89	1,000	1,179	600	707	1,300	1,532
1989-90	1,100	1,171	900	958	1,400	1,490
1990-91	1,300	1,384	[1]—	—	1,700	1,810
1991-92	1,500	1,500	[1]—	—	2,100	2,100

[1] Shetland funds all programme from revenue.

Capital allocations for Scottish water and sewerage programmes

£ thousand

Year	Central Scotland Water Development Board Cash prices	Central Scotland Water Development Board 1991-92 prices	All Scotland Allocations Cash prices	All Scotland Allocations 1991-92 prices
1979-80	900	1,627	82,200	148,636
1980-81	1,600	2,271	86,500	122,774
1981-82	1,600	2,177	96,900	131,864
1982-83	1,000	1,375	88,400	121,550
1983-84	1,400	1,945	93,300	129,638
1984-85	1,800	2,475	88,100	121,138
1985-86	1,380	1,822	92,900	122,628
1986-87	1,350	1,713	99,680	126,517
1987-88	2,000	2,422	104,000	125,495
1988-89	2,000	2,357	107,000	126,107
1989-90	2,000	2,129	121,500	129,339
1990-91	2,300	2,448	137,500	146,371
1991-92	2,400	2,400	164,600	164,600

Notes:

CSWDB provides bulk supplies to authorities in Central Scotland.
1991-92 prices established using the Non-Roads Public Works Output Price Index.

White Fish

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will state the quantities of white fish withdrawn from the market under intervention, subsequent to the letter from Lord Strathclyde to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North on 27 January, which have gone for human consumption *(a)* abroad and *(b)* via charities;

(2) if he will state the quantities of white fish withdrawn from the market under intervention, in each of the past 12 months and at what cost;

(3) if he will state the quantities of white fish withdrawn from the market under intervention in each of the past 12 months, by port of landing.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 28 October 1992]*: Since 27 January, none of the whitefish withdrawn from the market under intervention has gone for human consumption either abroad or to charities. Full settlement to the producers organisations of compensation payable for fish withdrawn from the market under the European Community's price support system takes place after the fishing year in question, though advance payments are made. Information on the quantities of whitefish withdrawn from the market in Scotland under intervention in each of the 12 months to end July 1992, being the most recent 12-month period for which information is available, on the ports of landing and on the intervention sums paid, is set out in the tables.

Compensation paid to producers organisations in each of the 12 months to end July 1992 following the withdrawal of whitefish from the market in Scotland

	£
1991	
August	57,400
September	43,200
October	23,600
November	43,600
December	133,300
1992	
January	164,300
February	62,900
March	13,300
April	12,900
May	68,700
June	166,600
July	51,200

Withdrawals of Whitefish (tonnes) by port of landing during the period 1 August 1991—31 July 1992

Port	*August 1991*	*September 1991*	*October 1991*	*November 1991*	*December 1991*	*January 1992*	*February 1992*	*March 1992*	*April 1992*	*May 1992*	*June 1992*	*July 1992*
Eyemouth	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Pittenween	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Arbroath	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Aberdeen	16	9	5	17	28	31	20	—	4	5	25	97
Peterhead	64	147	106	135	57	497	151	—	2	89	277	493
Fraserburgh	—	83	30	25	233	179	120	1	—	18	3	73
Macduff	2	—	—	—	—	10	—	—	—	4	1	4
Buckie	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	4	2
Lossiemouth	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wick	5	4	—	5	19	5	—	—	—	19	8	10
Shetland	5	11	5	3	16	1	24	—	—	1	2	13
Kinlochbervie	2	—	1	2	19	19	—	—	—	23	44	58
Stornoway	2	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	1	—
Ollapool	—	—	—	—	6	12	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mallaig	—	—	4	—	7	—	—	—	—	5	6	—
Oban	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Campbeltown	—	—	—	—	8	8	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ayr	2	—	12	6	27	4	—	—	—	—	1	2
Lochinver	10	—	6	—	17	3	—	—	2	7	27	29

EMPLOYMENT

Wages Councils

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps her Department is currently making to publicise the wages councils system.

Mr. McLoughlin: Every employer identified as being covered by a wages council is sent notices of wages council minimum rates, which must by law be posted where employees can see them. The Department also publishes a booklet "Wages Councils and Statutory Pay Rates", which explains workers' rights to statutory minimum pay.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is her estimate of the number of new jobs that will be created following abolition of wages councils; and if she will publish the evidence on which this estimate is based.

Mr. McLoughlin: There is a good deal of evidence about the link between pay and jobs at national level both in the United Kingdom and in other countries. This link has also been detected in several studies specifically about the wages council industries. We do not have the information to quantify the number of jobs that are inhibited by statutory minimum rates; and attempts to do so are not likely to be successful.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current adult male unemployment rate for each of *(a)* Arsenal, *(b)* Glyndon, *(c)* Burrage, *(d)* St. Mary's and *(e)* Nightingale wards in Woolwich; how many of these feature in the worst 10 wards in Greater London; and what specific action she has taken or proposes to take to reduce these figures.

Mr. McLoughlin: The smallest areas for which unemployment rates are available are self-contained labour markets known as travel-to-work areas, two of which cover the whole of Greater London.

The Department operates a wide range of measures, including employment and training programmes, which are available throughout Greater London as elsewhere. These include:

Nearly 1 million places will be available on our employment and training programmes in 1992-93, an increase of 100,000 on this year. This is in addition to the usual advice and assistance to which all unemployed people are entitled.

Job Search Seminars, directed at executives and managers, give advice on the best way to search out and apply for jobs are available throughout London.

Specialist Restart courses to help people with literacy, numeracy and language difficulties, ex-offenders, the homeless and people with drug or alcohol problems.

From April to September 1992, 307,568 people were interviewed through Restart and other adviser interviews in Greater London and 47,184 people had positive outcomes.

One hundred and eighty-eight Jobclubs in Greater London offering advice and practical help to people to search for and apply for jobs. From April to September 1992, 19,610 people joined Jobclubs and 10,345 had positive outcomes.

Job Interview Guarantee (JIG) Teams working to equip long-term unemployed people with the confidence and knowledge to succeed at a guaranteed interview. From April to September 1992, 18,441 people have been helped in Greater London by the JIG teams.

Job Preparation Courses which are similar to Restart courses but with employer participation are held throughout the area. Companies taking part include London Buses, British Rail and the Ambulance Service.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which ward has the highest rate of adult male unemployment in Greater London.

Mr. McLoughlin: The smallest areas for which unemployment rates are available are self-contained labour markets known as travel-to-work areas, two of which cover the whole of Greater London.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if she will show for each region and for Great Britain as a whole, for the latest available period, separately for male and female, for each ethnic group, and for those with a disability or health problem, the number and proportion of employment training trainees who three months after leaving were *(a)* in a full-time job with their work experience employer, *(b)* in a full-time job with another employer, *(c)* employed in their own business, *(d)* in a part-time job, *(e)* in voluntary work, *(f)* on another Government training programme, *(g)* on a full-time education or training course, *(h)* unemployed and claiming benefit, *(i)* unemployed and not claiming benefit, *(j)* in a job club and *(k)* doing something else;

(2) if she will show for each region and for Great Britain as a whole, separately for male and female, for the latest available period, the wages earned by employment training trainees who three months after leaving were *(a)* in a full-time job, *(b)* in a part-time job and *(c)* self-employed;

(3) for each region, and for Great Britain as a whole, and for each quarter since 1989, how many employment training trainees had employment status;

(4) for each region and for Great Britain as a whole, separately for male and female, if she will give the best information she has showing how many people have entered employment action and how many were participating in employment action in each month since January; if she will give as much detailed information she has about the destination of those participants who have left employment action; and if she will make a statement;

(5) how many training credits have been issued in the pilot areas to young people; how many young people have taken them up; what other information she has on the take up of credits in those areas; and if she will make a statement;

(6) if she will publish tables showing the latest available results from the employment training leavers survey for each training and enterprise council area in England and Wales and each local enterprise company area in Scotland broken down to show the number and proportion of employment training leavers who were *(a)* in a full-time job with their work experience employer, *(b)* in a full-time job with another employer, *(c)* employed in their own business, *(d)* in a part-time job, *(e)* in voluntary work, *(f)* on another Government training programme, *(g)* on a full-time education or training course, *(h)* unemployed and claiming benefit, *(i)* unemployed and not claiming benefit, *(j)* in a job club and *(k)* doing something else;

(7) if she will give the best information she has about the number of people who were participating in *(a)* employment training *(b)* the enterprise allowance scheme and *(c)* youth training in each month since January; and if she will make a statement;

(8) for each region, and for Great Britain as a whole, if she will give the latest results of the youth training scheme/youth training leavers survey, to show for male and female trainees and for each separate ethnic group and for those with a disability those in full-time work with the same employer, those in full-time work with a different employer, those in part-time work, those on a full-time course at a college/training centre, those on another youth training scheme, those doing something else, those who were unemployed, those who had obtained a vocational qualification, the number of questionnaires issued, the usable percentage response rate and the percentage of respondents who were early leavers;

(9) if she will publish tables showing the latest available results from the employment training leavers survey for each training and enterprise council area in England and Wales and each local enterprise company area in Scotland broken down to show the number and proportion of employment training leavers who had *(a)* been entered for a vocational qualification, *(b)* obtained a vocational qualification, *(c)* had failed to obtain a vocational qualification and *(d)* were awaiting their results; and how many of the employment training leavers in the relevant period had completed the training agreed in their initial action plan;

(10) for Great Britain and for each region, by male and female, at the most recent date, and at one year previously, how many youth training trainees had contracts of employment;

(11) if she will show for each region and for Great Britain as a whole, for the latest available period, separately for male and female, for each ethnic group, and for those with a disability or health problem, the number and proportion of employment training leavers who had *(a)* been entered for a vocational qualification, *(b)* obtained a vocational qualification, *(c)* had failed to obtain a vocational qualification and *(d)* were awaiting their results; and how many of the employment training leavers in the relevant period had completed the training agreed in their initial action plan;

(12) if she will give for each region, and for Great Britain as a whole, the latest available information she has on the characteristics of those who have entered employment training showing *(a)* the number of entrants covered, *(b)* whether male of female, *(c)* the duration of unemployment, *(d)* ethnic origin and *(e)* whether they have a disability;

(13) for each region, and for Great Britain as a whole, and for each year since 1989, what has been the average length of participation that trainees have spent on employment training;

(14) if she will publish tables showing the latest available results from the youth training leavers survey for each training enterprise council area in England and Wales and each local enterprise company area in Scotland broken down to show the number and proportion of youth training leavers who were *(a)* in full-time work with the same employer, *(b)* in full work with a different employer, *(c)* in part-time work, *(d)* on a full-time course at a college or training centre, *(e)* on another youth training scheme, *(f)* doing something else, *(g)* who were unemployed, *(h)* who had obtained a vocational qualification, *(i)* the number of questionnaires issued, *(j)* the usable percentage response rate and *(k)* the percentage of respondents who were early leavers.

Mr. McLoughlin: As the information is contained in a considerable number of tables, I will write to the hon. Member.

Enterprise Allowance

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give for each region and for Great Britain as a whole for each year since April 1990 *(a)* the number of people who were receiving the enterprise allowance scheme and *(b)* the amount of expenditure on the enterprise allowance scheme; what is the latest information she has on the survival of those businesses; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information, by region and for Great Britain, on the numbers of people receiving the enterprise allowance at the end of the 1990-91 and 1991-92 financial years and the 1992-93 year to date is shown on table 1. Enterprise allowance scheme expenditure for 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 to date is shown on table 2.

There is no information on the survival of the businesses supported in this period.

Table 1

Number of people receiving an enterprise allowance

Region	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	[1]*1992-93*
London	6,494	4,611	[3]2,385
South East	6,142	3,269	3,959
South West	4,642	3,991	3,546
West Midlands	5,025	4,173	4,471
East Midlands	5,653	4,281	[3]4,544
Yorkshire and Humberside	5,658	4,085	[3]4,836
North West	8,816	6,805	6,054
Northern	3,257	2,258	2,139
England	45,687	33,473	31,934
Wales	3,636	2,756	[5]2,619
England and Wales	49,323	36,229	34,553
Scotland	5,277	[2,4]4,400	[4]4,254
Great Britain	54,600	40,629	38,807

Notes:

1990-91—"old" National EAS delivered by ED Area Offices.

1991-92—TEC delivered EAS, England and Wales, lec delivered in Scotland reporting to Scottish Office.

1992-93—TEC delivered, England and Wales. Welsh TECs reporting to Welsh Office. Scotland as 1991-92.

[1] At mid September.

[2] Estimated.

[3] Understated due to incomplete TEC returns—considerably so in London.

[4] *Source:* Scottish Office.

[5] *Source:* Welsh Office.

Table 2

Enterprise allowance scheme: expenditure

£ million

Region	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	[1]*1992-93*
London	n/a	12·7	3·3
South East	n/a	11·4	2·2
South West	n/a	9·6	3·3
West Midlands	n/a	9·9	3·3
East Midlands	n/a	10·6	3·8
Yorkshire and Humberside	n/a	11·2	4·0
North West	n/a	16·4	5·7
Northern	n/a	6·1	1·7
England	n/a	87·9	27·3
Wales	n/a	7·1	[3]2·2
England and Wales	n/a	95·0	29·5
Scotland	n/a	[2]10·2	[2]3·9
Great Britain	133·0	105·2	33·4

Notes:

1990-91—"old" National EAS delivered by ED Area Offices.

1991-92—TEC delivered EAS, England and Wales, lec delivered in Scotland reporting to Scottish Office.

1992-93—TEC delivered, England and Wales. Welsh TECs reporting to Welsh Office. Scotland as 1991-92.

[1] At mid September.

[2] Source: Scottish Office.

[3] Source: Welsh Office.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were receiving the enterprise allowance scheme in each London training and enterprise council in each quarter since they became operational; what was the expenditure on the enterprise allowance scheme in the areas covered by each London training and enterprise council in 1991-92 and the budgets agreed for enterprise allowance scheme with each London training and enterprise council in 1992-93; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The statistical and financial information requested is given in the table.

Two sets of figures are given for the operating year 1991-92. One reflects total expenditure on business start-ups for the year. It includes expenditure by the Training Agency area offices, which ran the enterprise allowance scheme prior to the London training and enterprise councils commencing operation. The second shows expenditure by the training and enterprise councils alone, of whom all except one became operational during that year.

The London training and enterprise councils have built on the success of the national enterprise allowance scheme and increasingly tailored their provision in response to local need. Research has consistently shown that those small businesses with access to appropriate advice and training are more likely to remain in business beyond their first year of operation. The London training and enterprise councils therefore, in common with training and enterprise councils in other parts of the country, have developed their own integrated packages which include training and business counselling.

Enterprise Allowance scheme

London region

Enterprise Allowance scheme participants at end of quarter	*AZTEC*	*CENTEC*	*CILNTEC*	*LETEC*	*NLTEC*	*NWLTEC*	*SOLOTEC*	*STTEC*	*WLTEC*	*Total*
6 January 1991	502	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	502
31 March 1991	429	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	429
23 June 1991	394	—	—	798	—	—	526	1,263	—	2,981
15 September 1991	212	—	—	793			483	1,309	445	3,242
5 January 1992	385	936	637	586	612	255	462	972	361	5,206
29 March 1992	367	637	621	513	580	259	450	820	356	4,611
21 June 1992	433	276	528	569	437	147	523	631	323	3,867

Enterprise Allowance scheme participants at end of quarter	*AZTEC*	*CENTEC*	*CILNTEC*	*LETEC*	*NLTEC*	*NWLTEC*	*SOLOTEC*	*STTEC*	*WLTEC*	*Total*
13 September 1992	490	106	460	617	331	191	600	572	309	3,756
EAS expenditure 1991-92 (incl. AOs)[1]	764,260	2,020,200	1,501,887	1,441,200	1,457,548	577.486	1,046,240	2,167,180	929,200	11,913,201
EAS expenditure 1991-92 (TECs only)	764,260	969,160	649,440	1,441,200	709,640	291,900	1,046,240	1,794,260	535,760	8,201,860
EAS budget 1992-93	707,690	978,540	1,073,386	820,550	991,920	426,080	1,110,775	1,447,240	625,260	8,101,441

[1] Includes expenditure by AOs in TEC areas before TECs became operational.

Employment Service Courses

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether unemployed claimants offered a place at a Restart or other counselling interview have to participate in employment training or employment action, or any of the other programmes provided through the Employment Service, apart from Restart courses, after two years unemployment; if they take up a place on any of these programmes whether they can leave at any time without incurring a benefit penalty; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. G. Johnson to Ms. Clare Short, dated 29 October 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, it is the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the Agency's Chief Executive to answer parliamentary questions about relevant operational matters. In his absence, I am replying to your question to the Secretary of State for Employment about participation in Employment Department, Employment Training programmes by people who have been unemployed for two years or more.

It may help if I explain that the purpose of Employment Service advisory interviews is for clients to discuss their individual situation and circumstances with one of our client advisers. The aim is to reach an agreement on an appropriate course of action which, if followed, will offer the best chances of finding work. There is no compulsion on people to attend any of the employment and training programmes, including ET/EA, which the adviser may offer.

The only exception to this is the requirement for people who have been unemployed for two years or more to attend a Restart Course if they refuse all other offers of help.

Our advisers would not encourage clients to attend programmes which are not suitable for their individual needs. Indeed, the basis of our advisory interviews is that the client and their adviser should reach an agreement on a suitable course of action for returning to work. However, all unemployed people must show that they are capable of, available for and actively seeking work. Attendance at an employment or training programme is one way in which our clients can show that they are meeting these conditions.

There is also no benefit penalty if someone who has accepted a place on a programme decides to leave it. However, everyone who agrees to attend an employment or training programme and fails to start, or starts on a programme and fails to complete it, is asked to attend a follow up interview with a Client Adviser.

This is to check that the client is continuing to meet the conditions for receipt of benefit and to discuss the reasons for their non-attendance on, or failure to complete the programme.

The adviser will then agree with the client a further, suitable course of action which, if followed, will offer them the best chances of finding work.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Youth Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will publish for Great Britain and for each standard region the monthly reports of supply and demand for youth training places which have been sent to her since July 1992; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is not available in the form requested.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by region, and for Great Britain as a whole, and shown separately for male and female, how many 16 and 17-year-olds were in receipt of extended child benefit and how many were in receipt of bridging allowance for each month since June 1992; how many young people in each region and in Great Britain exhausted their entitlement to youth training bridging allowance; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. G. Johnson to Ms. Clare Short, dated 29 October 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, it is the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the Agency's Chief Executive to answer Parliamentary Questions about relevant operational matters. In his absence, I am replying to your question to the Secretary of State for Employment about how many 16 and 17-year-olds in Great Britain as a whole and by region, and shown separately for males and females, were in receipt of extended child benefit, how many were in receipt of bridging allowance, for each month since June 1992 and how many in each region and in Great Britain exhausted their entitlement to bridging allowance.

The information you have requested is provided in the attached tables. The period of extended child benefit for 1992 summer school leavers begins in September, which explains the rise in numbers between August and September. Unfortunately, a breakdown of the figures by sex and region is not available.

Terminations of bridging allowance may occur for a number of reasons, for example, a young person may no longer qualify for bridging allowance if they find a Youth Training place or a job; their eight week entitlement is exhausted; or if they are sick.

The figures that are collected each month show only the total number of terminations of bridging allowance in that period. There is no further breakdown of the figures to give particular reasons as to why the claims to bridging allowance have ceased.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Numbers in receipt of bridging allowance—by ES region
June-September 1992

	Northern	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*East Midlands*	*London and South East*	*South West*	*Wales*	*West Midlands*	*North West*	*Scotland*	*Total*
June 1992	667	932	1,015	2,099	625	464	1,080	1,570	1,635	10,087
July 1992	713	946	1,009	2,218	690	454	1,144	1,559	1,560	10,293
August 1992	609	1,015	1,070	2,432	793	515	1,222	1,483	1,325	10,464
September 1992	527	908	932	2,048	670	471	994	1,384	1,187	9,157
Numbers of males and females in receipt of bridging allowance—by ES region										
June 1992										
Male	404	606	634	1,342	416	310	698	1,031	1,033	6,474
Female	263	326	381	757	209	154	382	539	602	3,613
July 1992										
Male	484	599	624	1,423	432	308	726	978	971	6,545
Female	229	347	385	795	258	146	418	581	589	3,748
August 1992										
Male	410	649	671	1,527	515	371	765	938	810	6,656
Female	199	366	399	905	278	144	457	545	515	3,808
September 1992										
Male	342	586	599	1,311	445	343	630	894	750	5,900
Female	185	322	333	773	225	128	364	490	437	3,257

Numbers in receipt of extended Child Benefit
June 1992—September 1992

Month	*Weekly average per month*
June	4,856
July	5,195
August	Nil
September	24,941
October	26,522

NB: The figure for October does not include week commencing 26 October 1992.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the numbers of accidents in the youth training scheme, including fatal, major and minor, for the latest available three-month period; and how many YTS placements were closed or not accepted in that period and in the three preceding months.

Mr. McLoughlin: The following table gives the YT accident figures.

Quarter	*Fatal*	*Major*	*Minor*
April-June 1992	1	66	395

Notes:

(a) Employment Department figures for trainees have been compiled on a similar basis to those prepared by the Health and Safety Executive for employed persons. However, the Employment Department's figures include a number of accidents to trainees in educational establishments, and road traffic accidents, which would not have been reportable to the Health and Safety Executive had the individuals been employed.

(b) Major injuries are classified according to the severity criteria laid down in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations 1985. These regulations, which came into force on 1 April 1986, reclassified fractured wrists and ankles as major injuries. These were not classed as major injuries in the previous regulations, the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980 (NADOR).

Separate figures for closures and rejections of YT placements are no longer kept centrally.

Employment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for Great Britain, for each region and for each training and enterprise council or local enterprise company, what is her best estimate of the number of employment training trainees who *(a)* are lone parents and *(b)* have entered the scheme under the lone parent eligibility route; how many are receiving child care allowances; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: This information is not held centrally. TECs and LECs are required to deliver programmes that meet the needs of all their client groups. It is for the TECs and LECs to determine which trainee groups, such as lone parents, they support with the costs of childcare.

Restart

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, for each region and for Great Britain as a whole, how many people have attended a Restart interview since 1 April 1991; and what were the results of those interviews broken down between those who *(a)* started work, *(b)* began training under employment training, *(c)* started a job club, *(d)* started a Restart course and *(e)* attended an enterprise allowance awareness day.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. G. Johnson to Ms. Clare Short, dated 29 October 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, it is the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the Agency's Chief Executive to answer Parliamentary Questions about relevant operational matters. In his absence, I am replying to your question to the Secretary of State for Employment about how many people have attended a Restart Interview since 1 April 1991; and what were the results of those interviews.

The information you asked for is given in the attached annex. As you will appreciate, these figures reflect only the

direct results of Restart. We do not know how many people subsequently take up a job or a place on an employment or training programme as a result of the guidance given to them at their interview. It is through these indirect results of the help which advisers give clients in reviewing their options for returning to work that Restart has its effect.

An indication of the scale of that effect is provided by the report "The Restart Effect" which was recently published by the independent Policy Studies Institute. It is based on an analysis of the largest survey of unemployed people in the UK since 1980. This showed conclusively that the programme had a major effect in reducing the time it takes people to leave unemployment, to get a job and to enter Employment Training, particularly for those people who were at a disadvantage within the labour market.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Outcomes of Restart Interviews
April to December 1991

Region	*Interviews*	*Job placings*	*ET*[1]	*Jobclub*	*Restart course*	*EAS*
Northern	97,159	591	4,780	4,429	10,195	226
Yorkshire and Humberside	128,485	794	5,750	4,507	11,266	395
East Midlands and Eastern	122,162	1,777	4,270	5,579	6,641	459
London and South East	354,648	5,195	10,863	18,898	13,818	1,675
South West	81,877	827	3,282	4,198	4,330	542
Office for Wales	72,705	1,091	4,047	3,909	4,735	320
West Midlands	135,376	1,130	6,027	6,095	10,230	485
North West	222,734	1,767	6,411	10,553	20,181	653
Office for Scotland	155,130	1,943	7,236	8,036	15,656	483
Great Britain	1,370,276	15,115	52,666	66,204	97,052	5,238

[1] The figure for the total number of people starting Employment Training relates to ES generated starts only.

Outcomes of Restart interviews
April 1991 to August 1992

Region	*Interviews*	*Job placings*	*ET*	*Jobclub*	*Restart courses*	*EAS*
Northern	193,082	1,136	8,970	8,867	15,623	344
Yorkshire and Humberside	251,321	1,879	11,678	9,116	18,015	834
East Midlands and Eastern	263,285	3,814	8,799	12,593	12,026	958
London and South East	827,892	12,970	23,066	43,963	29,342	3,587
South West	181,090	1,801	7,498	9,013	8,156	1,064
Office for Wales	146,335	2,494	7,401	7,676	8,513	591
West Midlands	287,667	2,789	11,767	12,737	18,463	966
North West	460,506	4,153	13,017	21,018	31,943	1,320
Office for Scotland	310,200	4,481	13,192	15,056	23,423	907
Great Britain	2,921,378	35,517	105,388	140,039	165,504	10,571

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for each region and for Great Britain as a whole how many unemployed people have been referred to Restart courses by employment service counsellors since January 1991; how many of them were unemployed for over two years; how many attended and completed the course; what were the outcomes of the participants; how many had benefit penalties imposed for not attending or failing to complete their attendance at the Restart course; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. G. Johnson to Ms. Clare Short, dated 29 October 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, it is the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the Agency's Chief Executive to answer Parliamentary Questions about relevant operational matters. In his absence, I am replying to your question to the Secretary of State for Employment about Restart Courses.

As you will know from previous correspondence with Mike Fogden, Restart Courses are short courses aimed at helping people who are having the most difficulty returning to work. They are not an alternative to regular job search or other employment or training programmes. Essentially they provide people with the opportunity to explore all the options open to them and give them confidence to take the next step back to work.

Since December 1990 people who have been unemployed for 2 years or more who at their Restart interview refuse or fail to take up a place on an Employment Department employment or training programme are asked to attend a Restart Course.

As your question has raised a number of specific points, I am setting out the information you have asked for in the two tables attached—one deals with all Restart Course attenders, the other just those covered by the requirement to attend. As explained in the previous answer, we collect at a Regional level the number of people who are referred to the course who are also unemployed for 2 years or more. We have however not felt it necessary to keep similar figures for all those referred. The Benefits Agency make the decision on whether an individual's benefit should be reduced for failure to attend or complete the course. Their figures are compiled by their Districts which have different boundaries from those of our Regions. To avoid confusion, I have given the national figure only.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Travel-to-interview Scheme

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if expenses for second interviews are paid under the travel-to-interview scheme;

(2) how many people have claimed help under the travel-to-interview scheme since its inception; what is the cost of the scheme; what proportion of job applicants receive help; what proportion of claims are refused; and what proportion of claims are withdrawn;

(3) if she will amend regulations to permit backdated claims for interview expenses under the travel-to-interview scheme, where claimants are unable to notify the job centre in advance.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. G. Johnson to Mr. John Battle, dated 28 October 1992:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, it is the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the Agency's Chief Executive to answer Parliamentary Questions about relevant operational matters. In his absence, I am replying to your questions about the Travel to Interview Scheme (TIS).

It may help if I explain the background to the scheme. It was introduced in 1986 to help with travel costs for unemployed people to attend job interviews beyond daily travelling distance of their home area, thus widening the applicants' jobsearch, improving their chances of obtaining work and encouraging labour mobility. During 1991-92 the scheme helped 31,000 people at a cost of £933,000. A few basic conditions must be met before assistance can be granted, to ensure that the limited funds available are concentrated on those unemployed people to most need.

You have asked if TIS helps with assistance for second interviews. Whilst we realise it would be popular with jobseekers if help was available through TIS to cover the cost of repeat interviews, it could in practice be very costly. It could, for example, lead to the available funds having to be concentrated on a smaller number of people. We therefore limit the assistance to one interview per job. Where a selection process is a lengthy one we have to rely on the employer being sensitive to the costs likely to fall on the applicant and offer help towards them.

You also ask for the regulations to be amended to allow backdated claims. We normally expect applications for help to be made in advance as we wish to target the limited assistance available on those people who needed this incentive to apply for jobs they would not otherwise consider. However we recognise that on occasions there is insufficient time between arranging and attending an interview and in such cases we would always consider an application if it were made as soon as possible after the interview.

The scheme is currently under review and many of the eligibility conditions are being looked at to see if within the limited resources there are ways of helping more people.

Unfortunately we do not keep records of the number of applications withdrawn. However the attached chart provides the rest of the information you asked for.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administrative Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Travel to interview scheme
Numbers assisted by year/cost

Date	Number of applications	Number helped		Number rejected		Cost	Average cost
		Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	£	£
1986-87	28,938	21,765	75	7,173	25	[1]500,000	22·97
1987-88	45,7[illegible]5	34,136	75	11,649	25	946,000	27·72
1988-89	41,11[illegible]	32,833	80	8,823	20	920,000	28·02
1989-90	32,953	25,736	78	7,217	22	682,000	26·50
1990-91	29,178	22,112	76	7,066	24	500,000	22·61
1991-92	41,676	31,004	74	10,672	26	933,000	30·10

[1] Estimated cost.

Manufacturing Employment

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of the work force was engaged in manufacturing in each Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development country in 1979 and at present.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available information is as follows.

Civilian employment in manufacturing as a percentage of total workforce

	1979	1990
Australia	19	14
Austria	29	26
Belgium	23	19
Canada	18	15
Denmark	22	18
Finland	25	20
France	24	19
Germany	32	29
Great Britain[2]	28	19
Greece[1]	29	18
Iceland[1]	24	19
Ireland	19	17
Italy	24	20
Japan	24	24
Luxembourg	27	20
Netherlands	21	17
New Zealand	23	16
Norway	20	14
Portugal	23	24
Spain	23	18
Sweden	24	21
Switzerland	32	25
Turkey	10	13
United States	21	17

Source: OECD, except Great Britain (Employment Department).

[1] Latest data available is for 1989.

[2] Civilian employment in manufacturing is calculated as the sum of employees and self-employed.

Note: 1990 is the latest year for which comparable date are available.

HEALTH

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average response time for ambulances responding to emergency calls in the Greater London area; what assessment she has made of whether ambulances are reaching emergency cases quickly enough; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The table details the latest figures held centrally on the performance of the accident and emergency service provided by the London ambulance service.

Patient Transport Services 1990-91
Quality of service for London Ambulance Service
Response Times

	Number
Total number of emergency calls	456,695
Number where response within 7 minutes	50,390
Percentage of calls where response within 7 minutes	11·0
Number where response within 14 minutes	336,734
Percentage of calls where response within 14 minutes	73·7

Source: KA34 DH Statistics Division 2B 1992

The response time of an ambulance is the time taken from an emergency call being received to the arrival of a fully equipped vehicle at the patient's location.

As these figures illustrate, a significant proportion of accident and emergency ambulances from the London ambulance service are failing to meet the performance standards set out in the patients charter. I have discussed with the London ambulance service its plans for raising its performance including the full implementation of the computer aided dispatch system and new staff rosters and I, together with South West Thames regional health authority, which is responsible for the service, will monitor progress over the coming months.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to improve the performance of the London ambulance service; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A number of measures have been taken and others are planned to improve the performance of the London ambulance service.

These include:

an external inquiry, led by a chief ambulance officer from another metropolitan region into the operation of the Computer Aided Dispatch system;

a support system involving, where necessary, direct voice contact between the control centre and ambulances, building extra safeguards to ensure that ambulances are on their way;

a change in the management structure of the service to ensure that Ministers are kept in proper and regular touch with progress;

increases in the staffing levels in the London ambulance service control room;

an increase of 9 per cent. over 1991-92 in the funding of the London ambulance service in 1992-93 to nearly £70 million.

Epidemiological Research

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money, expressed as an overall figure and as a percentage of health care expenditure, is currently spent on epidemiological research in Britain.

Mr. Sackville: Information is not available in the form requested.

Cancer

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the incidence of newly diagnosed cases of *(a)* cervical and *(b)* breast cancer per 100,000 population for the age ranges 20 to 29, 30 to 39, 40 to 49, 50 to 59, 60 to 69 and 70-plus years for the Northern regional health authority area, the Oxford regional health authority area, and the United Kingdom area as a whole, for each year since 1983.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is shown in the table; 1987 is the latest year for which the information is available.

Incidence rates (per 100,000 population) for malignant neoplasms of female breast (ICD[1] 174) and malignant neoplasms of cervix uteri (ICD[1] 180) for the Northern and Oxford Regional Health Authorities and the United Kingdom, 1983 to 1987 by age breakdown

	1983		*1984*		*1985*		*1986*		*1987*	
Age group	*ICD 174*	*ICD 180*	*ICD 174*	*ICD 180*	*ICD 174*	*ICD 180*	*ICD 174*	*ICD 180*	*ICD 174*	*ICD 180*
Northern Regional Health Authority										
20 to 29	2·6	7·1	5·6	5·2	3·4	6·8	4·6	4·2	4·6	7·1
30 to 39	30·9	19·5	41·4	24·7	36·6	33·8	35·6	25·2	38·3	23·7
40 to 49	114·5	21·2	103·0	19·8	110·9	39·8	108·0	23·8	122·9	22·4
50 to 59	131·6	28·4	156·9	21·1	142·3	20·9	156·7	30·3	152·0	27·2
60 to 69	160·9	32·6	204·7	31·6	168·9	24·9	183·3	38·8	204·7	29·4
70+	201·3	22·1	211·6	27·4	213·9	35·2	210·3	30·0	205·8	20·4
Oxford Regional Health Authority										
20 to 29	1·1	6·0	2·6	4·8	3·5	7·1	4·4	5·4	3·8	5·2
30 to 39	37·5	14·0	35·5	22·2	36·2	23·6	37·1	25·3	44·0	19·0
40 to 49	124·5	23·6	123·3	12·8	126·8	20·8	112·5	18·2	129·4	21·7
50 to 59	160·7	17·9	158·7	24·5	178·3	18·8	166·9	13·8	217·9	19·4
60 to 69	190·3	21·2	211·4	33·9	240·9	21·8	226·7	22·4	231·0	25·6
70+	283·7	28·8	274·9	17·1	251·2	21·4	252·3	17·3	285·7	14·1
United Kingdom										
20 to 29	3·3	7·4	3·6	6·6	3·0	7·0	3·8	7·0	3·6	6·2
30 to 39	35·3	21·0	34·2	24·7	35·1	25·0	39·2	24·5	35·7	22·8
40 to 49	109·7	21·0	108·6	22·8	114·5	22·8	115·9	23·6	115·9	24·2
50 to 59	154·9	24·1	154·7	23·4	154·8	23·1	163·5	22·5	162·2	22·2

	1983		1984		1985		1986		1987	
Age group	ICD 174	ICD 180	ICD 174	ICD 180	ICD 174	ICD 180	ICD 174	ICD 180	ICD 174	ICD 180
60 to 69	187·6	30·6	189·9	31·1	198·8	29·7	201·8	30·6	211·6	29·6
70+	236·0	24·0	235·6	23·5	239·3	21·8	242·3	23·4	260·2	23·8

[1] International Classification of Diseases.

Source: OPCS.
Scottish cancer registration scheme.
Department of Health and Social Security, Northern Ireland.
Cancer registrations scheme.

Radon Gas

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients resident in each regional health authority have *(a)* been treated for, or *(b)* died as a result of, radon gas exposure in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is not available. The effect of exposure to radon gas can be the later development of lung cancer, but there is no way to detect the difference between lung cancers caused by smoking, by radon exposure, or by other factors. On the basis of research studies, the National Radiological Protection Board estimates that exposure to radon in the home may be responsible for about 2,000 premature lung cancer deaths a year in the United Kingdom, but no regional breakdown of this overall estimate is available.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish figures for each six months since June 1987 for inner London of *(a)* the numbers of people on waiting lists for in-patient hospital treatment, *(b)* the numbers of people on those waiting lists admitted to hospital for treatment and *(c)* the numbers of people removed from those waiting lists for other reasons.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the numbers of people waiting by district health authority is given in the publication "Hospital Waiting List, in-patients and Day Cases" published every six months, copies of which are available in the Library. Information on admissions and removals from waiting lists for all district health authorities is not routinely collated centrally. For the relevant information at national level, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 22 October at columns *369–70.*

Medical Confidentiality

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will introduce regulations or produce guidelines on medical confidentiality covering the subject matter of the draft National Health Service Functions (Preservation of Confidentiality) Regulations which were withdrawn in 1987; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department is preparing draft guidance on the confidentiality, use and disclosure of personal health information which will be issued for consultation shortly.

Doncaster Health Authority

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to increase the annual salaries and allowances of the chairman and each member of Doncaster health authority; by what percentage; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: A decision will be made in due course about the allowances and expenses paid to chairmen and non-executives.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all financial allocations made by *(a)* Her Majesty's Government and *(b)* regional health authorities directly to trusts and the reasons for them; why it was decided not to make them to district health authorities instead; what steps she has taken to ensure that these allocations directly to trusts do not contradict the purchaser-provider market; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: No allocations are made to trusts by either this Department or by regional health authorities. Allocations are made solely to health authorities. Both this Department and regional health authorities do, however, contract directly with trusts where the services concerned are most appropriately purchased at a national or regional level. Central and regional contracts with trusts are entirely consistent with the separate roles of purchaser and provider.

Voluntary Organisations

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the reasons for her decision that there will be no increase for inflation for voluntary organisations seeking renewal of their grant; whether this is an immutable ruling; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I have been asked to reply.

As part of our review of funding to voluntary organisations under the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 we have been looking at what steps we might take to ensure that the section 64 general scheme budget can be used to benefit a wider range of organisations than has previously been possible. Core funding towards headquarters and administrative expenses currently accounts for approximately 80 per cent. of the expenditure, much of which has been provided on a long-term basis.

We have decided that in future all core grants will be brought into line with those awarded after April 1990 and will not normally be renewed for more than a maximum of five years. Existing arrangements provide that core grants may be renewed in certain circumstances and our annual guidance in August restated previous policy that any renewal awards would not normally include an increase for inflation. In considering any renewal application we will take into account all relevant factors, but the presumption will be that there will not be an automatic increase for inflation. This will enable us to make available a larger proportion of funding for new applicants for core or project grants and to give more to those organisations less able to raise funds from other sources.

Health Service, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of beds in Doncaster hospitals, by category, *(a)* in 1990-91 and *(b)* at present.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is given in the table. The information for 1990-91 refers to Doncaster Health Authority. The provisional figures for 1991-92 are an aggregation of one directly managed unit and one trust.

Doncaster district health authority
Average daily number of available beds
Annual 1990-91 and 1991-92

Ward classification		*Code*	*1990-91*			*1991-92*[1]		
			Wards open overnight	*Wards open day only*	*Total*	*Wards open overnight*	*Wards open day only*	*Total*
General patients								
Children	Normal	1	54	0	54	59	0	59
	Limited	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Elderly	Normal	3	283	0	283	278	0	278
	Limited	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other ages	Intensive	5	24	0	24	25	0	25
	Normal	6	625	14	638	623	12	635
	Limited	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
Younger physically disabled								
Spinal unit		8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other		9	18	0	18	18	0	18
Neonatal								
Flag designated intensive		10	24	0	24	24	0	24
Non-maternity		11	0	0	0	0	0	0
Maternity		12	60	0	60	60	0	60
Maternity								
Consultants		13	98	0	98	82	0	82
Mixed		14	0	0	0	0	0	0
GP		15	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mental illness								
Children	Short stay	16	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Long stay	17	0	0	0	0	0	0
Elderly	Short stay	18	21	0	21	14	0	14
	Long stay	19	104	0	104	86	0	86
Other ages	Secure unit	20	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Short stay	21	76	0	76	80	0	80
	Long stay	22	83	0	83	119	0	119
Mental handicap								
Children	Short stay	23	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Long stay	24	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other ages	Short stay	25	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Long stay	26	165	0	165	156	0	156
TOTAL		27	1,635	14	1,648	1,629	12	1,641

[1] Provisional.

Source: KMO3.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the number of out-patients treated at Doncaster hospitals by category, for the latest date for which she has figures available; and what was the figure *(a)* six months and *(b)* 12 months ago.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested for 1990-91, the latest available centrally, and for 1989-90, is contained in the Department of Health annual publication, "Outpatients and Ward Attenders". Copies are in the Library.

Abortion

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what guidance is issued by her Department to doctors about the techniques which should be adopted in performing those late abortions which are now available until full term; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what guidance her Department has issued to doctors about the use of potassium chloride injections to perform late abortions; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Decisions as to the method by which an abortion is carried out are a matter for the clinical judgment of the operating doctor, taking into account the circumstances of the particular case.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has concerning the methods currently adopted in performing those late abortions which take place beyond 24 weeks; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The notification form which has to be sent to the chief medical officer in respect of each legal abortion requires the practitioner terminating the pregnancy to give details of the method used.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to ensure that RU486 is available only under the provisions of the Abortion Act 1967.

Mr. Sackville: Use of RU486 to terminate a pregnancy outside the terms of the Abortion Act 1967, as amended, would be an offence.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the RU486 pill will be available for general practitioners to prescribe; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will use the discretionary powers in section 37(3) of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 to license additional premises, such as community family planning clinics near hospitals, for prescription of mifepristone; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We have no current plans to extend use of this abortifacient drug to places other than national health service hospitals or private sector clinics approved under section 1(3) of the Abortion Act 1967, as amended.

GP Fund Holders

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by *(a)* regional health authority and *(b)* district health authority the current average budget of general practitioner fund holders.

Mr. Sackville: The current average budget for general practitioner fundholders by regional health authority is in the table. The information by district health authority is not held centrally.

Regional average budget set for first and second wave fundholders combined in 1992-93

Region	*Average budget set in £ million*
Northern	1·7
Yorkshire	1·7
Trent	1·4
East Anglian	1·7
North West Thames	1·4
North East Thames	1·3
South East Thames	1·3
South West Thames	1·3
Wessex	1·5
Oxford	1·4
South Western	1·4
West Midlands	1·4
Mersey	1·3
North Western	1·4

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioner fund-holding practices in each region in England are projecting overspends in the current financial year; how many were allocated additional resources in the first half of the year; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally.

Children's Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will introduce urgently legislation for a comprehensive system of registration and inspection of all children's homes.

Mr. Yeo: Under the Children Act 1989 and the Children's Homes Regulations 1991 private children's homes are subject to registration and inspection by local authorities. Voluntary children's homes are required by the Act to register with the Secretary of State for Health and are inspected by the Social Services Inspectorate. Additionally, guidance issued to local authorities advises that local authority "arm's-length" inspection units should inspect local authorities' own children's homes. Further guidance on inspection of children's homes by local authority independent inspection units is due to be issued shortly.

Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all the names of public appointments that she has made, giving the period for which the appointment was made, relevant qualifications of the appointees, and what remuneration each currently receives.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information about public appointments made by the Secretary of State for Health and the remuneration each currently receives is available from the Cabinet Office publications "Public Bodies" and "Public Appointments: a Handbook for Women's Organisations". Copies are available in the Library. Details of the individuals who hold those appointments could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Dr. Chris Chapman

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the impact of her new whistleblowers charter on the case of Dr. Chris Chapman; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Dr Chapman has recently taken his case to an industrial tribunal; it would therefore not be appropriate for me to comment on his case at this stage.

Health Pay Review Boards

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she has any plans to suspend the health pay review boards; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Operations

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of operations in each health authority in England were cancelled; what proportion of operations were cancelled on more than one occasion; and what proportion of operations were cancelled on the day of admissions in 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available centrally.

Patients Charter

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what number and percentage of patients were assessed immediately in accident and emergency departments in each district health authority area in England under the terms of the patients charter, for the first quarter of 1992-93; and if she will make a statement;

(2) Which targets specified in the patients charter can now be measured by health authorities; and what responses have been received to the monitoring of the charter in the first quarter of 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: Health authorities will be expected to monitor all aspects of their providers' performance against the rights and standards set out in the patients charter and reflected in contracts. The National Health Service management executive has recently issued guidance on monitoring the charter.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how information collected on the monitoring of the patients charter will differentiate between the performance of trust and non-trust units.

Mr. Sackville: All providers—whether trusts or non-trusts—will be required to supply information on performance against patients charter rights and standards to their purchasers.

Diabetes

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated cost of *(a)* a visit by a health visitor to administer insulin to a diabetic and *(b)* self-administration using a Novopen, including the cost of the Novo needle.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on the cost of a visit by a health visitor is not held centrally. The element of the cost of self-administration attributable to a Novopen and needle is commercial-in-confidence. However, many diabetics use disposable syringes to inject themselves with insulin and these are already prescribable. The use of injection pens and needles entails a real additional cost to the taxpayer. This factor has to be taken into account when considering whether to authorise their prescribing by GPs.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will make it her policy that Novo needles shall be available on prescription for people who suffer from diabetes and require insulin treatment.

Dr. Mawhinney: We are continuing to consider the case for authorising general practitioners to prescribe both insulin injection pens and needles but, in reaching a final decision, we shall need to take into account current public expenditure constraints.

Waiting Times

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is *(a)* the average and *(b)* the maximum waiting time between a patient's initial referral and the first appointment with a consultant in each health authority in England; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Figures for out-patient waiting times are not collected centrally, but all health authorities are required under the patients charter to publish information on the local standards they have set for waiting times for first out-patient appointments and on performance against these targets.

Emergency Ambulance Calls

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the change in the percentage of emergency ambulance calls being responded to in each district health authority area within the Orcon standard between the first quarter of 1991-92 and the first quarter of 1992-93; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what percentage of emergency ambulance calls were responded to in each district health authority area *(a)* within eight minutes, *(b)* within 14 minutes in urban areas and *(c)* within 19 minutes in rural areas during the first quarter of 1992-93;

(3) what percentage of urgent journeys by ambulance in each district health authority area in England reached the appropriate treatment centre within 15 minutes during the first quarter of 1992-93; and she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Information held by the Department relates to ambulance authorities which may cover more than one district health authority and is collected on a financial year basis and not a quarterly basis. Figures for 1991-92 are currently being assembled for publication and I will arrange for a copy of the summary tables to be sent to the hon. Member as soon as these are available.

Extra-contractual Referrals

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many district health authorities in each region in England have spent *(a)* up to or *(b)* over their budgets for extra-contractual referrals; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the regional health authority chairmen for details.

Childline

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to ensure the continued operation of the charity Childline.

Mr. Yeo: A Government grant of £100,000 has been given to Childline in each of the last five years, following an initial grant of £50,000 to help launch the organisation. Any further application for financial support will be considered on its merits.

Salford District Health Authority

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will respond to the request made to her by the Salford community health council and the Hope hospital, Salford, support group, for an independent inquiry into the funding and management of the Salford district health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: Responsibility for financial allocation to Salford district health authority is a matter for the North Western regional health authority. The requests received from the Salford community health council and the Hope hospital, Salford, support group were referred to the chief executive of the regional health authority on 27 October.

Council Tax

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the policy consideration underlying the charging of 50 per cent. council tax on the owners of residential care homes; and if he will reconsider this policy.

Mr. Redwood: Further to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Devon, North (Mr. Harvey) on 7 July, col. 157, we have received a number of representations from care homes about the council tax. We are presently discussing these representations with the joint care committee.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 30 October 1992

DEFENCE

Executive Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter delegated to my Department's executive agencies under their framework documents. I have therefore asked each chief executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Executive Agencies
- Met Office
- Defence Research Agency
- Duke of York's Royal Military School
- Queen Victoria School

Defence Support Agencies
- Hydrographic Office
- Service Children's School (North West Europe)
- Maintenance Group DSA
- Director General Defence Accounts
- Chemical & Biological Defence Establishment
- Director General Military Survey
- Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation
- Defence Analytical Services Agency
- Defence Operational Analysis Centre
- Defence Postal Courier Service

Letter from C. R. Flood to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

I am responding on behalf of the Chief Executive of the Met Office (who is abroad) to your Parliamentary Question.

"to ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible."

The answer is as follows:

The Met Office Executive Agency has published various documents including the 1991-92 Annual Review and the Annual Report and Accounts. The 5-year Corporate Plan is not published though the key targets were given in a reply to a Parliamentary Question from Mr. Mans (Hansard 11 June 1992. Written Answers, Column 282). Professor Hunt, the Chief Executive of the Met Office since January 1992, published many scientific papers during the last year, on subjects such as turbulence in fluids, the life and work of L. F. Richardson and wavelets, fractals and Fourier transforms.

Letter from J. A. R. Chisholm to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

In his written answer today the Minister of State for Defence Procurement said that each Agency Chief Executive would be replying directly to your question about papers they had published in the last 12 months.

In the last 12 months I have published:

a. DRA Annual Report & Accounts 1991-92—issued September 1992

b. DRA Rationalisation Strategy Consultative Document—issued September 1992

My key targets were published in a Parliamentary written answer on 2 July 1992.

Letter from Lieutenant Colonel G. H. Wilson to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

I refer to your parliamentary question which asked the Secretary of State to list for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible.

The Duke of York's Royal Military School was established as an Executive Agency of the MOD on 1st April 1992. In addition to the Royal Warrant and Framework Document which established the school as an Agency, the Duke of York's has produced a Corporate Plan 1992-97 and a Management Plan for financial year 1992/93. These were published on 26 February 1992.

Letter from Julian D. Hankinson to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

I have been asked to answer to you directly the following Parliamentary Question regarding Queen Victoria School.

Date of Order Paper: 22 October 1992

"17. Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley), To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the Chief Executive of each Executive Agency for which he is responsible".

Answer: This School has been an Executive Agency since April 1st, 1992, and is thus in its first year as an Agency. We are not yet in receipt of the Treasury Directive and to date this Agency has not published any papers or documents. Nevertheless, through the aegis of MOD (AG Secretariat), this Agency's/School's Royal Warrant and Framework Document have been published and are in the public domain.

I trust this answer supplies the information you require. Any further information can be supplied if you wish it.

Letter from Rear Admiral J. A. L. Myres to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

Hydrographic Office DSA—Parliamentary Question

You recently asked the Secretary of State to list, for the last 12 months, titles of papers published by the Chief Executive of each Executive Agency for which he is responsible. The Minister has asked me, as Chief Executive, to reply in respect of the Hydrographic Office Defence Support Agency.

The only paper published during the last 12 months relates to the agency's Key Targets for FY 1992-93 which were published in Hansard (columns 281-82) on 11 June 1992.

You may also wish to note that the Hydrographic Office Defence Support Agency Annual Report and Accounts for FY 1991-92 will be published shortly and copies will be placed in the libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

I hope this information is helpful.

Letter from I. S. Mitchelson to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence in which you asked him to list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the Chief Executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible.

I list below all documents published by the Service Children's Schools (North West Europe) Defence Support Agency since its formation in April 1991:

General Documents

(a) Framework Document—April 1991

(b) First Corporate Plan 1991-94—August 1991

(c) Management Plan 1991-92—August 1991

(d) Annual Report and Accounts 1991-92—July 1992

(e) Corporate Plan 1992-96—August 1992

(f) Management Plan 1992-93—August 1992

Other Professional Documents

(a) "Schools for the Future—A Discussion Document" —October 1991

(b) Individual school (83 schools) brochures—Autumn Term 1991

(c) "Schools News" news letter—Issue One—February 1992

(d) "Schools News" news letter—Issue Two—June 1992

(e) Individual school (80 schools) brochures—Autumn Term 1992

The following documents are currently at the printers and will be published shortly:

(a) SCS (NWE) "Complaints Procedures" brochure

(b) SCS (NWE) Parents brochure—long version

(c) SCS (NWE) Parents brochure—short version

(d) "Schools for the Future—Development Plan"

I hope this information is of assistance but if I can be of further help, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Letter from Air Vice-Marshal D. R. French to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

Maintenance Group Defence Support Agency—Published Papers

Reference:

A. D/FT/1/1/5 dated 22 October 1992.

1. In response to the Parliamentary Question notified at the Reference, seeking details of the papers published by the Maintenance Group Defence Support Agency over the last 12 months, please accept the following response:

(a) Maintenance Group Defence Support Agency Key Management Targets 1992/93. Published in May 1992 as a PQ.

(b) Maintenance Group Defence Support Agency Annual Report and Accounts 1991/92. Published in June 1992.

2. For information purposes, please note that the Maintenance Group Defence Support Agency Framework Document was published in April 1991.

Letter from M. J. Dymond to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

Parliamentary Question 7223F

You asked the Secretary of State for Defence to provide a list of the titles of papers published by MOD executive agencies during the last twelve months. As Chief Executive of DGDA I have been asked to reply for my Agency. In the last twelve months DGDA publications have been as follows:

(a) DGDA Annual Report and Accounts 1991-92;

(b) DGDA Corporate Plan 1993-98.

In addition the Agency's key targets for 1992-93, which were approved by Viscount Cranborne, USofS, on 16 July 1992, will be announced to Parliament in the near future.

Letter from Dr. Graham S. Pearson to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking if he will list for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the Chief Executive of each Executive Agency for which he is responsible.

2. The papers that I have published over the last 12 months are:

(a) Annual Report and Accounts 1991-92, CBDE Porton Down, June 1992 (a copy has been placed in the Library of the House).

(b) "Strengthening the BTWC Regime: A Defence View", Chemical Weapons Convention Bulletin, Issue No. 12, June 1991, pp 2-6.

(c) "Letter to the Editor", The New Scientist, dated 5 October 1991, Issue No. 1789, page 58.

(d) "Biological Weapons—Their Nature and Arms Control", lecture presented at Kings College London, 21-22 November 1991, to be published in proceedings by Oxford University Press.

(e) Book Review, Chemistry in Industry, 3 February 1992, No. 3, page 103.

(f) "Preventing Biological Warfare", Talking Point, The New Scientist, 21 March 1992, page 8.

(g) "Verification of the Biological Convention", presented at Gustav-Stresemann Institute, Bonn, Germany, 28-29 January 1992, published in the proceedings, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Forschungs Institut, Bonn, May 1992.

(h) "The Continuing Need for Chemical and Biological Defence following a Chemical Weapons Convention", proceedings 4th International Symposium on Protection Against Chemical Warfare Agents, 8-12 June 1992, pp. 353-358.

(i) "Letter to the Editor", Chemistry in Industry, dated 3 August 1992, page 546.

(j) "Vaccines for Biological Defence: Defence Considerations", presented at Vaccines for Peace Workshop, Biesenthal, Berlin, 9-13 September 1992, to be published by SIPRI.

Letter from Major General R. Wood to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

Reply to Parliamentary Question 7223F

The only unclassified document published in the last twelve months by the Director General Military Survey was the Military Survey Annual Report 91/92. Copies were sent to the Minister (AF) and the Parliamentary Clerk (for the House of Commons Library) on 22 October 1992.

Letter from Captain D. Symonds to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

In response to your parliamentary question to the Secretary of State for Defence concerning the papers published by Agency Chief Executives, the following papers have been published by the Chief Executive of the Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation (NARO) DSA:

NARO DSA Framework Document which is publicly available.

NARO DSA Corporate Plan which has limited distribution due to the 'Commercial-in-Confidence' nature of its content.

Letter from Paul Altobell to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

Publications by Agency Chief Executives

Minister of State (DP) suggested that I write to you about my publications in the last twelve months.

In the year to 29 October 1992, I have published the following documents:-

Framework Document	—published July 1992
Business Plan 1992/93 to 1994/95	—published August 1992
Key Targets	—published in Hansard, Tuesday 20 October 1992

Our 1992 Strategic Plan is currently with the printers and should be available shortly.

Letter from D. Leadbeater to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 October 1992:

In his written reply of 29 October the Secretary of State for Defence informed you that Agency Chief Executives would be replying directly to your question. The Defence Operational Analysis Centre is a Defence Support Agency formed on 1st July 1992. The agency's framework document has been published. The agency will be publishing a corporate plan and full cost accounts for year 92/93 in July 1993. The agency's business plan will contain more sensitive Defence Studies information and is not to be published.

Letter from Brigadier M. A. Browne to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

Further to your question the House on 22 October to the Secretary of State for Defence concerning papers published by Defence Agencies I am responding as Chief Executive of the Defence Postal and Courier Services—Defence Support Agency.

As a newly formed DSA the only publication to date is my Framework Document which has been passed to the House of Commons Library.

I enclose a personal copy of the publication for ease of reference.

Military Training

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what account Her Majesty's Government take of human rights considerations when making decisions on the provision of military training to military personnel of other countries.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In deciding whether or not to provide military training for a particular country, many factors, including the human rights record of the Government, are taken into account.

Missile Defence System

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has been given by his American and Russian counterparts on the USA-Russia agreement on the global protection against limited strikes missile defence system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United States has kept us in close touch with its dialogue with the Russian authorities on limited ballistic missile defences.

RAF Upavon

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of RAF Upavon.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: RAF Upavon in Wiltshire is at present the headquarters of No. 1 group RAF, a formation which controls the ground attack, support helicopter, air transport and air-to-air refuelling forces of the RAF. No. 1 group is part of Strike Command, the headquarters of which is at RAF High Wycombe.

Following a reorganisation in Strike Command, some staff are being transferred from Upavon to High Wycombe. I also propose, subject to the usual consultations with the trades unions, that the headquarters of No. 1 group should be transferred from Upavon to RAF Benson in Oxfordshire. Some 120 service posts would be transferred out of Upavon, and some 169 service and 80 civilian posts would be removed, as a result of these moves, which would save more than £45 million at current prices over the 25-year cost-appraisal period.

My Department has been looking at possible defence uses for RAF Upavon after the withdrawal of the RAF. I further propose therefore that the bulk of the Army's inspector general doctrine and training directorate will be collocated on a single site. RAF Upavon has been identified as the most cost-effective option and 150 military and 100 civilian posts will relocate from London, Camberley, Beaconsfield, Wilton and elsewhere. Other, minor units will also relocate to Upavon in due course. It is too early to say what the detailed implications will be for the civilian staff currently at RAF Upavon, but some will be employed by the Army.

Full consultation on these proposals will now take place with the trades unions concerned in accordance with agreed procedures.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Women Civil Servants

Mr. Paice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the progress towards achieving equality of opportunity for women staff in the civil service.

Mr. Robert Jackson: In the past year steady progress has been made. For example, there are now more women in the management grades, a wider use of part-time working and flexible working patterns, an expansion of child care provision and more equal opportunities awareness training. This builds further on the achievements of past years. A report on the progress made during 1991-92 towards achieving equality of opportunity for women in the civil service has been published today and I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Court Interpreters

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the average fee paid *(a)* per day and *(b)* per hour by Crown courts to (i) interpreters utilised by Crown courts in general in the United Kingdom and (ii) interpreters utilised specifically by Crown courts in Wales to undertake interpretation from, and into, the Welsh language.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The amounts allowed to interpreters working in the Crown court in England and Wales are in general at the discretion of the court. Guidance is issued which recommends an allowance of £14 to £24 per hour, with a minimum allowance of three hours for those employed regularly in this capacity. Thus the allowance for three hours is in the range of £42 to £72; or £70 to £120 for a full day.

The amounts payable to Welsh language interpreters in the Crown court in Wales are specified by the Lord Chancellor under section 3(1A) of the Welsh Courts Act 1942. At present the allowances are £50 for a half day and £100 for a full day, which may be increased to £60 and £120 respectively when significant travelling time has been involved.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor is responsible for two agencies, namely the Public Record Office (PRO) and the Land Registry.

The chief executive of the Public Record Office, the Keeper of Public Records, has personally published no papers since the PRO was launched as an agency on 1 April 1992. However, an information pack, including the agency framework document and corporate plan, was made publicly available at the time of the agency launch. In addition, the annual report of the Keeper of Public Records on the work of the PRO was laid before Parliament by the Lord Chancellor on 14 July 1992. The chief executive has also contributed an article to an historical journal.

The chief executive of the Land Registry, the Chief Land Registrar, has personally published no papers during the past 12 months. However, a consultation document on proposals to dispense with charge certificates was issued on 26 May 1992. In addition, the annual report of the Chief Land Registrar on the work of Her Majesty's Land Registry was published on 10 September 1992. The chief executive has also contributed articles to legal journals.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Executive Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible.

Mr. Mates: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the following agencies under their respective chief executives.

Training and Employment Agency—Mr. J. Crozier
Rates Collection Agency—Mr. D. Gallagher
Social Security Agency—Mr. A. Wylie
Ordnance Survey Agency—Mr. M. Brand
Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency—Mr. B. Watson
Compensation Agency—Mr. J. Robinson

I have asked them to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from J. S. Crozier to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

You asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he would list for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible.

During the last twelve months I, as the Chief Executive of the Training and Employment Agency (Northern Ireland) (T and EA), issued the following publications:

Annual Review April 1990-March 1991
Get Your Business into Training
Labour Market Skill Trends Bulletin—November 1991 (Issue No. 1)
Labour Market Skill Trends Bulletin—May 1992 (Issue No. 4)
Directory of Services
Corporate Plan 1992-95
Business Plan 1992-93
Annual Review April 1991-March 1992
Directory of Training Providers
Customer's Charter
Financial Statements April 1990-March 1991
Training Magazine—Issues 8 to 11 (quarterly)

Letter from D. W. Gallagher to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

As I am responsible for the Northern Ireland Rate Collection Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to reply to some Parliamentary Questions recently put down by you. These related to papers published by the Agency during the last 12 months and any fact-finding visits undertaken by myself during the same period.

As you may know, the Rate Collection Agency was established on 1 April 1992. During the last 12 months I have issued the Agency's 1992-93 Business Plan. Our 1991-92 Annual Report will be published shortly.

I would also advise that I have not undertaken any fact finding visits over the same period.

I hope that this information answers your questions but please let me know if I can be of any further help.

Letter from A. Wylie to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

Your recent Parliamentary Question asking for the titles of papers published during the last 12 months by the Chief Executive of each Executive Agency has been passed to me for reply as I am responsible for the Northern Ireland Social Security Agency.

During the last 12 months there have been 4 documents produced by the Agency. The titles are:

Strategic Plan 1992-96 and Business Plan 1992-93 *(published May 1992)*
Customer Charter *(published July 1992)*
Customer Survey Report 1991 *(published August 1992)*
Report of Findings of the Customer Survey 1991 *(shorter version of main report)*

Under the terms of its Framework Document the Agency prepares each year and submits to the Minister a Strategic and Business Plan. In line with the commitment in the Northern Ireland Citizen's Charter the Social Security Agency published a Customer Charter in July 1992. This sets out what the Agency's customers can expect in terms of a good quality service and the action they can take if things go wrong.

As part of its objective to consult its customers and as stated in its Customer Charter the Agency arranged for an independent survey of customer opinion on the quality of service it provides. The findings of the 1991 survey were published in the form of a main report and an executive summary.

Of the 4 documents only the Customer Survey Report 1991 and the Report of Findings of the Customer Survey 1991 were formally published and available through HMSO. The Strategic Plan 1992-96 and Business Plan 1992-93 and the Customer Charter were publicised and placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

I hope this is helpful to you and I will be pleased to provide any further information you may require.

Letter from J. F. Codd to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

You have asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the Chief Executives of each Executive Agency for which he is responsible.

Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland was launched as a Next Steps Agency on 1 April 1992 and therefore the period covered by this reply begins on that date. The following papers by Mr. J. D. Brand, Chief Executive and Director of Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland have been published:

1. "Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland—Framework Document", April 1992.
2. "Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland—Business Plan 1992-93", October 1992.
3. "Data 'THE' Investment", published in the proceedings of AM/FM International European Conference, October 1992.

Letter from J. B. Watson to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 29 October 1992:

I am responding to your recent Parliamentary Question seeking information on titles of papers published over the last 12 months by Executive Agencies.

The following papers have been published by the Driver & Vehicle Testing Agency:

The Framework Document
The Business Plan.

Letter from J. Robinson to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 October 1992:

I refer to your recent Parliamentary Question about the titles of papers published by executive agencies in Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State has asked me to provide the information in respect of the Compensation Agency.

I have published one paper since this Agency was established on 1 April 1992 namely "The Compensation Agency: Business Plan 1992-1993".

ENVIRONMENT

British Nuclear Fuels plc

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what preparations his Department has made in readiness for the borehole public inquiry to be held in Cleator Moor civic hall into an application by British Nuclear Fuels plc to construct a site characterisation borehole.

Mr. Maclean: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Planning Inspectorate executive agency under its chief executive, Mr. Crow. I have asked him to arrange a reply to be given.

Letter from H. S. Crow to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 27 October 1992:

The Secretary of State for the Environment has asked me to provide the reply to your recent Parliamentary Question to him, as its subject matter has been delegated to the Planning Inspectorate Executive Agency.

You ask what preparations have been made in readiness for the forthcoming inquiry into the planning appeals by British Nuclear Fuels relating to the drilling of exploratory boreholes near Gosforth, Cumbria.

The inquiry into these appeals is due to open on 24 November at the Civic Hall, Cleator Moor, Cumbria. It is expected to last for about 12 days. The Inspector appointed to decide the appeals is Mr. P. Rosser, who held a pre-inquiry meeting at Cleator Moor, with representatives of the parties, on 30 September. At that meeting the arrangements and programme for the inquiry were agreed.

Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the names of public appointments that he has made, giving the period for which the appointment was made, relevant qualifications of the appointee, and what remuneration each currently receives.

Mr. Howard: Information on relevant qualifications is not held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. Details of remuneration are contained in the annual HMSO publication "Public Bodies", copies of which are held in the Library of the House. The following new appointments have been made since 10 April 1992 to the boards of non-departmental public bodies sponsored by my Department:

Department of Environment
New appointments made from 10 April 1992

Name of body and postholder	*Appointment end*
BRITISH BOARD OF AGREEMENT	
Member	
D. C. Leonard	30 April 1995
COMMISSION FOR THE NEW TOWNS	
Deputy Chairman	
Lord Finsberg	31 August 1996
Member	
Lady Marsh	31 August 1996
ECO-LABELLING	
Member	
Miss J. Munsiff	31 July 1994
Ms. A. Foster	31 July 1995
Ms. T. Robertson	31 July 1995
Dr. R. Pugh	31 July 1994
Ms. J. Hailes	31 July 1994
L. C. Scott	31 July 1995
Mrs. H. Kimbell	31 July 1994
Dr. K. Humphreys	31 July 1994
Miss C. Whitehead	31 July 1994
Professor R. Cliff	31 July 1993
K. Miles	31 July 1993
N. Whittaker	31 July 1993
D. A. Norman	31 July 1993
Ms. P. Hyam	31 July 1993
ENGLISH NATURE	
Member	
Miss J. Kelly	31 March 1995
HOUSING ACTION TRUST LIVERPOOL	
Member	
M. Appleton	8 June 1995
R. Dykes	14 June 1995
Mrs. J. Roberts	8 June 1995
Mrs. S. Last	8 June 1995
E. McGonagle	8 June 1995
HOUSING ACTION TRUST NORTH HULL	
Member	
Mrs. Maginn	30 April 1995
LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY CORPORATION	
Member	
Mrs. L. Needham	28 May 1997
LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION	
Chairman	
Sir John Banham	30 June 1996
Member	
Mary Leigh, Councillor	30 June 1995
Ann Levick	30 June 1995
R. Scruton	30 June 1995
C. Wilkinson	30 June 1995
Lady Wilcox	30 June 1995
Professor M. Grant	2 July 1995
H. H. Hughes	2 July 1995
D. Thomas	2 July 1995
Professor M. Chisholm	30 June 1995
D. Ambro	30 June 1995
K. Ennals	30 June 1995

Name of body and postholder	*Appointment end*
B. Hill	30 June 1995
URBAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION BIRMINGHAM HEARTLANDS	
Member	
C. P. Finegan, Councillor	22 June 1996
Hazel M. Duffy	22 June 1995
P. C. Sabapathy	22 June 1995
J. A. Sheddon	22 June 1995
M. N. W. Wilcox	22 June 1995
R. Hales, Councillor	22 June 1995
R. A. M. Brew, Councillor	22 June 1995
A. Bore, Councillor	22 June 1995
F. J. Chapman, Councillor	22 June 1995
URBAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION BLACK COUNTRY	
Deputy Chairman	
C. Hawkins	15 April 1994
Member	
Dr. D. Green	21 June 1994
R. Burman	21 June 1994
W. E. Clarke, Councillor	31 July 1994
M. Bird, Councillor	31 July 1994
I. B. Flanagan	31 August 1994
URBAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LEEDS	
Member	
J. Trickett, Councillor	29 June 1994
URBAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION TRAFFORD PARK	
Member	
Ms. B. Hughes, Councillor	22 September 1994

Recycling

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities which have not yet submitted recycling plans to his Department; what enforcement action he intends to take; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Out of 366 waste collection authorities, 50—14 per cent.—have not submitted recycling plans to my Department. They are listed as follows:

District councils
Alnwick
Amber Valley
Barrow-in-Furness
Blackburn
Bolsover
Chorley
Cleethorpes
East Nottinghamshire
East Cambridgeshire
Eden
Erewash
Fenland
Glanford
Great Yarmouth
High Peak
Hyndburn
Kingston upon Hull
Lichfield
Newcastle-under-Lyme
North Shropshire
North East Derbyshire
Preston
Richmondshire
Shrewsbury and Atcham
Slough
South Ribble
South Cambridgeshire
Tandridge
Teesdale
Wyre
York

Metropolitan districts
Dudley
Gateshead
Knowsley
North Tyneside
Rochdale
Sandwell
Sheffield
Tameside
Trafford
Walsall
Wolverhampton

London boroughs
Barking and Dagenham
Brent
Camden
City of London
Hillingdon
Islington
Sutton
Waltham Forest

A further 26 authorities—7 per cent.—have submitted recycling plans, but the plans have not yet been approved by the council. They are noted as follows:

District councils
Aylesbury Vale
Bassetlaw
Broxbourne
Craven
East Yorkshire
Elmbridge
Hambleton
Huntingdonshire
Mid Sussex
Mole Valley
Oxford
Scarborough
Scunthorpe
Southampton
Stroud
West Wiltshire
Worthing

Metropolitan districts
Barnsley
Kirklees
Liverpool
Rotherham
Wakefield

London boroughs
Bromley
Enfield
Kingston upon Thames
Newham

Most of these authorities have said that they will submit plans shortly; if they do so, no enforcement action will be necessary. However, the Secretary of State will not hesitate to use his powers under section 49(7) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to set a statutory deadline for any local authorities which are unwilling to submit recycling plans within a reasonable time.

Surplus Land (Sale)

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will announce the outcome of the consultation on changes to the arrangements under which surplus land is offered for sale back to former owners.

Mr. Robin Squire: Consultation papers issued in England and Wales last December and in April in Scotland proposed that the arrangements, which apply directly to Government Departments and agencies and are recommended to local authorities and other statutory bodies, should be modified as follows:

(a) qualified valuers other than the district valuer should be able to carry out valuations for disposal;
(b) there should be an additional exemption from the offer-back obligation in cases where competitive sale is essential to establish market value;
(c) the periods allowed for former owners to indicate an intention to purchase and agree terms should be simplified by allowing two months in all cases for indicating an intention to purchase, two months to agree terms other than value and a further six weeks to agree the price;
(d) in the case of future acquisitions, a 25 year cutoff on the obligation to offer back to former owners should apply to agricultural land as it already does to other land;
(e) the terms of sale should include clawback provisions in cases where the planning position of a site is unclear.

The response to consultation indicated a measure of support for all the proposals. There was, however, some concern that the changes at (d) and (e) would unduly weaken the position of former owners or their successors. Having given careful consideration to the views expressed, I remain of the view that the changes are justified. There is no logic in the existing situation whereby the offer-back obligation applies to any agricultural land acquired since 1935 but only for 25 years from the date of acquisition in the case of other land.

Moreover, disposing bodies can face insuperable difficulties in trying to trace successors of owners whose land was acquired perhaps 50 or more years ago. As regards the use of clawback, this is the only practicable means of protecting the taxpayer's interest in cases of exceptional planning sensitivity where it would not be appropriate for a disposing Department itself to take action to clarify the planning position in order to establish the value of the land.

I have therefore concluded that it is right to proceed with all the changes referred to above. The new arrangements will take effect from today. My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Wales and the Secretary of State for Scotland are introducing similar changes following consultation exercises there. The revised procedures are set out in letters issued by my Department and the Welsh Office and in a circular issued by the Scottish Office today.

Council Tax

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library, in hard copy and on floppy disk, the data on each local authority's tax base for council tax purposes supplied to his Department on form CTB.1.

Mr. Howard: Information on forms CTB.1 has been received from all local authorities and is currently being processed. I will place the information for each authority in the Library of the House, as soon as it is available.

Local Government Boundaries

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will happen to reviews of local government boundaries and electoral arrangements which the Local Government Boundary Commission has not completed when it is wound up on 31 October.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. and learned Friend made an order on 6 October under section 30 (3) of the Local Government Act 1992 bringing into force, on 31 October 1992, section 24 of that Act under which the Local Government Boundary Commission, LGBC, is wound up. From that date, responsibility for all outstanding LGBC reviews of local government boundaries or electoral arrangements will rest with the Local Government Commission established on 1 July. We are discussing with the new commission the handling of reviews transferred to it.

Fulmer Main Drainage

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make a decision on Fulmer main drainage.

Mr. Baldry: Very shortly.

Mining Communities

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the impact of pit closures upon individual families and the housing market in mining communities.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 27 October 1992]*: I have been asked to reply.

The social and economic consequences of the proposed pit closures are a cause for deep concern. We have therefore announced a package of measures aimed at economic regeneration of the communities affected and have asked Lord Walker to co-ordinate these measures.

WALES

Disabled Trainees

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of youth training placement trainees have gained qualifications during their training within each training and enterprise council area in Wales in each of the last two years; and if he will indicate the proportion of disabled trainees who have gained qualifications within each training and enterprise council area over the same period.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information relating to the achievement of qualifications on youth training is provided in the tables.

Table 1

Qualifications obtained during 1990-91

	Full qualification Per cent.	*Part qualification Per cent.*
Gwent	26	17
Swansea	35	21
Cardiff	29	19
Wrexham	40	23

The figures relate to the four areas of Wales which existed prior to the setting up of training and enterprise councils, TECs. Reliable figures on qualifications obtained are not available for TECs for 1990-91, since TECs in Wales were mostly operational for only a small part of the year.

Table 2
Qualifications obtained April-December 1991

	Full qualification Per cent.	*Part qualification Per cent.*
Gwent	24	15
West Wales	35	22
Mid Glamorgan	27	19
South Glamorgan	26	15
North West Wales	46	24

These are the latest available figures for TECs, since the follow up of YT leavers is undertaken six months after leaving.

Figures for north-east Wales and Powys are not available owing to the low number of respondents to the follow-up survey in those areas.

Table 3
Qualifications obtained by disabled trainees

	Full qualification Per cent.	*Part qualification Per cent.*
Wales (total)	16	14

This information relates to qualifications obtained in the period April 1990 to March 1991. Because of the relatively small numbers of disabled trainees involved in the survey, information on the basis of individual TECs is not statistically reliable.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the level of opting for grant-maintained status by schools in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There have been 13 parental ballots in Wales on whether to apply for grant maintained status. Of the 10 in favour, three have been approved; three have published their proposals; and two are in the process of assembling their proposals prior to publishing. The applications from the other two schools were turned down. I expect many more applications.

Disabled Pupils

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the local authorities in Wales that currently employ a mobility worker specifically trained to work with disabled children.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Mobility officers are not trained specifically to work with one age group. They work with a range of people who have disabilities, including children, as necessary.

Prince Charles Hospital

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made of the number of surgical beds available at the Prince Charles hospital at Merthyr Tydfil in 1991; and what is the number currently available.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is for surgical specialities as shown in the table.

Prince Charles hospital:
Average beds available daily to surgical specialties[1]

	1991	*1992*
General surgery	89·3	80·8
Trauma and orthopaedics	71·3	73·3
Ear, nose and throat	21·3	19·5
Ophthalmology	17·5	14·6
Oral surgery	10·1	8·7
TOTAL	209·5	196·9

[1] Quarter ending June.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made of the cost of restoring the number of surgical beds before the recent reduction at the Prince Charles hospital, Merthyr Tydfil.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None. This is a matter which falls within the day-to-day management responsibility of Mid Glamorgan health authority.

Economic Report, Mid Glamorgan

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales pursuant to his answer of 24 June, *Official Report*, column *395*, what conclusions his Department has made following its study of the Mid Glamorgan council economic report.

Mr. David Hunt: The report is a careful analysis of the problems and opportunities facing Mid Glamorgan and my officials have taken careful note of its findings. It is not, however, for me to comment publicly on a report produced for the benefit of Mid Glamorgan councillors.

I am, of course, now considering my future policy for the valleys.

Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the names of public appointments that he has made, giving the period for which the appointment was made, relevant qualifications of the appointees and what remuneration each currently receives.

Mr. David Hunt: The names of current appointment holders, showing when their appointment comes to an end, and the remuneration, where received, are listed as follows. All appointments are made on the basis of aptitude and merit.

Public Appointments

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
CARDIFF BAY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION		
Chairman:		
Mr. Geoffrey Inkin, OBE	31,105	2 April 1993
Deputy Chairman:		
Councillor Lord Brooks of Tremorfa	17,545	6 May 1993

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
Members:		
Mrs. Honor Chapman, CBE	4,960	2 April 1995
Mr. Alan Cox, CBE	4,960	2 April 1993
Mr. Hugh Hudson-Davies	4,960	2 April 1993
Mr. B. Thomas	4,960	1 June 1994
Councillor Paddy Kitson	4,960	6 May 1993
Councillor John Phillips	4,960	31 July 1994
Professor Richard Silverman	4,960	2 April 1995
Mr. James Beveridge	4,960	2 April 1995
Councillor Leon Smith	4,960	31 August 1994
Councillor Jeff Sainsbury	4,960	31 July 1994
WELSH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY		
Chairman:		
Dr. Gwyn Jones	42,235	30 September 1994
Deputy Chairman:		
Sir Donald Walters	21,830	1 August 1993
Members:		
Mr. E. Glyn Davies[1]		31 March 1995
Mr. Philip Head[2]		31 December 1993
Mr. Richard Brewster	6,180	30 September 1993
Mr. John Foley, MBE	6,180	28 February 1994
Mr. Ralph Phillip Vinson Rees	6,180	31 December 1992
Mr. David Griffith Roberts, OBE	6,180	31 December 1992
Mr. David Colyn Gardner	6,180	31 December 1992
Mr. David Malpas	6,180	31 December 1992
Dr. Pamela Kirby	6,180	30 November 1994

Notes:

[1] Receives salary as Chairman DBRW.

[2] Receives salary as Chief Executive of WDA.

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES		
Chairman:		
Mr. Michael Griffith CBE, DL	28,470	4 November 1993
Deputy Chairman:		
Professor David Q. Bowen	9,815	4 November 1993
Members:		
Professor Dennis Bellamy	6,135	4 November 1993
Councillor Morgan Chambers	6,135	4 November 1993
Dr. W. Allan Evans	6,135	4 November 1993
Mr. John Harrop	6,135	4 November 1993
Dr. Merylyn Hedger	6,135	4 November 1993
Mr. Tom Jones	6,135	4 November 1993
Mr. Merfyn Williams	6,135	4 November 1993
Dr. Steve Ormerod	6,135	4 November 1993
Mr. Brian Thomas	6,135	4 November 1994
DEVELOPMENT BOARD FOR RURAL WALES		
Chairman:		
Mr. E. Glyn Davies	31,025	31 March 1995
Members:		
Mr. Robert Gee	6,135	31 March 1995
Mr. Ian A. Jones	6,135	31 March 1993
Councillor Veronica Hollis	6,135	31 March 1995
Councillor Andrew M. Leonard	6,135	31 March 1994
Mr. Jeffrey Morgan	6,135	31 March 1995
Mr. Edward Rae OBE	6,135	31 March 1993
Mr. Hywel Roberts	6,135	31 March 1995
Mr. Peter Saunders	6,135	31 March 1994
Sir Donald Walters	6,135	31 March 1993
Councillor Roger Williams	6,135	31 March 1995
Mrs. Christine Lewis	6,135	31 March 1995
Councillor E. J. K. Evans	6,135	31 March 1994

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
WALES TOURIST BOARD		
Chairman:		
Mr. A. R. Lewis	31,025	30 September 1995
Members		
Mrs. Lorna Minors	6,135	16 September 1994
Mr. E. Glyn Davies	6,135	31 March 1995
Mr. David H. Griffith	6,135	16 September 1993
Mr. John Dunscombe	6,135	31 October 1995
Mr. Chris R. Jackson	6,135	18 December 1993
Mrs. Teleri Bevan	6,135	12 October 1995
LAND AUTHORITY FOR WALES		
Chairman:		
Mr. Geoffrey D. Inkin OBE	30,740	25 November 1992
Deputy Chairman:		
Mr. John D. Allen CBE	8,730	29 December 1993
Members		
Mr. R. P. V. Rees	6,135	29 December 1993
Mr. Graham Jones	6,135	29 December 1993
Mr. Walter Rhys-Webb	6,135	29 December 1993
Mr. Ray G. Owen	6,135	29 December 1992
Mr. Alan Edwards	6,135	29 December 1993
Mr. Robert W. S. Knight	6,135	9 February 1995

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
SPORTS COUNCIL FOR WALES		
Chairman:		
Mr. Ossie Wheatley	15,495	31 March 1993
Vice Chairman:		
Mr. Tom Baxter-Wright	8,425	31 March 1993
Members:		
Mr. G. C. Crimp		31 March 1993
Mr. H. Davies		31 March 1993
Mr. T. G. R. Davies		31 March 1993
Mrs. J. Edwards		31 March 1993
Mr. P. Gunn		31 March 1993
Professor D. Herbert		31 March 1993
Councillor Mrs. D. M. J. James		31 March 1993
Councillor Mr. K. F. Powell		31 March 1993
Mr. H. M. Thomas		31 March 1993
Mrs W. Williams		31 March 1993
Councillor W. J. Williams		31 March 1993
Mr. D. R. Turner		31 March 1993
LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES		
Chairman:		
Lady Crawshay	198·44 per day	31 March 1994
Deputy Chairman:		
Mr. R. H. Williams	172·84 per day	31 March 1994
Member:		
Mr. R. Lacey	145·96 per day	31 March 1994
HOUSING FOR WALES		
Chairman:		
Mr. John Allen CBE	28,340	30 November 1994
Deputy Chairman:		
Vacant	8,770	
Members:		
Robert Ellis	3,845	31 May 1994
Mr. James Procter	3,845	30 November 1993
Professor Peter Williams	3,845	30 November 1994
Mr. Michael Murphy	3,845	31 May 1994
Mrs. Julia F. White	3,845	28 February 1995
Vacancy	3,845	

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
NHS TRUSTS		
PEMBROKESHIRE		
Chairman:		
Mr. A. Bowen	—	31 December 1993
Members:		
Mr. R. A. Collins	—	30 November 1995
Mr. D. L. Hughes	—	30 November 1995
Mr. G. T. Noakes	—	30 November 1993
T. S. Smedley	—	30 November 1993
Mrs. M. Thomas	—	30 November 1995
FAMILY HEALTH SERVICE AUTHORITIES		
CLWYD		
Chairman:		
Mrs. R. Atack	11,720	31 August 1996
Non-executive members		
Mr. Thomas Birchall	5,000	31 March 1993
Councillor Neil A. Formstone	5,000	16 September 1994
Mr. Paul D. M. Griffith	5,000	30 November 1992
Mrs. Lynne Hughes	5,000	30 November 1992
Mr. William J. Ridgway	5,000	31 March 1994
Mr. Christopher B. Swale	5,000	16 September 1994
Mrs. Irene J. Train	5,000	31 March 1993
Dr. Peter Wykes	5,000	31 March 1994
Mrs. N. P. (Patsy) Woodward	5,000	30 November 1992
DYFED		
Chairman:		
Mrs. Vanessa J. Bourne	11,720	31 May 1994
Non-executive members:		
Mrs. Anne Bowen	5,000	31 March 1993
Mrs. Brenda L. Davies	5,000	30 November 1992
Mr. Thomas Lloyd	5,000	31 March 1993
Mr. T. O. S. Lloyd	5,000	16 September 1994
Mrs. Anne M. Morris	5,000	30 November 1992
Councillor Edwyn P. Parry	5,000	31 March 1994
Mr. W. J. C. Roberts	5,000	31 March 1994
Mr. David F. Williams	5,000	30 November 1992
Vacancy	—	—

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
GWENT		
Chairman:		
Mr. Kenneth R. C. Rew	11,720	31 May 1994
Non-executive Members:		
Mrs. Estelle Blake	5,000	31 March 1994
Mr. David H. W. Davies	5,000	16 September 1994
Mr. John A. Gallimore	5,000	30 November 1992
Mr. Stuart Geddes	5,000	31 March 1994
Dr. Gregory L. Graham	5,000	31 March 1993
Mr. John F. Ingledew	5,000	16 September 1994
Mr. D. Jones	5,000	31 March 1993
Councillor Peter J. Law, JP	5,000	16 September 1994
Mrs. Patricia A. White	5,000	30 November 1992
GWYNEDD		
Chairman:		
Dr. John E. A. Kenrick	10,845	31 May 1994
Non-executive Members:		
Mrs. E. Barlow	5,000	31 March 1994
Mr. G. Morris Jones	5,000	30 November 1992
Mr. T. Jones	5,000	31 March 1994
Mr. Barry J. Owens	5,000	16 September 1994
Dr. J. G. Roberts	5,000	31 March 1993
Mrs. Lorna Sharer	5,000	16 September 1994

Name	*Remuneration* £	*Current appointment ends*
Mr. Gwyn T. Thomas	5,000	30 November 1992
Mr. Richard N. Thomas	5,000	31 March 1993
Mr. Richard Webb	5,000	30 November 1992
MID GLAMORGAN		
Chairman:		
Mrs. Kathrin E. Thomas	11,720	31 August 1996
Non-executive Members:		
Mrs. Bridget Caroline Dimond	5,000	16 September 1994
Mr. Peter Jenkins	5,000	31 March 1993
Mr. Raymond W. Martin	5,000	30 November 1992
Mr. Ian Price	5,000	31 March 1994
Mrs. Dorothy Richardson	5,000	31 March 1994
Mr. Victor Rizzo	5,000	30 November 1992
Dr. Bipin K. Shah	5,000	31 March 1993
Mr. Edward H. Tiltman	5,000	16 September 1994
Mrs. B. Ladbrooke	5,000	16 September 1994

Name	*Remuneration* £	*Current appointment ends*
POWYS		
Chairman:		
The Hon. Anthony T. Lewis, JP	10,845	31 May 1994
Non-executive Members:		
Mrs. Patricia A. Antill	5,000	31 March 1993
Mr. David S. Baird-Murray	5,000	30 November 1992
Mr. Paul G. J. Davies	5,000	31 March 1994
Mrs. Margaret J. Dodd	5,000	30 November 1992
Miss Barbara Hughes	5,000	16 September 1994
Mr. Hywel Davies	5,000	16 September 1994
Mr. J. D. Roberts-James	5,000	31 March 1993
Dr. Ainsley Reid	5,000	31 March 1994
Mrs. Jean Ryder	5,000	16 September 1994
SOUTH GLAMORGAN		
Chairman:		
Mrs. J. E. Sainsbury	11,720	31 August 1996
Non-executive Members:		
Mr. R. A. Fuge	5,000	31 March 1993
Mr. Richard C. Daniel	5,000	30 November 1992
Mrs. J. Edwards	5,000	31 March 1993
Mr. James H. Leighton	5,000	16 September 1994
Mr. Illtyd R. Lloyd	5,000	30 November 1992
Miss Elizabeth J. Muir	5,000	16 September 1994
Mr. Ian Phillips	5,000	31 March 1994
Mr. Gerald Rapport	5,000	16 September 1994
Dr. Michael T. K. Wheeler	5,000	31 March 1994
WEST GLAMORGAN		
Chairman:		
Mr. Graham L. Jones	11,720	31 August 1996
Non-executive Members:		
Mrs. Jane V. Davies	5,000	16 September 1994
Mr. Robert J. Davies	5,000	30 November 1992
Mr. Alan L. Jones	5,000	31 March 1994
Mr. Gerald Lawler	5,000	16 September 1994
Mr. William G. Rees	5,000	30 November 1992
Mr. Gerald Thomas	5,000	31 March 1993
Mr. Douglas S. Williams	5,000	30 November 1992
Dr. Eleanor M. Williams	5,000	31 March 1993
Vacancy		

Name	*Remuneration* £	*Current appointment ends*
DISTRICT HEALTH AUTHORITIES		
CLWYD		
Chairman:		
Mrs. Anne Lloyd Roberts	19,285	31 July 1994
Non-executive Members:		
Professor T. M. Hayes	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. Trefor G. Jones	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. A. Roberts	5,000	31 October 1992
Mr. John R. Slater	5,000	31 August 1994
Mrs. Angharad Waters	5,000	31 October 1992
EAST DYFED		
Chairman:		
Mr. James S. Thomas	17,145	31 July 1996
Non-executive Members:		
Mrs. Lynette George	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. Emrys W. Jones	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. Peter G. Price	5,000	31 October 1992
Mr. John Williams	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. O. J. Williams	5,000	31 October 1992
GWENT		
Chairman:		
Mr. Roger Newton	19,285	31 July 1994
Non-executive Members:		
Mr. Richard J. Dilnot	5,000	31 August 1994
Dr. Gareth Jones	5,000	31 October 1992
Mrs. Fiona N. Peel	5,000	31 August 1994
Professor Alan Richens	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. Roy C. Stevens	5,000	31 October 1992
GWYNEDD		
Chairman:		
Mr. G. Hulse	17,145	31 July 1994
Non-executive Members:		
Mr. Dilwyn O. Evens	5,000	31 October 1992
Mr. R. Hefin Davies	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. Richard H. P. Oliver	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. John L. Williams	5,000	31 October 1992
Mr. Richard Cuthbertson	5,000	31 August 1994

Name	*Remuneration* £	*Current appointment ends*
MID GLAMORGAN		
Chairman:		
Mr. Bryn Davies, MBE, CBE	19,285	31 July 1994
Non-executive Members:		
Dr. D. Eurof Evans, OBE	5,000	31 October 1992
Mrs. Sandy Grant	5,000	31 October 1992
Professor Oliver P. Gray	5,000	31 October 1992
Mr. Derek W. C. Morgan	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. O. Graham Saunders, OBE	5,000	31 August 1994
PEMBROKESHIRE		
Chairman:		
Mr. John E. Lloyd	15,125	31 July 1996
Non-executive Members:		
Mrs. Rachel P. James	5,000	31 August 1994
Rev. Thomas A. Thomas	5,000	31 October 1992
Dr. Edward R. Verrier Jones	5,000	31 October 1992
Mr. Gerald Henry Monte	5,000	31 August 1994
Vacancy		
POWYS		
Chairman:		
The Hon. Mrs. R. H. P. Price	15,125	31 July 1994
Non-executive Members:		
Major Michael W. F. Dyer	5,000	31 October 1992

Name	*Remuneration* £	*Current appointment ends*
Mr. Hugh Hudson Davies	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. David G. Margetts	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. Richard G. S. Mills	5,000	31 October 1992
Mr. P. R. Swanson	5,000	31 October 1992

Name	*Remuneration* £	*Current appointment ends*
SOUTH GLAMORGAN		
Chairman:		
Mr. I. Grist	19,285	31 July 1996
Non-executive Members:		
Mr. Nigel J. Butcher	5,000	31 October 1992
Professor Sir Herbert L. Duthie	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. Simon M. Jones	5,000	31 October 1992
Mr. John W. Phillips	5,000	31 August 1994
Lady Roisin M. Pill	5,000	31 August 1994
Professor Norman R. I. Robertson	5,000	31 October 1992
WEST GLAMORGAN		
Chairman:		
Mr. P. D. Allen, CBE	19,285	31 August 1994
Non-executive Members:		
M. G. Shellard	5,000	31 August 1994
Professor L. Bloom	5,000	31 October 1992
Mrs. Carolyn Kirby	5,000	31 October 1992
Mr. C. C. Lea	5,000	31 August 1994
Mr. M. Rosser	5,000	31 October 1992
COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCILS		
Clwyd South		
Mr. I. E. Williams		30 June 1996
Mrs. S. C. Cope		30 June 1996
Mr. D. Northwood		30 June 1994
Mrs. P. M. Wood		30 June 1994
Clwyd North		
Mrs. B. A. Thompson		30 June 1996
Mrs. J. B. Thomas		30 June 1996
Mr. D. Elliott		30 June 1994
Mr. H. S. Martin		30 June 1994
Carmarthen/Dinefwr		
Mrs. W. J. Evans		30 June 1996
Mrs. P. M. Carpenter		30 June 1996
Mrs. Z. Jenkins		30 June 1994
Mrs. M. Davies		30 June 1994

Name	*Remuneration* £	*Current appointment ends*
Llanelli/Dinefwr		
Ms. M. E. Senior	—	30 June 1996
Mr. J. H. Owens	—	30 June 1996
Mrs. M. James	—	30 June 1994
Mr. L. C. Murphy	—	30 June 1994
Ceredigion		
Mr. A. L. Gard	—	30 June 1996
Mrs. C. W. Davies	—	30 June 1996
Mrs. M. E. Jenkins	—	30 June 1994
Mrs. I. M. Toney	—	30 June 1994
Pembrokeshire		
Mr. F. B. M. Reynolds	—	30 June 1996
Ms. J. B. Williams	—	30 June 1996
Miss N. I. Lewis	—	30 June 1994
Mrs. C. A. Howells	—	30 June 1994
South Gwent		
Mrs. A. Fletcher	—	30 June 1996
Mrs. N. Patel	—	30 June 1996
Mrs. E. Dixon	—	30 June 1994

Name	*Remuneration* £	*Current appointment ends*
Mr. R. O. Thomas	—	30 June 1994
North Gwent		
Miss E. Tuckwell	—	30 June 1996
Mr. B. R. Hood	—	30 June 1996
Mrs. M. J. Smart	—	30 June 1994
Mrs. J. E. Davies	—	30 June 1994
Aberconwy		
Mrs. M. Oliver	—	30 June 1996
Mr. J. Cockburn	—	30 June 1996
Mr. L. M. Wyn-Roberts	—	30 June 1994

Name	*Remuneration* £	*Current appointment ends*
ARFON/DWYFOR		
Mrs. W. F. T. Watkin	—	30 June 1996
Mrs. V. E. Roberts	—	30 June 1994
Miss R. Lister	—	30 June 1996
Mrs. G. A. Richards	—	30 June 1996
Vacancy	—	—
MEIRIONYDD		
Mr. R. H. Allen	—	30 June 1996
Mr. E. M. Davies	—	30 June 1994
YNYS MÔN		
Miss E. Hughes	—	30 June 1996
Mr. R. A. Johnson	—	30 June 1994
Mrs. E. E. Hughes	—	30 June 1994
EAST GLAMORGAN		
Mrs. J. E. Evans	—	30 June 1996
Mrs. O. J. Leebrooke	—	30 June 1996
Mr. M. W. Davies	—	30 June 1994
Councillor F. L. Thomas	—	30 June 1994
MERTHYR/CYNON VALLEY		
Miss E. O. Evans	—	30 June 1996
Mrs. M. Howard-Jones	—	30 June 1996
Mrs. D. M. Griffiths	—	30 June 1994
Mrs. B. Brown	—	30 June 1994
OGWR		
Captain M. Wilcox	—	30 June 1996
Mrs. M. C. Evans	—	30 June 1994
Mrs. Y. M. Griffiths	—	30 June 1994
RHYMNEY VALLEY		
Mr. B. W. Rees	—	30 June 1996
Mr. K. Perryman	—	30 June 1996
Mrs. M. Roberts	—	30 June 1994
Vacancy	—	—
BRECON/RADNOR		
Mrs. A. Davies	—	30 June 1996
Mrs. K. M. Tinsley	—	30 June 1996
Mr. J. Davies	—	30 June 1994
Mrs. M. V. Morgan	—	30 June 1994

Name	*Remuneration* £	*Current appointment ends*
Montgomery		
Mr. O. R. Dodd	—	30 June 1996
Mrs. M. A. Morgan	—	30 June 1996
Cardiff		
Mrs. M. Williams	—	30 June 1996
Mr. G. H. Miles	—	30 June 1994
Mr. C. M. Williams	—	30 June 1994
Vacancy		

Name	Remuneration £	Current appointment ends
Vale of Glamorgan		
Mrs. S. L. Greensmith	—	30 June 1996
Mr. S. U. Sufyan	—	30 June 1996
Mrs. M. A. Campbell	—	30 June 1994
Mr. R. G. Pugh	—	30 June 1994
Neath/Port Talbot		
Mrs. J. H. Thomas	—	30 June 1996
Mrs. B. I. Tyler	—	30 June 1996
Mr. J. Warman	—	30 June 1994
Mrs. B. E. Wheadon	—	30 June 1994
Swansea/Lliw Valley		
Mrs. S. M. Langdon	—	30 June 1996
Miss J. E. Bassett	—	30 June 1996
Mrs. P. R. Moore	—	30 June 1994
Dr. B. Shepperdson	—	30 June 1994
Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances		
Dr. G. W. Phillips	—	31 January 1995
Advisory Council on Misuse of Drugs		
Dr. W. B. Clee	—	31 December 1992
Dr. M. R. Keen	—	31 December 1992
Dr. D. J. Temple	—	31 December 1992
Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work		
Dr. T. Jones	—	31 August 1995
Mr. A. Hazell	—	31 August 1994

Name	Remuneration £	Current appointment ends
Committee on Dental and Surgical Materials		
Dr. J. R. Larke	—	31 December 1995
Mr. T. D. Turner	—	31 December 1995
Committee on Safety of Medicines		
Dr. W. A. Jerrett	—	31 December 1996
Dental Auxiliaries Committee		
Mrs. J. M. Prior	—	31 August 1996
Intermediate Treatment Fund Trust		
Mr. C. Weston-Evans	—	Indefinite Period
Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation		
Professor G. C. Crompton	—	31 March 1993
Medical Practices Committee		
Dr. S. McHugh	—	31 March 1994
Medicines Commission		
Professor J. Rhodes	—	31 December 1993
Professor P. Spencer	—	31 December 1995
National Radiological Protection Board		
Professor G. M. Roberts	—	30 September 1993
Public Health Laboratory Service Board		
Professor G. C. Crompton	—	31 July 1994
Standing Dental Advisory Committee		
Professor R. M. Green	—	31 March 1996
Standing Medical Advisory Committee		
Vacancy	—	
Professor A. Richens	—	31 March 1994
Standing Nursing and Midwifery Advisory Committee		
Mr. M. J. Vince	—	31 March 1996
Vacancy		

Name	*Remuneration* £	*Current appointment ends*
Standing Pharmaceutical Advisory Committee for England and Wales		
Professor P. Spencer		31 March 1994
Mental Health Act Commission		
Mr. R. G. Bevan	111 per day	31 July 1996
Mrs. C. M. Llewellyn-Jones	111 per day	31 August 1994
Mr. M. J. Graham	111 per day	31 August 1995
Mr. J. Allam	111 per day	31 August 1993
Mrs. A. R. Mumford	111 per day	31 August 1993
Prof. B. C. Diamond (Mrs.)	111 per day	31 August 1995
Mrs. M. R. Roberts	111 per day	31 March 1995
Mr. G. Bye	111 per day	31 August 1993
Dr. M. Harper	111 per day	31 August 1995
Dr. I. G. Price	111 per day	31 March 1995
All Wales Advisory Panel on the Development of Services for People with a Mental Handicap		
Chairman:		
Mr. I. H. Lightman, CB	—	31 August 1993
Members:	—	
Mr. David Towell	—	31 August 1995
Mr. Gerald Wishow	—	31 August 1995
Professor Davids Sines	—	31 August 1995
Professor William Fraser	—	31 August 1995
Mr. Gareth Jones	—	31 August 1995
Mr. Graham Harper	—	31 August 1995
Dr. David Whitlow	—	31 August 1995
Mrs. Philippa Russell	—	31 August 1995
Professor Maurice Chazan	—	31 August 1993
HEALTH PROMOTION AUTHORITY FOR WALES		
Chairman:		
Mr. J. I. Davies	15,125	31 March 1996
Non-executive Members:		
Dr. B. N. C. Littlepage	5,000	31 March 1993
Mr. R. Cuthbertson	5,000	31 March 1995
Mr. H. D. Griffiths	5,000	31 March 1995
Mr. J. Thomas	5,000	31 March 1995
Mrs. C. E. Lewis	5,000	31 March 1993
Mr. R. C. May-Hill	5,000	31 March 1994
Miss A. Thomas	5,000	31 March 1993

Name	*Remuneration* £	*Current appointment ends*
Welsh Committee for Postgraduate Pharmaceutical Education		
Mr. I. Phillips		31 March 1995
Miss C. W. Howells		31 March 1995
Mrs. M. Rawlins		31 March 1995
Mrs. S. M. E. Cockbill		31 March 1995
Professor P. S. J. Spencer		31 March 1995
Dr. D. N. A. Armstrong		31 March 1995
Mr. D. A. Morgan		31 March 1995
Mr. D. Baker		31 March 1995
Mr. M. A. Pollard		31 March 1995
Welsh National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting		
Dr. J. Andrews		14 September 1993
Mr. G. Boulton		14 September 1993
Professor B. Davies		14 September 1993
Dr. D. Harrett		14 September 1993
Mr. D. C. Jones-Davies		14 September 1993
Mrs. D. A. Keddie		14 September 1993
Mrs. A. V. Males		14 September 1993
Mrs. S. B. Nuttall		14 September 1993
Mrs. T. J. Parry		14 September 1993
Mr. N. S. Towns		14 September 1993
Mrs. B Wroe		14 September 1993
Vacancy		
Welsh Health Common Services Authority		
Chairman:		

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
Mr. John Wyn Owen		Coterminous with appointment as NHS Wales Director
Members:		
Mr. N. Kirk		Coterminous with appointment as Chief Executive WHCSA
Mr. K. James	5,000	31 January 1994
Mr. R. Ellis	5,000	31 January 1994
Mr. K. White	5,000	31 July 1993
Housing Management Advisory Panel		
Chairman:		
Professor Peter Williams		30 June 1993
Members:		
Mr. Williams Evans		30 June 1993
Mr. Ken Nicholas		30 June 1993
Mrs. Christine O'Meara		30 June 1993
Mr. Fred Boncham		20 June 1993
Ms. Elaine Ballard		20 June 1993

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
Saundersfoot Harbour Commission		
Mr. E. A. Phillips	—	31 May 1994
Mr. B. Waters	—	31 May 1994
Welsh Scheme for the Development of Health and Social Research		
Chairman:		
Professor S. Kilpatrick	—	1 September 1994
Vice Chairman:		
Professor I. Kellaway	—	1 September 1994
Members:		
Professor J. Blackman	—	1 September 1992 (under review)
Professor Sir Herbert Duthie	—	1 September 1992 (under review)
Dr. A. Eleri Edwards	—	1 September 1994
Dr. P. Elwood	—	1 September 1992 (under review)
Dr. D. Felce	—	1 September 1994
Professor P. Harper	—	1 September 1994
Professor D. Lloyd	—	1 September 1994
Vacancy		
Dr. J. S. Morris	—	1 September 1992 (under review)
Dr. J. A. V. Pritchard	—	Permanent
Dr. M. Riley	—	1 September 1994
Professor N. R. E. Robertson	—	1 September 1994
Mrs. G. M. Stephens	—	1 September 1994
Dr. T. Geraint Williams	—	1 February 1995
Professor J. Woodcock	—	1 February 1995
CURRICULUM COUNCIL FOR WALES		
Chairman:		
Mr. Richard Daugherty	10,200	31 August 1994
Deputy Chairman:		
Mr. Ieuan Price	5,500	31 August 1994
Members:		
Mr. Allen Williams	—	31 July 1994
Dr. Eleri Wyn Lewis	—	31 July 1994
Mrs. Gillian Jeffreys	—	31 December 1992
Mr. Keith McDonagh	—	31 July 1994
Mr. Ieuan Lloyd Roberts	—	31 July 1993
Mr. Paul Rich	—	31 July 1994
Mrs. Karin Davies	—	31 July 1994

Name	*Remuneration* £	*Current appointment ends*
Mrs. Kay Edwards	—	31 July 1994
Mr. Dafydd Whittal	—	31 July 1994
Mr. Stuart Hockey	—	31 July 1994
Mrs. Penny Ryan	—	31 July 1994
Mr. Ivor Evenden	—	31 July 1994

Name	*Remuneration* £	*Current appointment ends*
National Museum of Wales		
Court and Council		
Rt. Hon. Lord Rees QC	—	8 February 1994
Mr. Roger Geraint Thomas	—	8 February 1994
Mr. M. J. M. Clarke	—	8 February 1994
Mr. A. Creunant Davies	—	8 February 1994
Court only		
Mr. J. E. Hugh Rees	—	8 February 1994
Professor Eric Sunderland	—	8 February 1994
National Library of Wales		
Court		
Mr. Jeffrey W. Morgan	—	19 April 1996
Mr. Roy Luff	—	19 April 1996
Mr. Ifan Moelwyn Hughes	—	19 April 1996
Mr. John Watkin	—	19 April 1996
Council		
Mr. Ifan Moelwyn Hughes	—	17 May 1994
Mr. John Watkin	—	17 May 1994
Mr. Roy Luff	—	17 July 1994
Library and Information Services Council Wales		
Chairman:		
Mr. W. Gwyn Williams	—	30 September 1995
Members:		
Ms. Tudfil Adams	—	30 September 1993
Mr. Keith Bray	—	30 September 1993
Mr. R. Ieuan Edwards	—	30 September 1993
Dr. Ian Lovecy	—	31 December 1993
Dr. Brynley F. Roberts	—	28 February 1994
Mr. Hywel E. Roberts	—	30 September 1995
Mr. John Lancaster	—	30 September 1994
Ms. Lynda Garfield	—	30 September 1995

Name	*Remuneration* £	*Current appointment ends*
Welsh Language Board		
Chairman:		
Mr. John Elfed Jones	—	31 July 1994
Members		
Mr. Ron Jones	—	31 July 1994
Councillor Peter Law	—	31 July 1994
Mr. Edward Rea, OBE	—	31 July 1994
Mr. Winston Roddick, QC	—	31 July 1994
Mrs. E. Closs Stephens	—	31 July 1994
Prof Eric Sunderland	—	31 July 1994
Mr. Eurwyn Ogwen Williams	—	31 July 1994
Place Names Advisory Committee		
Chairman:		
Professor Gwynedd Pierce	350[1]	N/A
Member:		
Mr. Tomas Roberts	250[1]	N/A
HIGHER EDUCATION CORPORATIONS (INITIAL APPOINTMENTS)		
University of Glamorgan (formerly Polytechnic of Wales)		
Chairman:		
Mr. Rudi Plaut	—	—
Vice-Chairman:		

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
Mr. Roy Cull	—	—
Members:		
Dr. Gareth Jones	—	31 March 1995
Mr. Peter Kelly	—	31 March 1995
Mr. R. P. V. Rees	—	31 March 1995
Professor Sir William Taylor, CBE	—	31 March 1995
Dr. Don B. Thomas	—	31 March 1995
Mrs. Jane Evelyn Thomas	—	31 March 1995
Dr. John Thynne	—	31 March 1995
Mr. Roberts Watts	—	31 March 1995
Swansea Institute of Higher Education		
Chairman:		
Mr. Carl E. Hadley	—	—
Vice-Chairman:		
Mr. W. E. Edwards	—	—
Members		
Mr. Colin Adlam	—	31 March 1995
Professor Brian L. Clarkson	—	31 March 1995
Mr. R. E. T. Davies	—	31 March 1995
Mr. R. Davies-Evans	—	31 March 1995
Mr. Cyril Goldstone	—	31 March 1995
Mr. Illtyd R. Lloyd	—	31 March 1995
Ms. Val Feld	—	31 March 1995

[1] Honorarium

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
Cardiff Institute of Higher Education		
Chairman:		
Councillor Peter Perkins		
Vice-Chairman:		
Mr.Gordon L. Harrhy		
Members:		
Mr. Tom Morgan	—	31 March 1995
Dr. Rita Austin	—	31 March 1995
Mr. J. K. Brown MBE	—	31 March 1995
Mr. A. B. Connolly	—	31 March 1995
Mr. Robert Knight	—	31 March 1995
Professor M. W. Roberts	—	31 March 1995
Mr. Paul Sheldon	—	31 March 1995
Ms. Sarah Dawson	—	31 March 1995
Welsh College of Music and Drama		
Chairman:		
Geraint Stanley Jones		
Vice-Chairman:		
Rev. Bob Morgan		
Members:		
Mr. Michael Boyce	—	31 March 1995
Mr. Huw Davies	—	31 March 1995
Mr. Frank Lincoln	—	31 March 1995
Mr. Tom Owen	—	31 March 1995
Ms. Sian Phillips	—	31 March 1995
Mr. Chris Ryde	—	31 March 1995
Mr. Adrian Trickey	—	31 March 1995
Gwent College of Higher Education		
Chairman:		
Mr. Alan Burton		
Vice-Chairman:		
Mr. Elwyn Tudno Jones		
Members:		
Mr. G. T. Canning	—	31 March 1995
Miss Susan Kent	—	31 March 1995
Ms. Sally Medlyn	—	31 March 1995

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
Mr. Roger Peachey	—	31 March 1995
Professor P. S. J. Spencer	—	31 March 1995
Mr. Nigel Williams	—	31 March 1995

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
Coleg Normal Bangor		
Chairman:		
Mr. Gwilym Humphreys		
Vice-Chairman		
Mr. Alun Evans		
Members:		
Mr. T. Burman	—	31 March 1995
Mr. R. Hefin Davies, MBE	—	31 March 1995
Mr. Tom Jones	—	31 March 1995
Mr. H. I. G. Roberts	—	31 March 1995
Professor G. R. Sagar, CBE	—	31 March 1995
Mrs. Eurwen Thomas	—	31 March 1995
Court of the Governors of University College of Swansea		
Mr. P. H. J. Meyer	—	31 August 1994
Dr. Gwyn Jones	—	31 August 1995
Mr. Peter Scott	—	31 August 1993
Court of the Governors of University College of North Wales		
Mr. Roy Bichan	—	31 July 1993
Court of the Governors of University College of Aberystwyth		
Mr. J. M. James	—	31 August 1994
Dr. D. E. Evans	—	31 August 1994
Mr. Meurig Rees	—	31 August 1994
Mr. Geraint Stanley Jones	—	31 December 1992
Court of the Governors of St. David's University College Lampeter		
Mr. Robert Gee	—	30 April 1994
HISTORIC BUILDINGS COUNCIL FOR WALES		
Chairman:		
Mr. Thomas Lloyd	4,310	30 April 1995
Members:		
Professor John Eynon	—	30 September 1995
The Earl Lloyd George	—	30 September 1995
Dr. Prys Morgan	—	30 September 1995
Mr. Lindsay Evans	—	30 September 1994
Mr. Richard Haslam	—	30 September 1994
Mrs. Sara Furse	—	30 September 1995
Dr. Simon Unwin	—	30 September 1995

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board		
Chairman:		
Mr. Roy Bichan		31 December 1994
Members:		
Dr. A. S. Folwell		31 December 1993
Mr. K. Hodge		31 December 1994
Mr. D. Jenkins		31 December 1993
Mr. H. G. Jones		31 December 1992
Mr. T. J. Jones OBE		31 December 1992
Mr. M. Wallace OBE		31 December 1993
Mr. M. J. Reilly		31 December 1994
Brecon Beacons National Park		

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
Chairman:		
Mr. R. H. Williams		
Vice-Chairman:		
Mr. D. Jones		
Members:		
The Hon. Mrs. E. S. J. Legge-Bourke		31 March 1995
Dr. C. S. Briggs		31 March 1995
Dr. D. Jones		31 March 1995
Mr. D. Harvey		31 March 1993
Mrs. R. Harris		31 March 1993
Mrs. J. Hosie		31 March 1993
Dr. J. C. Venus		31 March 1994
Ms. S. Price		31 March 1994
Mr. A. Michael		31 March 1994
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Committee		
Chairman:		
Mr. D. Halket-Jones		
Vice-Chairman:		
Mr. R. Pratt		31 March 1995
Members:		
Mr. C. Parry		31 March 1995
Mr. W. Evans		31 March 1995
Mr. P. Mould		31 March 1993
Mrs. C. Barton		31 March 1994
Mr. A. Rhys Davies		31 March 1994

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
Snowdonia National Park Committee		
Chairman:		
Mr. J. Tudor	—	—
Vice-Chairman:		
Mr. F. Jones	—	—
Members:		
Mr. J. Dale	—	31 March 1995
Mr. E. C. Roberts	—	31 March 1993
Dr. M. B. Alcock	—	31 March 1993
Mr. R. Collister	—	31 March 1993
Mr. J. Lloyd-Jones	—	31 March 1994
Mr. D. Tomos	—	31 March 1994
Mrs. F. Lynch	—	31 March 1994
Mr. A. Jones	—	31 March 1994
Regional Flood Defence Committee (National Rivers Authority)		
Chairman:		
Mr. M. A. McLaggan	[1]10,925	31 March 1994
Members:		
Mr. R. Ap Simon Jones	[1]3,620	31 March 1994
Mr. W. N. Waters	[1]3,620	31 March 1994
Mr. L. T. Chase	[1]3,620	31 March 1994
Mr. P. J. Perkins	[1]3,620	31 March 1994
Mr. J. W. Hughes	[1]3,620	31 March 1994
Mr. J. Llewellyn	Nil	31 March 1994
National Rivers Authority: Welsh Regional Board Member		
Professor R. W. Edwards	18,350 (paid by NRA)	31 October 1992
National Rivers Authority: Advisory Committee for Wales		
Chairman:		
Professor R. W. Edwards[3]	—	—
Members:		
Lord Moran KCMG[2]	—	—
Mr. M. A. McLaggan JP[1,2]	—	—
Dr. T. H. Y. Tebutt[2]	—	—
Councillor J. D. A. Thompson JP	—	28 February 1993

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
Mr. B. Riddleston	—	28 February 1993
Dr. S. Tyler	—	28 February 1993
Mr. L. E. Taylor[3]	—	—

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[1] Paid by National Rivers Authority.

[2] Appointed for as long as they are Chairmen of various National Rivers Authority regional committees.

[3] Appointed for as long as he is a member of the National Rivers Authority.

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee		
Members:		
Mr. D. J. O. Chant		30 June 1993
Mr. P. G. Davies		30 June 1993
Mr. H. G. Evans		30 June 1993
Mr. W. R. Garner		30 June 1993
Mr. G. M. Hughes		30 June 1993
Mr. R. J. Packman		30 June 1993
Dr. S. E Shackley		30 June 1993
Mr. R. S. Shaw		30 June 1993
Mr. J. I. Stock		30 June 1993
Consumers Committees for Great Britain and for England and Wales		
Members:		
Mrs. M. J. Roberts	Nil	7 January 1994
Miss B. Brookes	Nil	15 April 1994
*Intervention Board Executive Agency**		
Member:		
Mr. O. Rees, CB	Nil	21 February 1995
*Meat and Livestock Commission—Consumers Committee**		
Member:		
Mrs. S. Roberts	Nil	30 September 1995
*Milk and Dairies Tribunal for Wales**		
Member:		
Mr. L. N. H. George	£88 per day	1 February 1993
*Food from Britain**		
Member:		
Mr. A Evans, OBE	£1,895 (under review)	22 September 1992
*British Wool Marketing Board**		
Member:		
Mr. C. Jones	£5,925	24 September 1995
*Committees of Investigation for Great Britain and for England and Wales**		
Member:		
Mr. H. Humphreys Jones	£73 per day	5 December 1994

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* Bodies for which the Secretary of State makes some or all appointments jointly with other Ministers.

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
Home Grown Cereals Authority[1]		
Member:		
Mr. D. F. R. George	2,940	2 June 1995
Meat and Livestock Commission[1]		
Member:		
Mr. R. E. M. Rees CBE	6,140	31 March 1995
Milk Marketing Board[1]		
Member:		
Mr. J. M. Williams	13,600	31 August 1993
Potato Marketing Board[1]		
Mr. G. Hawkins	3,453	4 November 1994

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
Hill Farming Advisory Committee for England, Wales and Northern Ireland		
Chairperson:		
Lord Howe	Nil	Not specified
Deputy Chairman:		
Mr. Alun Evans, OBE	Nil	14 February 1995
Members:		
Mr. P. Cornelius	Nil	14 February 1995
Mr. Charles Armstrong	Nil	14 February 1995
Mr. Henry Bainbridge	Nil	14 February 1995
Mr. John Dowson	Nil	14 February 1995
Mrs. A. Cowan	Nil	14 February 1995
Mrs. J. Gilman	Nil	14 February 1995
Mrs. G. Jones	Nil	14 February 1995
Mr. Edmund Morphet	Nil	14 February 1995
Mr. Thomas Roskilly	Nil	14 February 1995
Mr. John Sayer	Nil	14 February 1995
Mr. John Tamplin	Nil	14 February 1995
Mrs. R. Mudge	Nil	14 February 1995
Mr. Campbell Tweed	Nil	14 February 1995
Mr. J. Vaughan	Nil	14 February 1995

[1] Bodies for which the Secretary of State makes some or all appointments jointly with other Ministers.

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
Sub Committee for Wales of the Hill Farming Advisory Committee for England, Wales and Northern Ireland		
Chairman:		
Mr. Alun Evans, OBE	Nil	14 February 1995
Members:		
Mr. H. Bainbridge	Nil	14 February 1995
Mr. R. Howells	Nil	14 February 1995
Mrs. G. Jones	Nil	14 February 1995
Mr. C. Lewis	Nil	14 February 1995
Mr. W. Lloyd	Nil	14 February 1995
Mr. J. Price	Nil	14 February 1995
Mr. C. Pugh	Nil	14 February 1995
Mr. John Tamplin, OBE	Nil	14 February 1995
Mr. J. Vaughan	Nil	14 February 1995
Agriculture Advisory Panel for Wales		
Chairman:		
Mr. R. E. M. Rees	Nil	31 October 1992
Members:		
Mr. J. A. Parry	Nil	31 October 1992
Mr. D. F. R. George	Nil	31 October 1992
Mr. D. Williams	Nil	31 October 1992
Mr. E. H. Perkins	Nil	31 October 1993
Mr. R. C. Pratt	Nil	31 October 1993
Mrs. A. M. Rees	Nil	31 October 1992
Mr. J. R. Gill	Nil	31 October 1993
Mr. M. S. Pickering	Nil	31 October 1993
Mr. T. H. Jones	Nil	31 October 1994
Mrs. T. Adams	Nil	31 October 1994
Mr. F. J. Morgan	Nil	31 October 1994
Mrs. R. Rowlands	Nil	31 October 1994

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
Rent Assessment Panel for Wales		
Professional:		
D. R. Davies	172 per day	31 December 1992
L. J. Edwards	172 per day	31 December 1992
J. H. Firman	172 per day	31 December 1992
R. B. Griffiths	172 per day	31 December 1992
W. H. Griffiths	172 per day	31 December 1992
G. H. Joy	172 per day	31 December 1992
W. R. G. James	172 per day	31 December 1992
V. A. Kenneally	172 per day	31 December 1992

Name	*Remuneration* £	*Current appointment ends*
J. Lewis	172 per day	31 December 1992
J. Lingard	172 per day	31 December 1992
J. G. Lloyd	172 per day	31 December 1992
P. K. Lucas	172 per day	31 December 1992
V. E. A. Morris	172 per day	31 December 1992
D. B. Phillips	172 per day	31 December 1992
Mrs. R. Pomfret	172 per day	31 December 1992
J. A. W. Protheroe	172 per day	31 December 1992
R. L. Thompson	172 per day	31 December 1992
G. B. Travis	172 per day	31 December 1992
H. M. Tudor	172 per day	31 December 1992
N. O. Tyler	172 per day	31 December 1992
D. S. Williams	172 per day	31 December 1992
Lay Member:		
Mrs. J. Aitken	110 per day	31 December 1992
C. W. Bickley	110 per day	31 December 1992
D. J. I. Davies	110 per day	31 December 1992
Mrs. E. Elias	110 per day	31 December 1992
County Councillor E. K. Griffiths	110 per day	31 December 1992
D. A. Jones	110 per day	31 December 1992
W. Jones	110 per day	31 December 1992
Mrs. M. A. Mason JP	110 per day	31 December 1992
C. J. Noott	110 per day	31 December 1992
J. R. Pritchard JP	110 per day	31 December 1992
Mrs. K. M. Provis JP	110 per day	31 December 1992
Mr. E. M. Richards	110 per day	31 December 1992
Mr. I. C. Williams	110 per day	31 December 1992
H. H. Roberts	110 per day	31 December 1992
Mrs. C. E. M. Borland	110 per day	31 December 1992
M. I. Jones	110 per day	31 December 1992
J. Hensham	110 per day	31 December 1992

Name	*Remuneration* £	*Current appointment ends*
Committee on Agricultural Valuation Wales		
Chairperson:		
Mr. J. R. Mathias	T and S only	28 February 1993
Members:		
Mr. C. H. Arkell	T and S only	28 February 1993
Mr. F. G. Grounds	T and S only	28 February 1993
Mr. T. Hammett	T and S only	28 February 1993
Mr. J. H. Harris	T and S only	28 February 1993
Mr. H. B. Knight	T and S only	28 February 1993
Mr. K. R. McDiarmid	T and S only	28 February 1993
Mr. J. A. Pallister	T and S only	28 February 1993
Mr. T. W. Sale	T and S only	28 February 1993
Mr. T. G. Shearman	T and S only	28 February 1993
Mr. R. V. Stone	T and S only	28 February 1993
Mr. R. Thomas	T and S only	28 February 1993
Mr. G. A. Wadsworth, Chem, DIC.	T and S only	28 February 1993
Mr. G. T. Williams, JP	T and S only	28 February 1993
Agricultural Wages Committee and Agricultural Dwelling House Advisory Committees		
Clwyd		
Chairperson:		
Mr. T. Jones	66 over 5 hrs 35 under 5 hrs	
Members:		
Mr. J. E. Ambrose	52 over 5 hrs	31 December 1992
Mr. I. G. Richards	26 under 5 hrs	31 December 1993
Dyfed		
Chairperson		
Mrs. E. D. Williams	66 over 5 hrs 35 under 5 hrs	31 December 1993
Members:		
Mr. G. Davies	52 over 5 hrs	31 December 1993
Mrs. E. Jenkins	26 under 5 hrs	31 December 1993

Name	*Remuneration* £	*Current appointment ends*
Glamorgan		
Chairperson		
Mr. D. R. I. Williams	66 over 5 hrs 35 under 5 hrs	
Members:		
Mr. P. T. Hart	52 under 5 hrs	31 December 1992
Mrs. S. E. L. Reeve	26 under 5 hrs	31 December 1992

Name	*Remuneration* £	*Current appointment ends*
Gwent		
Chairperson:		
Mr. J. L. Evans	66 over 5 hours 35 under 5 hours	31 December 1993
Members:		
Mrs. A. L. Heynes	—	31 December 1992
Mrs. J. M. Williams	—	31 December 1993
Gwynedd		
Chairperson:		
Mr. T. H. Morgan	66 over 5 hours 35 under 5 hours	
Members:		
M. R. R. Harris	—	31 December 1993
Dr. E. Lloyd Evans	—	31 December 1992
Powys		
Chairperson:		
Mr. W. G. Davies, MBE	66 over 5 hours 35 under 5 hours	
Members:		
Mrs. L. A. Davies	—	31 December 1993
Canon E. C. John	—	31 December 1992
Forestry Commission Reference/Committee Panel (Wales)		
Members:		
Mr. P. L. Marriott	—	30 November 1993
Mr. R. A. Smart	—	30 November 1993
Mr. C. H. W. Griffiths	—	30 November 1993
Mr. W. B. Walker	—	30 November 1993
Urban Investment Grant Appraisal Panel		
Chairman:		
Sir Melvyn Rosser	—	31 May 1993
Mr. P. Laing	—	31 May 1993
Mr. R. Lacey	—	31 May 1993
Mr. S. Lindsay	—	31 May 1993
Mr. D. Schwarz	—	31 May 1993
Mr. R. James	—	31 May 1995
Mr. K. Doolan	—	31 May 1995

Note:

Chairpersons of AWC's are not appointed by the Secretary of State but by members of the Committee itself, from one of the two independent members who are Secretary of State appointments.

Name	*Remuneration* £	*Current appointment ends*
Agricultural Wages Board		
Chairperson:		
Professor J. Marsh	172/meeting + 35 reading allowance + t & s	31 July 1993
Members:		
Mr. H. Hughes	110/meeting + t & s	31 July 1993
Mrs. J. E. Thomas	110/meeting + t & s	30 July 1993

Name	*Remuneration* £	*Current appointment ends*
Part-time Forestry Commissioners		
Mr. I. D. Coutts	6,140	30 September 1993
Mr. T. S. Mallinson	6,140	30 September 1993
United Kingdom Seeds Executive		
Chairman:		
Professor J. C. Murdoch	8,000 + t & s	21 November 1992
Members:		
Mr. J. M. Harley	2,500 + t & s	21 November 1992
Mr. P. R. Hayward	2,500 + t & s	21 November 1992
Mr. T. M. Clucas	2,500 + t & s	21 November 1992
Professor J. D. Hayes	2,500 + t & s	21 November 1992
Departmental Members:		
Mr. J. Harvey	Nil	21 November 1992
Mr. D. R. Thomas	Nil	21 November 1992
Mr. I. M. Whitelaw	Nil	21 November 1992
Mr. I. C. Henderson	Nil	21 November 1992
National Institute of Agricultural Botany Council		
Members:		
Dr. F. B. Ellis	Nil	28 November 1993
Professor J. L. Stoddart	Nil	31 July 1993
Mr. R. B. Nelstrop	Nil	4 October 1992
Plant Variety and Seeds Tribunal		
Members:		
General Agriculture:		
Professor G. R. Dickson	110/day + t & s	30 September 1993
Mr. A. G. Harris	110/day + t & s	30 September 1993
General Horticulture:		
Professor G. R. Dixon	—	30 September 1993

Name	*Remuneration* £	*Current appointment ends*
CEREALS		
Mr. D. M. Barling	—	31 October 1993
STRAWBERRIES		
D. J. K. Jones	—	30 April 1993
ANCIENT MONUMENTS BOARD FOR WALES		
Chairman:		
Professor Glanmor Williams	—	31 March 1995
Members		
Mr. R. G. Keen	—	31 March 1995
Mr. R. B. Heaton	—	31 March 1995
Miss F. M. Lynch	—	31 March 1995
Professor J. B. Smith	—	31 March 1995
Professor R. R. Davies	—	31 March 1993
Dr. S. Aldhouse-Green	—	31 March 1993
Professor W. H. Manning	—	31 March 1993
Mr. D. Moore	—	31 March 1993
Dr. P. Smith	—	31 March 1993
WALES YOUTH AGENCY		
Chairman:		
Mr. Gerald Davies	2,500	31 March 1995
Vice Chairman:		
Dr. Howard Williamson	2,500	31 March 1995
Members:		
Miss Sara Edwards	—	1 September 1995
Mrs B. Martin	—	1 September 1995
Miss M. Herbert	—	1 September 1995
Mr. D. Allen	—	31 March 1995
Mrs. A. Hughes	—	31 March 1995
Mr. B. Jones	—	31 March 1995

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
Mr. D. Jones	—	31 March 1995
Mr. B. Thirsk	—	31 March 1995
Mr. P. Williams	—	31 March 1995

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
Higher Education Funding Council for Wales		
Chairman:		
Sir Idris Pearce	10,500	5 May 1995
Members:		
Professor Sir John Cadogan	2,000	5 May 1995
Mr. Alan Cox	2,000	5 May 1995
Professor Sir Sam Edwards	2,000	5 May 1995
Mr. Michael Griffith	2,000	5 May 1995
Professor Richard Griffiths	2,000	5 May 1995
Sir Philip Jones	2,000	5 May 1995
Mr. Alfred Morris	2,000	5 May 1995
Dr. Brynley Roberts	2,000	5 May 1995
Dr. Ann Robinson	2,000	5 May 1995
Dr. Robert H. Jones	2,000	30 June 1995
Further Education Funding Council for Wales		
Chairman:		
Mr. Malcolm Wallace	18,500	5 May 1995
Members:		
Mrs. P. Ryan	2,000	30 May 1995
Mr. J. Cocks	2,000	30 May 1995
Mr. K. Thomas	2,000	30 May 1995
Dr. J. Walters	2,000	30 May 1995
Mrs. S Stansford	2,000	30 May 1995
Mr. G. Walshe	2,000	30 May 1995
Mr. H. Jones	2,000	30 May 1995
Mr. D. Margetts	2,000	30 May 1995
Mr. R. Webster	2,000	30 May 1995
Mr. S. Dunster	2,000	30 May 1995

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
Welsh Committee on Drug Misuse	—	
Chairman:		
Mr. P. Williams	—	31 March 1993
—		
Members:		
Mrs. S. J. Jones	—	31 March 1993
Dr. S. Palmer	—	31 March 1993
Miss M. H. Jones	—	31 March 1993
Dr. M. R. Keen	—	31 March 1993
Mr. R. M. Pates	—	31 March 1993
Dr. D. J. Temple	—	31 March 1993
Mr. J. Wreford	—	31 March 1993
Mr. D. J. Allen	—	31 March 1993
Dr. D. Bevan	—	31 March 1993
Dr. W. B. Clee	—	31 March 1993
Dr. G. W. Hughes	—	31 March 1993
Mrs. L. D. Quinn	—	31 March 1993
Mr. D. T. Williams	—	31 March 1993
Dr. B. O. Wilson	—	31 March 1993
ACC A. May	—	31 March 1993
—		
Welsh Committee on Alcohol Misuse	—	
Chairman:		
Mr. R. Hodgson	—	31 March 1993
—		
Members:		
Ms. R. Emlyn Jones	—	31 March 1993
Mr. O. Aneurin Owen	—	31 March 1993
ACC G. E. Pritchard	—	31 March 1993
Mr. J. Fisher	—	31 March 1993
Mr. G. Winstanley	—	31 March 1993
Mr. N. Breese	—	31 March 1993
Dr. K. M. Bhakta	—	31 March 1993

Name	*Remuneration £*	*Current appointment ends*
Mrs. R. Owen	—	31 March 1993
Dr. P. Higson	—	31 March 1993
Mr. B. Hudson	—	31 March 1993
Dr. R. Hall	—	31 March 1993
Dr. R. Jenkins	—	31 March 1993
Mr. J. Stephens	—	31 March 1993
Mrs. S. Rees	—	31 March 1993
Mr. S. Young	—	31 March 1993

Water

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, for each water company supplying water to domestic customers in Wales, the supply zones where one or more sample in 1991 exceeded 10 micrograms of lead per litre of water; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information about lead concentration in water supplies in Wales is contained in "Drinking Water 1991" the second annual report by the chief inspector of the drinking water inspectorate and in the document "Nitrate, Pesticides and Lead, 1989 and 1990", published by the inspectorate in July 1992.

Primary School Pupils

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the latest available figures for the total number of pupils at every individual primary school in Dyfed and the standard numbers at each school.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The standard numbers for schools are not held centrally.

I will write to the hon. Gentleman giving the number of full and part-time pupils on roll at each primary school in Dyfed, at January 1992.

AIDS

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest figures for reported AIDS cases in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Statistics on the number of HIV—AIDS cases are collected by the Public Health Laboratory Service Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre. Ninety-two cases of AIDS have been notified in Wales since reporting began in 1982. Of those 69 are known to have died. The cumulative total of HIV positive cases in Wales was 287 at the end of September 1992.

Surplus School Places

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many surplus school places there are in Wales; what is the annual cost of maintaining surplus school places; and what action he plans to take to reduce the number and cost of surplus school places.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Department estimates that there were 118,000 surplus school places in Wales in 1991, costing local education authorities about £23 million.

Our future plans are set out in "Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools" (Cm 2021) a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cargoes of clinical waste from outside the United Kingdom were incinerated in Wales in each of the past five years; and if he will specify the quantity of waste involved in each year.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None.

Council Tax

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discretion councils will have to make differential increases in the council tax applicable to each valuation band.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None.

The council tax for each of the eight valuation bands will be determined in accordance with a fixed ratio: thus the council tax for a dwelling in band A will be two thirds of that for a dwelling in band D. The ratio is set out in section 5(1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Neath-Port Talbot Hospital

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will undertake to maintain the proposed time scale for the building of the new Neath/Port Talbot general hospital; when he now expects the main contract to be let; and how much money will be spent in the financial years 1992-93, 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96, respectively.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the right hon. and learned Gentleman to the announcement by my right hon. Friend in the House on 29 October.

Inmos Ltd.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has received concerning financial aid or other inducement offered to Inmos Ltd., Newport to relocate outside Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Such information is commercially confidential.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the contacts he has had with the Commission and individual directorates general of the European Community since June on the future location of Inmos Ltd., Newport.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

Alcohol

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being undertaken to halt the sale of alcohol to minors.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply.

The Licensing Act 1988 strengthened the offence of selling alcohol to young people under 18 by placing a greater responsibility on licensees and their staff. The Act also increased the maximum penalty for this offence and made wholesalers' premises subject to this provision of licensing law. Enforcement of the law is a matter for the police.

TRANSPORT

Rail Services

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been achieved in improving the quality of service on the London, Tilbury and Southend line.

Mr. Freeman: Work on the £50 million resignalling project for the line is progressing, with the survey and design phase now virtually complete. BR believes this project to be the key to improving the reliability of the line.

The rolling stock withdrawn for checking and repair is expected to be fully introduced by the end of November, reducing cancellations and restoring capacity. A new train-washing machine has been installed and will soon be operational.

Closed circuit TV systems have recently been installed at six of the most heavily used car parks on the line to improve security.

A passenger information system—called PRIDE—was installed earlier this year. It uses state of the art satellite communications to transmit messages from the information centre at Southend to the individual PRIDE installations on LT and S stations.

For the year so far, the line has exceeded its passengers charter targets for both peak punctuality and reliability. Punctuality has been particularly good at 90·3 per cent. —12 per cent. higher than the average achieved during 1991.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Jim Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for public consultation on the channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Freeman: Union Railways (UR), British Rail's subsidiary for the rail link, is in the final stages of its studies to refine the easterly approach route. The Government's brief for the studies is described in a paper entitled "Developing the Route", supported by a paper entitled "Environmental Appraisal", which have been discussed with the local authorities concerned. Copies have been placed in the Library. The studies take account of information provided by local authority officers during confidential consultation on matters such as planning considerations.

Union Railways's report to the Government is expected by the end of December and will contain a reference case route together with sub-route options. The Government will decide and announce as soon as possible the route for consultation. At the same time, Union Railways will publish supporting information and take the lead in a full consultation process, which is expected to last about six months. The consultation will include right hon. and hon. Members, local authorities, environmental bodies and the public.

At the end of the consultation period, the Government will decide on any changes to be incorporated in the route, and will make a further announcement.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Fisheries Policy

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to encourage review within the EC of the common fisheries policy covering *(a)* policies on industrial fisheries, *(b)* fisheries management and its implications for wildlife, *(c)* fleet sizes and *(d)* fishing intensity.

Mr. Curry: The Commission is already carrying out a study of industrial fishing and I am pressing it to produce its report on this. We continue to urge that the Community should take account of the effect of fisheries management on the wider marine environment, and I am pleased that the Council at its last meeting on 19 October adopted a measure aimed at better protection of marine mammals. The Council on 19 October discussed Commission proposals designed to reduce fleet sizes and fishing intensity, and will return to this subject at its next meeting.

Cereals (Moisture Content)

Mr. Tom King: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what maximum moisture content standard will apply to cereals bought into intervention in the United Kingdom in the 1992-93 marketing year.

Mr. Gummer: Harvesting of many cereals was delayed throughout Britain this year because of poor weather and farmers frequently forced to combine in very wet conditions.

In these exceptional circumstances, the moisture content was bound to be much higher than usual, leading to additional costs in drying down to reach the normal intervention standard of 14·5 per cent.

I have, therefore, sought the Commission's agreement to a derogation increasing the moisture content standard to 15 per cent. for cereals sold into intervention in the United Kingdom this season. This will apply to all cereals intervened from 1 November and will ensure that United Kingdom farmers are not disadvantaged in comparison with producers elsewhere in the Community.

EC Cosmetics Directive

Mr. Burden: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to support the proposals from the European Parliament and European Commission to amend the cosmetics directive 76/769 with regard to animal testing.

Mr. Leigh: I have been asked to reply.

The Government's policy in the negotiations on the proposed sixth Council amendment to the cosmetics directive is to keep animal testing to a minimum consistent with human safety. In recognition of the progress made in developing skin and eye irritancy tests, the United Kingdom has called on the European Community to set 1998 as a target date for the replacement of animal tests in those areas subject to there being validated alternatives. We will continue to press for a reduction in animal testing and we hope that during our presidency member states will agree to the phasing out of testing on animals when they can be replaced with suitably validated non-animal alternatives.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Green Issues

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Attorney-General how many civil servants have been allocated new or additional responsibilities to deal with the management and development of green issues; and what additional allocation of resources has been made to support programmes related to green issues in his Department.

The Attorney-General: The number of civil servants who have been allocated such new or additional responsibilities is as follows:

	Number
Legal Secretariat to the Law Officers	2
Serious Fraud Office	2
Treasury Solicitor's Department	5
Crown Prosecution Service	34

No additional allocation of resources has so far been required.

EMPLOYMENT

Annual Leave

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will publish estimates from the latest available data of the annual leave entitlement in Britain, showing the number and proportion of employees with *(a)* no annual leave entitlement and *(b)* under four weeks' annual leave entitlement, broken down by (i) males, (ii) females and (iii) all employees.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is not available.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many non-manual workers were unemployed according to official figures in September 1979 and in September of each subsequent year; and what percentage of the work force this represented.

Mr. McLoughlin: This information can be derived only from the labour force survey. Estimates are available only on a consistent basis from 1984 and relate to the spring of each year.

Non-manual workers unemployed[1] in Great Britain

Year	*Numbers (thousands)*	*Percentage of labour force*
1984	629	4·9
1985	602	4·5
1986	604	4·5
1987	601	4·4
1988	520	3·7
1989	436	2·9
1990	466	3·1
1991	596	3·9
1992	781	5·1

Source: Labour Force Surveys.

[1] International Labour Office definition of Unemployment.

Earnings

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the most recent figures from the 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992 new earnings survey showing the average gross weekly earnings, not affected by absence of full-time 16, 17 and 18-year-olds, given by *(a)* males, *(b)* females and *(c)* all employees.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information available from the new earnings survey for each of the years requested is given in the table.

Average gross weekly earnings of full-time employees whose pay for the survey pay period was not affected by absence

£ per week

	At April			
Age	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Males				
16	85·0	92·5	98·7	96·5
17	98·9	105·7	114·9	119·9
18	121·5	133·0	140·8	145·0
Females				
16	87·1	98·1	95·6	91·8
17	98·9	107·8	111·6	112·7
18	110·0	121·6	130·1	132·8
All				
16	85·9	94·9	97·4	95·0
17	98·9	106·6	113·3	116·8
18	115·8	127·5	135·8	139·0

Union Subscriptions

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment pursuant to her answer of 26 October, *Official Report*, column *500*, what action has been taken by her Department to verify the allegations of subscriptions being deducted from non-union members.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department does not investigate allegations of this kind. It is clear that there currently exists scope for the abuse of "check-off" arrangements. The introduction of the proposed new requirement for the individual written consent of employees to the deduction of trade union subscriptions direct from their pay will help to minimise the scope for abuse.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Works of Art

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the works of art that have been donated to the nation during the last 24 months in lieu of payment of tax; and where the general public can currently view each of these works of art.

Mr. Brooke: The information the hon. Member requests is as follows:

Items accepted	*Current location*
Collection of works by and relating to John Piper	Wolverhampton Art Gallery

Beaton photographs	National Portrait Gallery
Stamp Collection	British Library
Thirty-eight paintings connected with East Anglia and a George III cabinet	Norwich Castle Museum
Four Old Master drawings by Mirola, Barocci, Cortona and Reni	National Gallery of Scotland
Runciman drawings and a portrait by Ramsay	National Gallery of Scotland
Sickert painting	Tate Gallery
A portrait attributable to Sir Joshua Reynolds	Paxton House
Two portraits by Raeburn	University of Edinburgh and Scottish National Gallery
Harpsichord by Shudi	University of Edinburgh
Collection of musical instruments	University of Edinburgh
Watercolour by Whistler	Museum of London
Greenough Papers	University College, London
Two paintings by Nasmyth	Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester
Bas D'Armoire and Sevres dinner service	Bowes Museum, Durham
Poele de l'Atelier by Cezanne	National Gallery
Vintage Bugatti motorcar, Scott motorcycle and Brough motorcycle	National Motor Museum (Bugatti) Bradford Industrial Museum (Scott) Tank Museum (Brough)
Statham porcelain collection	Fitzwilliam Museum
Eight contemporary paintings	Wakefield Art Gallery (6) and Tate Gallery (2)
Surface Substitution by Jennifer Bartlett	Tate Gallery
Chattels at Upton House	Upton House
Sporting paintings and silver	National Horseracing Museum (paintings) and Victoria and Albert Museum (silver)
Up and Out by Richard Hamilton	Tate Gallery
Hambledon Cricket Club Accounts	Hampshire Record Office
Portrait by Augustus John	National Portrait Gallery
Portraits by Reynolds and Van Dyck	Knole House
Two busts by Rysbrack	Hagley Hall
Portrait by Peter Greenham	Tate Gallery

Relocation

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many sites he has considered as a future location for his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: My Department has considered an extensive range of sites, taking into account relevant factors such as effectiveness, efficiency, value for money and the accessibility of the site. We are now engaged in detailed negotiations and I shall be making an announcement in due course.

National Lottery

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 26 October, *Official Report*, column *437*, if he intends to publish the report of GAH Group into aspects of the national lottery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The report of the GAH Group is advice internal to my Department and I do not therefore intend to publish it.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 26 October, *Official Report*, column *437*, what was the cost to his Department of the consultants GAH Group, who advised on aspects of the national lottery.

Mr. Brooke: The total cost of work carried out by consultants—the GAH Group—in advising my Department on aspects of the National Lottery is £44,985, excluding VAT.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 26 October, *Official Report*, column *437*, whether the contract for the research work undertaken to advise on aspects of national lottery by GAH Group was the subject of competitive tender.

Mr. Brooke: Yes.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Housing Benefit

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of *(a)* the annual cost or saving, *(b)* the numbers of gainers or losers, *(c)* the average amounts of weekly gains or losses and *(d)* the maximum amounts of weekly gains and losses in individual cases, which would result from adjustments of the housing benefit taper from 65 per cent. to (i) 50 per cent., (ii) 55 per cent., (iii) 60 per cent., (iv) 70 per cent., (v) 75 per cent. and (vi) 80 per cent.

Mr. Burt: The information requested for *(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)* is shown in the table[1].

Housing Benefit taper	*Annual cost*	*Annual saving*	*Number of gainers*	*Number of losers*	*Average weekly amount of gain*	*Average weekly amount of loss*
per cent.	*£ million*	*£ million*	*000s*	*000s*	*£*	*£*
50	340	—	1,470	—	3·60	—
55	210	—	1,470	—	2·40	—
60	100	—	1,465	—	1·20	—
70	—	90	—	1,400	—	1·10
75	—	165	—	1,340	—	2·10
80	—	240	—	1,285	—	3·00

[1] Figures have been provided from data drawn from the 1987, 1988, 1989 family expenditure surveys and are modelled at 1992-93 prices. These figures are rounded and take no account of those people who would either become eligible or ineligible for housing benefit in the event of a change to the present taper.

Figures for *(d)* could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest annual figures for the London borough of Waltham Forest for the number of recipients of income support and housing benefit; and what the comparable figures were for each of the last five years.

Mr. Burt: The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. Neil Gerrard, dated 29 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what are the latest annual figures for the London Borough of Waltham Forest for the number of recipients of Income Support and Housing Benefit; and what were the comparable figures for each of the last five years.

The complete information you requested is only available at a disproportionate cost. This is because statistics of a local nature are destroyed at regular intervals in accordance with standing procedures.

I have listed below the information available.

HOUSING BENEFIT

The administration of Housing Benefit is a matter for Local Authorities. The following information has been obtained from the Housing Benefit Management Information System.

February	*Numbers*
1990	[1]22,862
1991	16,487
1992	18,019

[1] This figure includes 5,984 customers in receipt of a rates rebate which altered to Community Charge Benefit by February 1991.

INCOME SUPPORT

The figures quoted are for the areas covered by Ilford, Leytonstone and Walthamstow offices, which make up the Benefits Agency's Lea-Roding District. It is not possible to provide a more detailed breakdown because the District boundary does not correspond with that of the London Borough of Walthamstow.

August	*Numbers*
1990	40,394
1991	47,262
1992	55,645

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the *Official Report*. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will take steps to require that all assessors of housing benefit levels disregard in total all war disablement pensions when assessing individual applications for housing benefit.

Mr. Burt: Local authorities already have the discretion to disregard war disablement pension in excess of the statutory £10 weekly disregard when assessing entitlement to housing benefit. We have no plans to change these arrangements.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he intends to introduce any compensation measures for individuals claiming disability living allowance who have been incurring costs in trying to trace the progress of their claims.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. Neil Gerrard, dated 29 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about compensation measures for individuals claiming Disability Living Allowance (DLA) who have incurred costs trying to trace the progress of their claim.

All claims to DLA are acknowledged at the outset and a further letter is sent explaining that there are delays if the claim remains uncleared after six weeks.

My letter of 19 October to all MPs set out the action we are taking to resolve the time it takes to clear the backlog of cases. The action taken has been comprehensive and the effect has been to reduce substantially the claims outstanding.

You asked whether we will introduce compensation measures. The present rules are that compensation can only be considered where, exceptionally, a claim for benefit takes longer than 12 months to process; or in the case of an existing award, there is an interruption in payment of 3 months or more. We would not normally pay costs incurred as a result of enquiries regarding the progress of claims.

I recognise that delays are unacceptable at any stage, but you will appreciate that given the length of time which must elapse before compensation can be paid, few cases will in fact be eligible.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Benefit Claims

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in the Walthamstow constituency submitted claims *(a)* more than three months ago and *(b)* more than six months ago whose claims are still outstanding.

Mr. Scott: The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter to Mr. Neil Gerrard from Mr. Michael Bichard, dated 29 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many people in the Walthamstow constituency submitted claims *(a)* more than three months ago and *(b)* more than six months ago whose claims are still outstanding.

The complete range of information you requested is not available except at disproportionate cost. This is because not all claims to benefits are submitted to District Offices. Claims such as Child Benefit, Family Credit and Disability Living Allowance are dealt with at central locations. It would be necessary to examine all claims outstanding nationally to obtain the relevant information.

The information I have outlined in Appendix 1, is for benefits processed locally by Ilford, Leytonstone and Walthamstow offices which make up the Benefits Agency's Lea-Roding District. It is not possible to provide a more detailed breakdown because the District boundary does not correspond with that of the London borough of Walthamstow.

There is no information kept locally to record the length of time a claim has been outstanding. It would be exceptional for claims to be outstanding three or even six months. This can be illustrated by the information which I have given at Apprendix 2, which is a list of local clearance targets for some of the benefits mentioned. It gives account of new claims, the review of claims on a change of circumstances, and the actual performance achieved for the year to date.

I hope this reply is helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Library. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Appendix 1

Outstanding claims from Lea-Roding district

Benefit	*Claims outstanding at 30 September 1992*
Sickness and invalidity benefit	286
Maternity benefit	54
Severe disablement allowance	89
Widows benefit	89
Income support	822
Social fund applications	490

Appendix 2

Benefit	*Target*	*Achieved-year to date*
Income support (claims)	4 days	3·9 days
Income support (review)	65 per cent. in two days 95 per cent. in five days	84 per cent in two days 87 per cent. in five days
Sickness/invalidity	65 per cent. in 10 days 95 per cent. in 30 days	66 per cent. in 10 days 90 per cent. in 10 days
Retirement and widows pension (claims)	65 per cent. in 20 days 95 per cent. in 60 days	not available dealt with centrally
Retirement and widows pension (review)	65 per cent. in five days 95 per cent. in 15 days	74 per cent. in five days 91 per cent. in 15 days
Social fund		
Crisis loans	0·1 days	0·1 days
Budgeting loans	5·0 days	2·1 days
Community care grants	5·1 days	4·4 days

Disability

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what steps he is taking to establish more reliable estimates of the number of people who may be eligible to claim *(a)* the disability living allowance and *(b)* the disability working allowance;

(2) what is the latest information he has on the levels of income and severity of disablement of *(a)* invalidity benefit recipients, *(b)* recipients of disability living allowance and *(c)* recipients of other forms of disability benefit.

(3) what steps he is taking to improve information about the incomes received and the incomes needed by those aplying for, and receiving, the disability living allowance and the disability working allowance, as part of the evience required to assess the success of targeting.

Mr. Scott: Information on the income of disability benefit claimants is not generally available from administrative sources, as, apart from the disability working allowance which is income-related, this information is not required to make a decision on the claim. Some information on income levels is available from surveys such as the family expenditure survey (FES). For example, the 1989 survey shows the average gross income of a benefit unit with at least one invalidity benefit recipient was £155, but FES information is not reliable for other disability benefits. The family resources survey, announced in July 1992, will have a larger sample size than the FES and will provide better information in due course. The latest and most reliable information about levels of severity of disablement is contained in the reports of the surveys of disabled people carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys between 1985 and 1988. Our monitoring of disability living allowance and disability working allowance will produce more information.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to offer compensation to claimants of disability living and working allowances whose claims are not dealt with within the target periods set by his Department.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance and disability working allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. Dafydd Wigley, dated 29 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for

Social Security about compensation payments to claimants of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Disability Working Allowance (DWA) whose claims are not dealt with within the target periods.

My letter of 19 October to all MPs set out the action we are taking to resolve the time it takes to clear the backlog of DLA cases. The action taken has been comprehensive and the effect has been to reduce substantially the claims outstanding.

For DWA, I should explain that there is no backlog of cases waiting to be dealt with. To date there are 18 cases waiting for initial action and just under 500 cases where the adjudication officer is waiting for further information before a decision can be made.

You asked whether we will make it our policy to offer compensation. The present rules are that compensation can only be considered where, exceptionally, a claim for benefit takes longer than 12 months to process; or in the case of an existing award, there is an interruption in payment of 3 months or more.

I recognise that delays are unacceptable at any stage, but you will appreciate that given the length of time which must elapse before compensation can be paid, few cases will in fact be eligible.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to overcome the backlog with regard to processing applications for mobility allowance and attendance allowance, both under the previous schemes and under the new disability living allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Birchard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. Dafydd Wigley, dated 29 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about what steps he is taking to overcome the backlog with regard to processing applications for Mobility Allowance (MobA) and Attendance Allowance (AA), both under the previous schemes and under the new Disability Living Allowance (DLA) scheme.

Various initiatives have been instigated in order to clear the backlog of claims. These include;

setting up a senior management task force chaired by me, to oversee the recovery programme;

increasing the number of staff devoted to handling claims by over 800—an increase of approximately 25 per cent.;

sanctioning overtime in all Disability Benefit Centres and Units—equivalent to a further 250 more staff;

establishing, staffing and equipping additional processing units in Preston, Newcastle, Wembly and Manchester to handle new and renewal claims and so relieve some pressures on existing units and increase output;

conducting a detailed and thorough review of our procedures and organisation to further speed up the process wherever possible.

The full extent of the initiatives we have introduced was outlined in my letter to all MPs on 19 October.

The measures we have in hand have brought about a reduction in the number of claims outstanding and will continue to do so.

I hope you will find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many letters he has received from hon. Members during the past three months complaining about the slowness of processing applications for disability allowance, attendance allowance and disability living allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance and attendance allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. Dafydd Wigley, dated 29 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about how many letters he has received from Honourable Members during the past three months complaining about the slowness of processing applications for Disability Allowance, Attendance Allowance (AA) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

The number of complaints recorded for July to September, inclusive, are as follows:

AA 65+	*DLA*
145	1,896

My letter dated 19 October to all MPs set out the action we are taking to reduce the backlog of cases. These measures, together with the increasing confidence and experience of staff, resulted in a substantial improvement in the speed of claims processing.

By September, monthly output on claims to DLA (from new and existing AA and Mobility Allowance customers) and AA had risen to 152,000 compared with 65,000 claims cleared in May.

In the period February to the end of September we had processed a total of 711,000 AA, DLA and "top-up" claims of which 617,000 were processed under the new self assessment procedures, about 80% of which were determined without the need for a medical examination.

Significant inroads have been made into the backlog of claims and I am now confident that we will have reached a steady state shortly for new claims to DLA and AA, and by the end of November for "top-up" claims from people who were already receiving either AA or Mobility Allowance.

I hope you will find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average time taken to reassess income support levels per person for young disabled people aged 16 or 17 years embarking on a youth training placement; and if he will make it his policy to issue guidelines to benefit providers including time scale targets for achieving such reassessments.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. Dafydd Wigley, dated 29 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what is the average time taken to reassess Income Support levels per person for young disabled people aged 16 or 17 years embarking on a Youth Training placement; and if he will make it his policy to issue guidelines to benefit providers including timescale targets for achieving such reassessments.

The reassessment of such claims are undertaken on the same basis as Income Support customers in general.

National clearance targets for the reassessment of Income Support claims are already in place. These are outlined below.

I should explain that the average time is obtained from statistics available from the Income Support Management Information System. It takes account of the actual time taken between receipt of the notification of the change of circumstances and the date of adjudication.

Targets	*Achievement—year to date*
65% clearance within 2 days	88% cleared within 2 days
95% clearance within 5 days	93% cleared within 5 days

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what territory is covered by the Wales and central England terrorial office of the Department of Social Security Benefits Agency disability living allowance unit, Government Buildings, Gabalfa, Cardiff.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. Rhodri Morgan, dated 29 October 1992:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what territory is covered by the Benefits Agency Office in Cardiff dealing with Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

New claims to DLA are administered by ten Disability Benefit Centres (DBCs) around the country, each one dealing with large areas. The DBC in Government Buildings, Gabalfa, Cardiff is responsible for all the new claims from customers in Wales.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

Carer Premium

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to continue providing income support hardship allowances in instances where a claimant's partner qualifies for the carer premium for looking after someone in another household.

Mr. Burt: A reduced rate of income support may be payable to claimants who fail the availability for work or the actively seeking work tests if an adjudication officer is satisfied that they would otherwise suffer hardship. However, the Government have announced their intention to remove entitlement to income support from some groups of claimants who fail the actively seeking work test. Regulations will be laid before Parliament shortly when we have had an opportunity to consider the report of the social security advisory committee on our proposals.

Fact-finding Visits

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the fact-finding visits made in the past 12 months by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible; and what were the findings resulting from each visit.

Mr. Scott: Each of the chief executives makes regular visits to their operational areas as a matter of good management practise; these visits provide opportunities to meet staff and discuss with them ideas, initiatives and problems.

Visits are also made under the Government scheme to link agencies with academic institutions, and to investigate academic training opportunities for staff; and to other countries social security operations to share experience and expertise.

The following visits were made in the last 12 months:

Benefits agency
Glasgow
Belfast
Midlands
Leeds
Birmingham
AA Unit/DCA Unit
Newcastle Benefits Directorate

District branch offices
Glasgow Shettleston
Nottingham (David Lane)
Leamington Spa
Wolverhampton
Edmonton
North Wales
Bradford
Dartford
Warrington and Widnes
Hackney and Islington
Surrey Downs

Area directors offices
East of Scotland
Glasgow and Paisley × 2
Merseyside and Bristol
East Midlands
Fylde Benefits and War Pensions Directorate × 2

Management services
Parliamentary Business Branch
Preston Training Centre

Contributions agency
Central Services Newcastle:
Contracted-out Employment Group, Newcastle upon Tyne
Field Operations Support Group, Newcastle upon Tyne
Training, Newcastle upon Tyne
Data Entry Group, Newcastle upon Tyne

Area offices:
Newmarket
Essex
Canterbury
Milton Keynes
Bath
Edinburgh
Colwyn Bay
Glasgow
Durham
Dundee

- Croydon
- Liverpool
- Swindon
- Cardiff
- Plymouth
- Blyth
- London (City)
- Sheffield
- Brixton
- Cannock

Resettlement agency

Resettlement units:
- Alvaston
- Camden
- Cedars Lodge
- Lancelot Andrew's House
- Leicester
- Plawsworth
- Pound Lodge
- Sittingbourne
- Southampton
- South Wales
- Spur House
- Walkden
- West End House
- Woodhouse

Replacement projects:
- North Tyneside
- Nottingham
- Derby
- Rochdale
- Brighton
- Manchester, Smithfield

Information technology service agency (ITSA)
- Butler Cox Foundation International Conference
- Salford University
- Lancaster University
- Northern Ireland Social Security Agency
- United States Social Security Administration
- Manchester Business School

Income Support

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by region, and for Great Britain as a whole, shown separately for male and female, how many 16 and 17-year-olds for each month since January 1992 have made applications for income support on the ground of extreme hardship and how many have been granted or refused; if he will give the information he has about the grounds on which applications were turned down; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to her on 21 May at columns *238-39*. Such information as is available after March 1992 is in the tables. Each application under the severe hardship provisions is considered on its own merits and an award is made where there is a risk of hardship. The figures confirm that our policy of helping those at risk is working effectively.

	Total	*Successful*	*Refused*
Scotland			
1992			
April	1,988	1,669	319
May	1,905	1,552	353
June	2,157	1,722	435
July	2,158	1,716	442
August	2,921	1,664	357
September	1,936	1,539	397
North Eastern			
1992			
April	1,292	1,020	272
May	1,222	983	239
June	1,404	1,099	305
July	1,495	1,224	271
August	1,488	1,230	258
September	1,413	1,123	290
North Western			
1992			
April	1,082	918	164
May	1,132	942	190
June	1,265	1,045	220
July	1,429	1,181	248
August	1,289	1,093	196
September	1,260	1,038	222
Midlands			
1992			
April	1,093	888	205
May	1,088	909	179
June	1,126	896	230
July	1,312	1,086	226
August	1,240	1,032	208
September	1,269	1,020	249
Wales and South Western			
1992			
April	1,000	848	152
May	954	784	170
June	1,077	910	167
July	1,177	982	195
August	1,141	946	195
September	1,087	905	182
London North			
1992			
April	877	730	147
May	824	698	126
June	991	844	147
July	1,104	911	193
August	1,029	865	164
September	1,019	851	168
London South			
1992			
April	888	708	180
May	901	749	152
June	974	790	184
July	1,148	955	193
August	1,035	851	184
September	1,044	862	182
Great Britain			
1992			
April	8,221	6,781	1,440
May	8,041	6,627	1,414
June	8,996	7,308	1,688
July	9,846	8,075	1,771
August	9,272	7,702	1,570
September	9,042	7,350	1,692

Source: Severe Hardship Claims Unit Database.

Maternity Grant

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the number of maternity grants paid during 1991 in each local authority area.

Mr. Scott: The information is not collected in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost; but the numbers of maternity payments made by each Benefits Agency district office last year are in the table.

District	Payments
Bankside	900
Barking and Havering	1,132
Barnet	794
Barnsley	997
Bedfordshire	1,700
Berkshire	1,750
Birmingham Chamberlain	1,689
Birmingham Heartlands	1,569
Birmingham North West	1,602
Birmingham South East	1,348
Birmingham South West	1,430
Blackburn and Accrington	1,567
Blackpool	1,083
Bolton	1,668
Bradford	2,627
Bristol, Severnside	1,560
Brunel	1,305
Buckinghamshire	1,635
Burnley/Pendle/Rossendale	1,297
Cambridgeshire	1,676
Canterbury and Thanet	980
Central Derbyshire	1,216
Channel	942
Cheshire East	892
Cheshire North West and Central	1,742
City East	1,402
Clyde Coast and Cowal	581
Coatbridge	712
Cornwall	1,573
Coventry	1,645
Cumbria North	968
Cynon Merthyhr Rhymnney Valley	1,463
Derbyshire North	731
Derbyshire South	1,169
Doncaster	1,362
Dorset	1,563
Durham North	1,640
Durham South	1,319
East Lowlands	1,322
East Sussex	1,014
Essex South East	1,078
Essex South West	1,648
Euston	2,180
Exeter and North Devon	1,204
Fife	1,232
Forth Valley	1,011
Fulham	2,091
Glamorgan South	2,160
Glasgow South West	912
Glasgow Anniesland	615
Glasgow City	562
Glasgow Laurieston	1,192
Gloucester	1,422
Grampian and Shetland	893
Gwent North and Brecon	1,057
Gwyneddigion	1,012
Hackney and Islington	2,055
Halifax	1,468
Hampshire North	1,238
Harrow and Hillingdon	912
Hereford and Worcester	1,553
Highlands and Islands	1,013
Hordan House, Wirral	1,910
Hounslow and Kingston	1,268
Hull East	2,383
Irvine	1,015
Kent North	2,049
Kirklees	1,782
Knowsley	1,536
Lancaster	1,021
Lea-Roding	1,862
Leaside	1,977
Leeds North	1,291
Leeds South	1,895
Leicester South	1,687
Leicestershire North	1,316
Lewisham and Brixton	1,873
Lincolnshire East	1,172
Liverpool Central	889
Liverpool North	1,170
Liverpool South	1,338
Lomond and Argyll	635
London Central	295
London Ealing	1,727
London Newham	1,862
Lothian Central	717
Lothian West	1,017
Manchester Central	1,338
Manchester North	801
Mid Wales and Maelor	906
Motherwell	1,051
Neasden	1,270
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,825
North and East Herts	905
North Essex	1,231
North Staffs	1,0927
North Tees	1,544
North Tyneside	717
North Wales Coast	1,134
North Yorkshire	1,075
Northamptonshire	1,854
Northumberland	907
Norwich	1,495
Nottinghamshire East	1,376
Nottinghamshire North	1,776
Nottinghamshire West	1,673
Ogwr Afan Nedd	1,086
Oldham	1,797
Oxfordshire	1,222
Paisley	853
Preston	1,449
Rotherham South	1,809
South East Hampshire and Wight	1,860
Salford	1,236
Sandwell	1,818
Sefton	1,346
Sheffield East	1,504
Sheffield West	1,106
Shettleston	1,204
Shropshire	1,458
Solent and Forest	1,836
Somerset	1,269
South Cheshire	1,702
South Devon	2,171
South Downs	1,025
South Gwent and Islwyn	1,205
South Humberside	1,588
South Manchester	1,724
South Tees	1,953
South West Lancashire	1,469
South West Thames	1,631
Springburn	989
Staffordshire Central	1,278
Stockport	991
Suffolk	1,442
Surrey Downs	1,060
Surrey North	1,785
South West Scotland	1,099
Swansea	1,184
Taff Rhondda	796
Tameside	1,092
Tayside	1,470
Thameside	1,638
Tyneside South	1,733
Wakefield	1,535
Wales West	1,139
Walsall	1,536
Warwickshire	1,193
Wearside	2,032
West Hertfordshire	872
West Kent	1,156
West Lincolnshire	1,329
West Pennine	1,879
West Sussex	1,463
Wigan and Leigh	1,310
Wiltshire	1,556

District	*Payments*
Wolverhampton	1,709
Worcestershire North	1,536
Yorkshire East	850

Diabetes

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will introduce legislation which would grant an additional monetary allowance to senior citizens suffering from diabetes to allow them to purchase sugar-free substances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: We have no plans to do so.

EDUCATION

Fact-finding Visits

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for the last 12 months, the fact-finding visits the chief executive of the Teachers' Pensions Agency has made; what were her findings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The Teachers' Pensions Agency was established on 1 April 1992. To date, the chief executive has not undertaken any fact-finding visits.

Disabled Children

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement outlining the arrangements for providing specialist equipment for disabled children integrated into mainstream grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Forth: Any local education authority which maintains a statement of special educational needs for a pupil for whom it is responsible has a legal obligation to make the necessary special education provision. If a disabled pupil, who attends a grant-maintained school, requires specialist equipment as specified in section III of the pupil's statement, then the local education authority must provide that equipment.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Pit Closures

Mr. Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what will be the net effect on the public sector borrowing requirement of the pit closure programme.

Mr. Portillo: Given the uncertainties at this stage, it is not possible to calculate the effect.

Manufactures

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the Treasury's forecast of the increase in the volume of production, imports and exports of manufactures in each of the next five years as a result of the fall in interest rates and the exchange rate since August.

Mr. Portillo: The Industry Act forecast, to be published at the time of the autumn statement, will contain forecasts of GDP, manufacturing output, imports and exports over the period to the end of 1993. This will take account of all relevant factors, including recent changes in interest and exchange rates. It is not customary to publish forecasts for these items over the longer term.

Tax Allowances

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the percentage increase in personal income tax allowances since indexation began; and what is the percentage increase in the retail prices index over the same period.

Mr. Dorrell: The provisions under which income tax allowances are indexed by reference to movements in the retail prices index unless Parliament determines otherwise have applied to changes in allowance levels from 1977-78. In 1992-93 the personal allowance is 265 per cent. higher than the equivalent allowance in 1977-78 and the retail prices index is forecast to be 197 per cent. higher.

Economy

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish an estimate, based on the Treasury model of the economy, of the level of interest rates and the weighted average exchange rate required to enable the economy to return to full employment at a high and sustainable rate of growth.

Mr. Portillo: It has not, since 1978, been the practice to provide results from the Treasury model in response to parliamentary questions; but the hon. Member will be aware that the model is available for Members' use through the Library of the House.

Unemployment

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the minimum rate of unemployment for adult men recognised by the Government as being consistent with full employment at a high and sustainable rate of growth.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 29 October 1992]:* Many factors influence the rate of unemployment consistent with non-inflationary growth, and that unemployment rate cannot be estimated precisely.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Asylum

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 20 October, *Official Report,* columns *253-54,* what is the latest monthly figure for the number of asylum applicants this year; and what was the comparable number for the same months in 1991.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In the period January to September 1992 a total of 16,170 asylum applications, excluding dependants, were received. The total for the corresponding months in 1991 was 34,460.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the total number of applications for asylum received for each month since 1987 *(a)* in list form and *(b)* as a graph.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 26 October 1992]*: Information is available in tabular form. As the *Official Report* is unable to print information in graphical form, a copy of the corresponding graph will be placed in the Library of the House.

Average monthly totals	*Number*
1987	355
1988	335
1989	970
1990	1,835
1991	3,735
1992[1]	1,795
Monthly totals	
1991	
January	4,455
February	3,445
March	3,885
April	5,275
May	3,805
June	3,000
July	3,725
August	3,350
September	3,525
October	4,375
November	3,790
December	2,210
1992	
January	2,165
February	1,420
March	1,595
April	1,440
May	1,370
June	1,615
July	2,180
August	1,790
September	2,590

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 20 October, *Official Report*, columns *255-56*, how many asylum claims have been rejected under paragraph 101 of the immigration rules each month since December 1991 expressed as a number of ejections and as a percentage of total claims decided in that month.

Mr. Charles Wardle: *[holding answer 26 October 1992]*: The information requested is given in the table.

Refusals[1] [2] under Paragraph 101 of the Immigration Rules of applications for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, and such refusals as a percentage[1] of total decisions on asylum applications, December 1991 to September 1992

	Refusals under paragraph 101 of Immigration Rules	*Refusals under paragraph 101 of Immigration Rules as percentage of total decisions on asylum applications Per cent.*
December 1991	785	58
January 1992	1,210	61
February 1992	1,120	61
March 1992	1,615	65
April 1992	935	57
May 1992	735	49
June 1992	1,025	49
July 1992	1,010	32
August 1992	840	28
September 1992	985	35

[1] Figures rounded to the nearest 5, percentages rounded to the nearest whole per cent.

[2] Refusals do not directly relate to applications made in the same month.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the proposals from the European Commission with respect to a data protection directive are of the kind that will be subject to subsidiarity arrangements; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The principle of subsidiarity is defined in article 3b of the treaty on European union, when that treaty comes into force it will apply to all proposals for Community legislation.

The main objective of the data protection directive is to ensure free flow of personal data across the internal frontiers of the Community. The Government accept that a prerequisite for this free flow is harmonisation of minimum essential data protection requirements, and consider that the 1981 Council of Europe convention on data processing provides such requirements.

We considered that the procedural requirements in the Commission's original proposals were matters best left to national authorities to resolve. We are now considering how far the Commission's amended proposals meet this objection.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the Data Protection Registrar has sufficient funds to carry out his functions; and what response he intends to make to the comments made by the registrar in his annual report on the financing of his office.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government determine the resources which should be made available to the registrar in the light of the statutory responsibilities laid upon him, the registrar's own assessment of what he needs to discharge those duties and overall public expenditure constraints.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will summarise his main objections to the revised proposals from the Commission with respect to a data protection directive; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Commission's revised proposals have only just been released. The Government will now be considering them in consultation with all the interest groups likely to be affected. The Government's policy, in discussions with their Community partners, will continue to be to ensure that it strikes a proper balance between the interests of data users, data subjects and others.

Green Issues

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many civil servants have been allocated new or additional responsibilities to deal with the management and development of green issues; and what additional allocation of resources has been made to support programmes related to green issues in his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Environmental policies are closely integrated into the day-to-day operations of my

Department and all staff are expected to take due account of them in the course of their work. Environmental policies have generally been pursued within existing resources and in most cases it is not possible separately to identify the resources devoted to them. The following elements are however separately identifiable: (i) expenditure on energy efficiency measures for the prison estate amounting to £1.517 million in 1991-92; (ii) the Department's energy management group, which has been in existence since 1981 and comprises 5·3 staff; and (iii) expenditure of some £50,000 during 1992-93 on the fitting of power factor correctors, automatic lighting controls, water meters and automatic VDU controls in Home Office buildings.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will establish ways of detecting changes in the proportions of people at different ages of involvement in serious crime.

Mr. Jack: Changes in the relative involvement in crime of persons of different ages are measured centrally for England and Wales by changes in the number of persons found guilty at magistrates courts or the Crown court or cautioned by the police. Chapter 5 of the 1990 issue of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (Cm 1935) contains information on these known offenders analysed by age, sex and offence.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of those cautioned in each of the 1985 and 1988 samples in the Home Office Statistical Bulletin 20/92 entitled the criminal histories of those cautioned in 1985 and 1988 who had been cautioned previously, had been cautioned *(a)* on one occasion in the past, *(b)* on two occasions, *(c)* on three occasions, *(d)* on four occasions, or *(e)* on five or more occasions.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 19 October 1992]:* The information requested is in the tables. As estimates for all those cautioned, the figures in table 2 are liable to some sampling error.

Table 1

Persons cautioned in 1985 and 1988 samples by previous cautioning history

Year	*0*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5+*	*Total*
1985	2,371	295	43	12	5	8	2,734
1988	2,493	343	74	27	10	3	2,950

Table 2

Percentage of persons cautioned in 1985 and 1988 samples by previous cautioning history

Year	*0*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5+*	*Total (=100 per cent.)*
1985	87	11	2	[1]	[1]	[1]	2,734
1988	85	12	3	[1]	[1]	[1]	2,950

[1] Is less than 0·5 per cent.

Electoral Administration

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the membership of the joint committee looking into electoral administration matters referred to by the Minister of State in his oral answer of 22 October, *Official Report*, column 557, giving the terms of reference and expected time of reporting.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Five working groups of Home Office officials and representatives of returning officers and local authorities will consider different aspects of the electoral process. The remits of the working groups are as follows:

Electoral registration

To examine the scope for changes to the present registration system, including the definition of residence, the role of the qualifying date, the procedures for claims and objections, and to assess the feasibility and resource implications of rolling registration.

Absent voting

To consider changes to the absent voting system, including qualification for an absent vote for an indefinite period or at a particular election, and the closing dates for applications.

Forms

To consider, in consultation with HMSO, the need for the changes to electoral registration, absent voting and election forms.

Returning Officers' fees and expenses

To consider whether changes are required to current categories of expenditure, and whether current levels of fees and allowances are appropriate.

Automated vote counting

To explore the practical implications of introducing automated vote counting procedures with a view to conducting a trial at either a parliamentary or local government election. This group might also consider other miscellaneous suggestions about voting procedures.

It is expected that the working groups will report back next summer. Membership of the five working groups will be settled shortly and I will write to the hon. Member with the details.

Membership will be drawn from the organisations as follows:

Association of District Councils
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland
Association of District Secretaries
Society of Local Authority Chief Executives
Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (Scotland)
Scottish Assessors' Association
Association of Electoral Administrators

Parole

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what effect a prisoner's protestation of innocence has on the decision of the parole board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: When the parole board assesses the suitability of prisoners for early release on licence, the principal concern is the risk of further offending. Protestation of innocence per se does not dictate the outcome of its deliberations.

Hostel Places

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many probation and bail hostel places were available at the latest date available.

Mr. Jack: The number of places currently available in probation-bail and bail hostels is 2,575—653 of these are in bail only hostels and 1,922 in probation-bail hostels.

Criminal Justice Act 1991

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice his Department has given on the practical interpretation of the concept of seriousness as encapsulated in the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

Mr. Jack: The criteria for determining the seriousness of an offence for the purpose of deciding on an appropriate sentence are set out in the Criminal Justice Act 1991. However, it is for the courts alone to interpret the provisions of the Act as they apply to individual cases in the light of all the circumstances of the offence and the offender and any guidance which the Court of Appeal may issue in due course. A substantial programme of training for sentencers on all matters relating to the Act has been provided under the auspices of the Judicial Studies Board.

Sex Offenders

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many individuals who completed sentences for child sex offences are known to have reoffended subsequently in each of the past five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that this information is not collected in the form requested. Current estimates indicate that 28 per cent. of males released in 1984 from custodial sentences for sexual offences as a whole were reconvicted of a further standard list offence within two years of discharge—table 8(c) of Prison Statistics 1987, Cm 547. A recent survey of adult males released in 1980 from custodial sentences of four years or over for several offences recorded as involving a victim aged under 16 indicates that 30 per cent. were reconvicted within 10 years of discharge of a sexual offence of which half were known to be against a child.

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what factors the parole board takes into account when deciding to release sex offenders back into the communities where their offences were committed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The factors which the parole board needs to address, in all cases, when considering suitability for release on licence are the risk to the public; whether the offender has tackled his offending behaviour; and whether the resettlement plan will help secure the offender's rehabilitation. The board also needs to take into account, among other things, any risk to the victim and the attitude of the victim and the local community.

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's policy on the proportion of sentence served in prison by persons convicted of sexual offences against children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The new arrangements for the release of sentenced prisoners introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 1991 will ensure that, like all other prisoners serving determinate sentences, those sentenced on or after 1 October 1992 for sexual offences against children will serve at least half their sentence in custody and that those serving sentences of four years or more may be required to remain in custody until the two thirds point of sentence. All prisoners will be at risk after release of having their original sentences reactivated if convicted of further imprisonable offences before the end of their original sentences. In addition, all prisoners serving terms of a year or more will be supervised by the probation service up to the three quarters points of their sentence. In addition, some sex offenders will be supervised right until the end of their sentence at the direction of the sentencing judge where this is considered necessary to protect the public.

Common Travel Area

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with European Commission officials concerned with amending current arrangements under the common travel area between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom; and what proposals have been submitted by the European Commission to appropriate Ministers for amending common travel area arrangements between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None.

Policing Costs

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much it has cost the Metropolitan police in money and police man hours during the past 12 months to *(a)* police demonstrations, rallies and the Notting Hill carnival and *(b)* fight terrorism and cope with terrorist activities.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on public order events could only be supplied at disproportionate cost.

It is not our practice to disclose details of resources devoted to combating terrorism.

Prison Service

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the annual costs are for providing educational services in Her Majesty's prison service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 26 October 1992]*: The total cost of providing prison education in England and Wales was £32.8 million in the financial year 1990-91—the latest year for which information has been published.

Drink Driving

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish *(a)* the number of deaths caused by drink driving, *(b)* the number of convictons for drink driving and *(c)* the estimated number of occasions when drivers and riders were above the legal limit, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Jack: Estimates of fatal casualties in accidents involving illegal alcohol labels in Great Britain are published by the Department of Transport and are as follows:

Year	*Number*
1979	1,790
1980	1,570
1981	1,540
1982	1,670
1983	1,200
1984	1,280
1985	1,130
1986	1,060
1987	980
1988	840
1989	870
1990	800
[1]1991	700

The number of convictions for drink driving in England and Wales is as follows:

Year	*Number (thousands)*
1979	67
1980	78
1981	71
1982	75
1983	98
1984	101
1985	107
1986	107
1987	115
1988	119
1989	114
1990	113
[1]1991	104

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[1] Provisional.

Estimates of the number of occasions when drivers and riders were above the legal limit are not made routinely. Department of Transport roadside surveys carried out in the year 1988, 1989 and 1990 have found consistently that during the peak drinking period—7 pm to 2 am—the proportion of drivers of cars and light vans over the legal limit is in the range of 1 to 1½ per cent.

HEALTH

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will introduce legislation to provide for the continued availability of dietary supplements for British sufferers from myalgic encephalomyelitis; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: There is no generally agreed method of treatment for people with ME. Treatment to alleviate the various symptoms is very much a matter for medical judgment in each case.

Student Loan

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy in respect of the inclusion of a notional student loan in its calculations for full financial assistance to full-time students for dental and other NHS charges.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on Friday 23 October at column *395*.

Child Protection

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what implications the conclusions of the Clyde report have for child protection provisions in England and Wales.

Mr. Yeo: We will study the recommendations of the Clyde report and any implications for social services and child care in England will be carefully considered.

Child Psychotherapists

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to increase the numbers of trained child psychotherapists in the NHS.

Mr. Yeo: The employment and training of child psychotherapists is primarily a mater for health authorities. However, the Department is supporting the Child Psychotheraphy Trust's work to increase the numbers of trained child psychotherapists and to develop a greater understanding of their role. Following a recent meeting with the trust, officials are discussing training arrangements for these staff with regional health authorities.

Live Births

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of live births in each local authority area during 1991.

Mr. Sackville: The number of live births in each local authority area within England and Wales during 1991 has been placed in the Library.

Dentistry

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will indicate what research is undertaken by her Department, and what statistics are kept, on the dental health of the population at regional, family health services authority and district health authority levels.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department commissions the Office of Population Censuses and Survey to undertake surveys into the dental health of adults and children. The last decennial adult dental health survey was in 1988. A similar child dental health survey will take place in 1993. Data is published by HMSO and is available in the Library. There is current research into the dental needs of an aging population and into young childrens' dental health. The Department also uses information collected by district dental officers and collated by the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry.

Redundancy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has regarding rates of *(a)* suicide, *(b)* premature death and *(c)* psychiatric disorders amongst families of people made redundant.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are increased rates of suicide, premature death, and depression and anxiety among unemployed people generally, although this is at least in part due to social and economic factors other than unemployment. Less is known about these rates in the families of those whose unemployment is the result of redundancy.

Homosexuality

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for what reasons homosexuality is listed as a sexual disorder and sexual deviancy under the mental illness category in the national health service nationwide computer system categorising patients; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: All hospital systems in England classify diagnoses in accordance with the current revision—the ninth—of the international classification for diseases, ICD, published by the World Health Organisation, WHO.

Homosexuality was first listed in the ICD in 1948 when the use of the ICD was expanded from a traditional classification of mortality causes to become a morbidity classification as well. The WHO reports that it is practically impossible to establish who proposed the inclusion.

In the current revision, the ninth, of the ICD, in use since 1979, the facility has been retained whereby homosexuality is listed in section 302.0 and defined as:

"exclusive or predominant sexual attraction for persons of the same sex with or without a physical relationship".

Provision is made to code homosexuality, regardless of whether considered a mental disorder or not, but is now rarely used.

This classification risked misinterpretation and consequently scientists, as well as several non-governmental organisations recommended the deletion of homosexuality as a category in the classification. Thus, in the 10th revision of the ICD approved by the World Health Assembly in May 1990 sexual orientation by itself is not regarded as a disorder. This revision will come into force for health services' purposes from April 1994.

Abortion

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will give a breakdown by regional health authority of the numbers of abortions in the last 12-month period for which figures are available and which were undertaken by the use of RU486;

(2) what information she has concerning the number of occasions during the last 12-month period upon which a woman has required treatment as a result of complications associated with abortions performed using the drug RU486.

Mr. Sackville: Between July 1991, when Mifegyne, known as RU486, was first licensed, and December 1991, the chief medical officers of England and Wales were notified of 109 abortions where the drug was used. A breakdown by regional health authority of woman's residence is given in the table:

Regional health authority of residence	*Number of abortions carried out using mifegyne (RU486)*
Northern	4
Yorkshire	16
Trent	—
East Anglian	—
North West Thames	7
North East Thames	23
South East Thames	4
South West Thames	6
Wessex	4
Oxford	18
South Western	4
West Midlands	4
Mersey	3
North Western	10
Wales	6
Total	109

There was one case where a complication was reported.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give a breakdown by gestation of the numbers of late abortions in the last 12 months for which figures are available which have involved the use of potassium chloride injections.

Mr. Sackville: In 1991, 10 abortions over 24 weeks gestation were notified to the chief medical officers of England and Wales where the method used involved potassium chloride injections. A breakdown by gestation period is given in the table:

Gestation period	*Number of abortions*
25 to 29 weeks	6
30 weeks and over	4
TOTAL	10

Lead Water Pipes

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, by regional health authority, what proportion of each regional health authority's buildings have lead piping in the water supply; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. Health authorities and national health service trusts are responsible for the management of national health service property, and are bound by all statutory standards relating to water supply and distribution.

National Health Service Prescriptions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the items available on a national health service prescription which currently cost less than the prescription charge.

Dr. Mawhinney: A list setting out those preparations which had an average net ingredient cost of less than the prescription charge in the period April 1992 to June 1992 has been placed in the Library. The list represents preparations and appliances dispensed by pharmacies and appliance contractors, dispensing doctors and prescriptions submitted by prescribing doctors for items personally administered. The net ingredient cost does not represent the full cost to the national health service of dispensing a prescription, this being made up, when prescriptions are dispensed by pharmacies, of the net ingredient cost, less discount, plus dispensing fees, on-cost and container allowances.

Ultra-violet Radiation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has made of the additional risk of a child in the United Kingdom developing *(a)* skin cancer and *(b)* eye cataracts as a result of ozone depletion; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 19 October 1992 at column *80*.

Estimates of skin cancer based solely on an estimate of ozone depletion would be misleading. The same points apply to any estimate of eye cataracts.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to extend the present three UV-B monitoring stations to a nationwide regional network in order that people can be given burn-time warnings on days when there is a high incidence of UV radiation; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Plans are underway to extend the monitoring network set up by the National Radiological Protection Board in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of the terrestrial solar UV levels over United Kingdom latitudes.

Earlier this year, the United Kingdom Health Departments asked the independent Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment, COMARE, to advise on the adverse health effects of ultraviolet radiation. COMARE noted that there can be seasonal variations in solar UV levels and short-term variations due to cloud and local weather which are far in excess of any variations anticipated as a result of ozone depletion. It stated that for this reason, it would not be helpful to publish daily information on solar UV levels, such retrospective information being of little practical value. The Government have accepted that opinion.

General Medical Practitioners

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what specific qualifications must be obtained by a general medical practitioner before he is permitted to dispense pharmaceuticals within England and Wales.

Dr. Mawhinney: In considering applications to dispense, family health services authorities must be satisfied that the doctor is a fully registered medical practitioner and that he is medically qualified, and since 1979 has satisfied the NHS (Vocational Training) Regulations.

Members' Correspondence

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines are issued to his Department for the processing of correspondence from hon. Members; and what is the average delay between receipt of correspondence from, and the date of response to, an hon. Member.

Mr. Sackville: Guidance to the Department makes it clear that Ministers aim to reply to all letters from right hon. and hon. Members within 28 days of receipt. Performance is closely monitored. Information on response times is shown in the table.

	Number of letters sent	*Percentage sent within target*	*Average response time*
1 January 1991 to 31 December 1991	18,001	60	28·8
1 January 1992 to 25 October 1992	13,801	76	20·2

Occupational Therapists

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the qualifications required to enter training as an occupational therapist at undergraduate and postgraduate level.

Dr. Mawhinney: For undergraduate training as an occupational therapist the minimum entry requirements are five GCE/GCSE passes, two of which must be at A-level. Business and Technician Education Council national diploma and certificates are accepted as equivalent. Individual schools may specify further requirements. Requirements for entry to accelerated courses for graduates vary according to the school concerned.

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people enter training as occupational therapists leading to recognition by the Royal College of Occupational Therapy every year.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of people entering full-time training as occupational therapists has increased by more than 30 per cent. in the past five years and is shown in the table:

	Number
1987	815
1988	859
1989	947
1990	998
1991	1,072

Note: Figures are for Great Britain.

Qualification leads to state registration by the occupational therapy board of the Council for the Professions Supplementary to Medicine and membership of the College of Occupational Therapists.

NHS Trusts

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of each application for the third wave of NHS trusts; and what was the total cost.

Dr. Mawhinney: Applications were prepared by individual units, with assistance from regional health authorities. Information about the cost of individual applications is not held centrally.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration she has given to the London ambulance service's application for trust status.

Dr. Mawhinney: The London ambulance service has no application for NHS trust status outstanding with the Department.

Appliance Contractors

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will seek to reduce the level of payments to appliance contractors to be the same as for pharmacists dispensing the same prescription; and what estimate she has made of the saving which would result.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are no plans to reduce the level of payments to appliance contractors. We shall consider the structure of payments in the light of changes we are making to pharmacists' remuneration.

NHS Superannuation Scheme

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 29 June, *Official Report*, columns *445–46*, if she will now announce the date for the publication of the framework document of the next steps agency for the NHS superannuation scheme for *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* Scotland.

Mr. Sackville: The framework document of the NHS Pensions Agency, which covers England and Wales, will be published before the launch. I expect to make an announcement very shortly on the date of the launch. The responsibility for arrangements in Scotland is for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Interleukin-6

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether Coopers and Lybrand, at the request of Leeds Western health authority, carried out an investigation into possible financial loss to the national health service arising out of the fraud in 1988 and 1989 on the Interleukin-6 research project in the Leeds general infirmary; and if she will make a statement;

(2) whether the internal auditors of the Leeds Western health authority have investigated the possible financial loss to the national health service arising out of the fraud in 1988 and 1989 on the Interleukin-6 research project in the Leeds general infirmary; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: No investigation was carried out either by Coopers and Lybrand or the internal auditors of the then Leeds Western health authority, into a possible financial loss from the Interleukin-6 research project in 1988-89.

An investigation in 1989 considered Dr. Chapman's allegations concerning a consultancy arrangement between a Belgian pharmaceutical company and the head of the bio-chemistry department at Leeds general infirmary. A separate inquiry into Dr. Chapman's allegations concerning research into Interleukin-6 was conducted by the university of Leeds earlier this year and a further review is currently under way.

Vascular Radiology Treatment

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients were referred from Liverpool's Royal hospital to Broadgreen hospital for vascular radiology treatment during the past two years.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. M. F. Emberton, chairman of Liverpool health authority, for details.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list, for the last 12 months, the titles of papers published by the chief executive of each executive agency for which she is responsible;

(2) if he will list the fact-finding visits made in the last 12 months by the chief executive of each executive agency for which he is responsible; and what were the findings resulting from each visit.

Dr. Mawhinney: The administration of the Medicines Control Agency is a matter for the chief executive, Dr. Keith Jones, and the administration of the National Health Service Estates Agency is a matter for its chief executive, Mr. J. C. Locke. I have asked the chief executives to reply to the hon. Member.

Letter from L. John Wardle to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 October 1992:

The Secretary of State for Health has advised that two of your recent parliamentary questions will be answered directly by the Chief Executive of the relevant agencies. In the absence of our Chief Executive this week, I give below the response for NHS Estates.

Parliamentary Question PQ 1430

None of the visits made by the Chief Executive during the past twelve months were arranged specifically for fact finding purposes. However, various meetings with senior NHS managers have provided information which will help the Agency meet the needs of its customers in the most effective and efficient way.

Parliamentary Question PQ 1380

During the past 12 months the Chief Executive has published an Annual Report and Accounts. The Agency has also published a number of guidance documents on the safe design, operation and management of the health care estate as shown in the accompanying table.

NHS ESTATES—GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS
Publications in 12 months to October 1992

Design Guides
The design of community hospitals
The design of day nurseries in a DGH

Estatecode
Level 2—Estate management information in the NHS

Firecode
Fire Practice Note 5—Commercial enterprises on hospital premises

Health Building Notes
8—Rehabilitation—accommodation for physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy
15—Accommodation for pathology services
18—Office accommodation in health buildings
20—Mortuary and post-mortem room
26—Operating department
34—Estate maintenance and works operations
45—External works for health buildings
46—General medical practice premises
47—Health records department
51—Accommodation at the main entrance of a District General Hospital
51 Supp 1—Miscellaneous spaces in a District General Hospital

Health Guidance Notes
"Safe" hot water and surface temperatures

Miscellaneous
Agreement for the appointment of project managers for commissions for construction projects in the NHS
Engineering symbols and drawing conventions
The control of Legionellae in health care premises: a code of practice

Concode
Amendments Nos. 10, 11, 12

Nucleus
Comprehensive children's department study pack
Maternity wards data pack
Operating department engineering data pack
Design information—energy and water consumptions
Maternity department—delivery suite and neonatal unit data pack
Operating department data pack
Accident and emergency department engineering data pack
Nucleus News (now Newslink—Nucleus Supplement) issues 27, 28, 29

Letter from Dr. K. Jones to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 October 1992:

The Secretary of State for Health will have advised that your recent Parliamentary Questions will be answered directly by the Chief Executive of the relevant agencies. I give below the response for the Medicines Control Agency:

Parliamentary Question P.117

During the last 12 months I have published an Annual Report and Accounts.

Parliamentary Question P.9

I have made one fact finding visit during the last 12 months. On the 18 May I attended a Food & Drug Administration hearing in Washington, USA, to determine the point of view of the advisory panel to the FDA for the benzodiazepine, triazolam (Halcion, Upjohn Ltd.).

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Increases

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to protect the real overseas aid increases announced by Her Majesty's Government last autumn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The future level of the aid programme is being considered, with other public expenditure programmes, in this year's public expenditure survey. I cannot anticipate the outcome of the survey. The Government remain committed to a substantial and effective overseas aid programme.

Global Environment

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy that the United Kingdom's contribution to the global environment facility will continue to be additional to the aid budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom's contribution to the global environment facility will continue to be separate from and additional to the aid programme for developing countries.

Somalia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much food, and of what kinds, has been given to Somalia from EC surplus food stocks held in store.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 29 October 1992]*: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman when we receive the relevant information which we have requested from the European Commission.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what projects by British non-governmental organisations working in Somalia have been funded by the Overseas Development Administration in the current year.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 29 October 1992]* We have committed almost £27 million of humanitarian aid for Somalia in 1992. We are funding the following projects which are being implemented by British non-governmental organisations:

Somalia

Projects funded by ODA and Implemented by British NGOS

	Project
BILATERAL FOOD AID	
August	
5,000 tonnes for south Somalia	CARE
5,000 tonnes for Mogadishu	CARE
HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE	
January	
Water supplies—Hargeisa, Burao	OXFAM
Supplies for Displaced—Burao	SCF
March	
Water, sanitation and shelters—Mogadishu	SCF
April	
Plane for NGO use in the north	SCF
Telecommunications for the north	CARE
June	
Plane for NGO use in the north	SCF
July	
Contribution to Activities	BRC
August	
Supplementary feeding, Mogadishu	World Vision
LWF airlift—Mogadishu & Belet Huen	Christian Aid
Logistical support and medical supplies—Mogadishu & Belet Huen	SCF
Seeds/Tools for the south	CARE
September	
Seeds for the South	OXFAM
Water equipment & airlift for the south	OXFAM
Airlift operational costs—relief supplies for south	CARE
25 emergency flights to Baidoa & 530MT for supplementary feeding	Christian Aid
October	
Unimix & Agricultural packs	World Vision
Operational costs—Nairobi	SCF

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British aircraft are involved in the airlift of food to Somalia; and for how long the aircraft have been involved.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 29 October 1992]*: Since airlifts of food to Somalia began in August, we have provided £1·46 million for such operations through British and Irish non-governmental organisations. We are assured by the World Food Programme which co-ordinates airlifts of food to Somalia that it has sufficient air capacity to meet present needs. Delivery of food is constrained by the volatile security situation in Somalia.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place a copy of the United Nations 100-day action plan for Somalia in the Library.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 29 October 1992]*: A copy of the United Nations 100-day action plan for Somalia has been placed in the Libraries of the House.

EC Food Surpluses

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the basis of the calculation of the value of donations of food from EC surpluses donated to overseas aid relief.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 29 October 1992]*: The cost to the EC aid programme of buying cereals for food aid from EC intervention stocks is similar to the world market price for food of comparable quality.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much of the overseas Development Administration aid buget is paid into EC funds to obtain EC food surpluses for famine relief.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 29 October 1992]*: Provisional figures show that the cost to the overseas aid budget of European Community food aid in 1991 was £74 million. This includes food aid for famine relief and for other food aid programmes; food purchased from EC intervention stocks, from the EC open market and from third countries. Some 250,000 tonnes of wheat were purchased out of intervention stocks for use as food aid in 1991 out of a total provided of 1·74 million tonnes of cereals.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Community Policy

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Community to encourage the international community to provide extra resources for agricultural recovery; if he will make it his policy to enlarge the EC social fund to enable the poorest people to cope with economic changes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We do not intend to press for additional resources for agriculture either during, or after, the United Kingdom presidency. The recently agreed common agricultural policy reform measures included generous compensation for all farmers. In addition, the Community's agricultural guidance fund already provides resources to support structural change and investment in the agricultural sector.

The European social fund is essentially a vocational training and retraining fund. The United Kingdom's top priority is that the European social fund should continue to help those who are unemployed back into the labour market through vocational training and employment measures.

Chernobyl

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many delegations, including representatives from her Department, have visited the areas worst affected by the Chernobyl disaster to date.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: During the course of two studies funded by Her Majesty's Government's know-how fund, company representatives have paid nine visits to the affected areas during 1992. The studies aim to monitor the effects of the Chernobyl disaster on food production and distribution in Ukraine, to determine radiation measures, and to develop a strategy to rehabilitate the areas affected. The chargé d'affaires at the British embassy in Kiev visited Chernobyl earlier this year.

Allan Nicklin

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will summon the Saudi Arabian ambassador to demand that Mr. Allan Nicklin, currently detained in Saudi Arabia against his will, be allowed to leave the kingdom immediately; and if he will make a full statement about the circumstances of Mr. Nicklin's detention.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As my hon. Friend is aware, Mr. Nicklin was first detained in August 1990 when the insurance company of which he was chief executive, Western Agencies Ltd. (WAL) (Jedda), incurred debts which it could not meet because of the failure of two United States underwriters to meet the claims of its parent company, WAL (Cyprus). He was released, although not free to leave Saudi Arabia, in November 1990, re-arrested in November 1991 and released into his sponsor's custody in January 1992. Although Mr. Nicklin was later cleared of personal liability for the debts, he has not obtained his exit visa.

We have repeatedly raised Mr. Nicklin's case at high level with the Saudi authorities, who are trying to resolve this complicated commercial dispute. Most recently, I told the Saudi ambassador on 22 October 1992 of the deep concern of Her Majesty's Government at Mr. Nicklin's continued detention. The ambassador again promised to do what he could to help. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs does not therefore propose at present to summon the ambassador to see him.

European Parliament

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Council of Ministers will, during the British presidency, be discussing the seat of the European Parliament.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The question of the sites of EC institutions, including the EP seat, may be discussed at the Edinburgh European Council.

Iran

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further representations he has made to the Iranian Government following recent further killings, property confiscations and persecutions against the Baha'i and other religious minorities.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We remain seriously concerned about continued human rights abuses in Iran, including the persecution of Baha'is. We are active through the human rights machinery of the United Nations, as well as bilaterally and with our EC partners, in keeping up the pressure on Iran. We have recently made representations on behalf of the EC to the Iranian authorities in Geneva and Tehran reiterating our concern at new reports of persecution of Baha'is in Iran.

Maastricht Treaty

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what decision was reached by the Council of Ministers meeting in Oslo on 4 June concerning the ratification of the treaty of Maastricht by the other 11 members states following the Danish referendum; whether the decision was unanimous; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs told the House on 8 June, the Council agreed that we should continue with the process of ratification of the Maastricht treaty on the basis of the existing text, and that the door should be left open for Denmark. This was agreed by all Twelve.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide an English language translation of the term "acquis Communautaire" as applicable within the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The term "acquis Communautaire" means the provisions of the Community treaties and the Acts of the Community institutions adopted under those treaties to date.

Ghana

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken by Her Majesty's Government to help ensure that the forthcoming elections in Ghana are free and fair.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 29 October 1992]*: We have provided approximately £1 million worth of office equipment, electoral booths, and technical co-operation, including electoral officer training, to Ghana's interim national electoral commission. We are also contributing to the cost of a commonwealth electoral monitoring team.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Regional Assistance

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) when he expects to complete his evaluation of the regional selective assistance programme in Wales; by whom that evaluation is being carried out; and if he will place a copy in the Library;

(2) when he expects the completion and publication of the evaluation exercise on regional selective assistance.

Mr. Sainsbury: An evaluation report on the regional selective assistance scheme during the period 1985 to 1988 carried out by PA Cambridge Economic Consultants has been received by Ministers in the three operating Departments, Department of Trade and Industry, Scottish and Welsh Offices. We are currently considering the report which will be published shortly.

Information Technology

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to ensure a level playing field across the Community in the national markets for information technology.

Mr. Leigh: My Department takes every opportunity to encourage the achievement of a level playing field in IT markets in Europe and participated fully in discussions leading to the European Community Council resolution on electronics, information and communication technologies in November 1991. We also fully support the European Community Commission in its application of the Community's competition and state aids policies.

Innovation Unit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the current priorities of his Department's innovation unit; and if he will list the projects and research reports it has commissioned externally since April.

Mr. Leigh: My Department's innovation unit was established to promote market driven innovation—the successful exploitation of new ideas—as the key to sustained competitiveness and wealth creation. The unit works alongside many different organisations as a catalyst for increasing the understanding of innovation and activities related to innovation. It provides support and assistance to existing projects where appropriate.

Its current priorities are:

(i) increasing the importance, and improving the management, of innovation at all levels in business;

(ii) improving the commercial exploitation of the United Kingdom's science and technology base;

(iii) improving communication about innovation between firms and their investors, including the banks;

(iv) increasing the level of appreciation throughout the education system of the importance of technology, engineering and innovation to everyday life and to wealth creation;

(v) increasing public awareness and understanding of the role of innovation in wealth creation;

(vi) ensuring consistency and synergy between the overall message and the content, rules, marketing and delivery of innovation-related DTI schemes and services, with a view to simplification where possible.

The following external reports have been commissioned since April 1992;

1. A study on the collaborative links between Polytechnics and Business. (Academic Industry Links Organisation; reported May 1992).
2. A market assessment study on the need for improved literature to explain the essentials of obtaining finance to small firms and to inform investors about the financial requirements of such firms. (Segal Quince Wickstead; reported August 1992).
3. A market assessment study on the usefulness of an Innovation and Technology Review to small and medium sized firms. (Metra Martech; reported August 1992).
4. A study of the usefulness to firms of the NEDO "Innovation Management Toolkit". (The Success Group; reported August 1992).
5. A study on the feasibility of developing and objective method of innovation benchmarking in firms. (London Business School; not yet reported).
6. A study on the use of the UK science base by small firms (Science Policy Research Unit; not yet reported).
7. A study on the perceptions of firms in the Yorkshire/Humberside region of the value of DTI innovation-related schemes (SIBTECH; not yet reported).

The innovation unit has commissioned the following projects since April 1992:

1. The annual UK R&D Scoreboard (published in "The Independent" 9 June 1992).
2. The 1993 UK Innovation Lecture, in collaboration with the Royal Society, The Royal Academy of Engineering, The CBI and the Design Council.
3. Contributions on generic technologies in an innovation pack for schools produced by Michael Benn & Associates.
4. A brochure, "Measurement in Sport", for schools in collaboration with the National Physical Laboratory.
5. A series of 8 videos and teacher support material "Innovation—Wealth from Science and Engineering" for schools use and national broadcast.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total number of staff in his Department's innovation unit.

Mr. Leigh: The DTI innovation unit comprises 15 staff of whom five are senior industrialists on secondment.

Coal

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the basis of his calculations that United Kingdom coal is more expensive than imported coal.

Mr. Eggar: British Coal currently supplies coal to National Power and PowerGen at around £1·88p a gigajoule (GJ). Assuming delivery costs of 5–20p/GJ, depending on the sourcing of the coal this gives a delivered cost of around £1·93–2·08p/GJ.

The price of coal delivered to Amsterdam/Rotterdam over the past 12 months has been in the range 75p–£1/GJ, depending on the exchange rate and the world price of coal. Transport and port charges to cover the cost of delivery to power stations in England and Wales would add a further 20–40p/GJ to this cost.

Pit Closures

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with *(a)* the Trades Union Congress and *(b)* the National Economic Development Council over the coal pit closure programme.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade announced on 21 October that he has put in hand a full and wide-ranging review of the prospects for the 21 pits proposed for closure by British Coal but not subject to the statutory consultation currently being undertaken by British Coal. He made it clear that consultation will take place with all the principal providers and consumers of energy, the trades unions and other interested parties.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what calculation he has made on the effect on the balance of trade of the pit closure programme.

Mr. Eggar: Pit closures that correctly reflect lower demand for coal will have little effect on the balance of trade.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations he has had with the National Rivers Authority about the pollution consequences of pit closures.

Mr. Eggar: None. There is regular liaison between British Coal and the National Rivers Authority at local and regional levels on all issues relevant to the National River Authority's responsibilities for regulating water pollution.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many coal mining pits have been closed in the last five years.

Mr. Eggar: British Coal has closed 57 collieries in the past five financial years.

Coal and Energy Inquiry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce legislation to require the private generating companies, British Gas and British Coal to make public all information relevant to the promised full inquiry into the coal and energy industries, which is at present covered by conditions of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Eggar: No. In my right hon. Friend's parliamentary answer on 26 October, *Official Report*, columns *522–23*, he explained that all evidence submitted to the Government's review will be published unless it is commercially confidential.

Appointments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all the names of public appointments that he has made, giving the period for which the appointment was made, relevant qualifications of the appointees and what remuneration each currently receives.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend is responsible for a total of over 800 public appointments. A total of 121 appointments, including reappointments, to 27 public bodies have been made since 9 April 1992. The required information on these appointments is not held centrally in the form requested and could be produced only at disproportionate cost. The readily available information about the public appointments for which my right hon. Friend is responsible is published regularly in "Public Bodies" and in "Public Appointments: A Handbook for Women's Organisations".

Research and Development

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he plans to take to make it more attractive for companies to invest in research and development.

Mr. Leigh: The Government believe that the research and development which is undertaken by industry itself is the most effective and the most likely to help them maintain competitiveness. Accordingly the role for Government, in this area, is to create the right environment in which companies invest more of their own resources in research and development. For example, the Government will continue their policy of reducing the burdens on industry—we now have the lowest corporation tax of any G7 or European Community country. The success of the Government's approach is demonstrated by the 38 per cent. growth, in real terms, of industry's own funded research and development between 1983 and 1990, the last year for which figures are available.

Point of Ayr Colliery

Mr. Richards: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy that the proposed investment by British Coal at the Point of Ayr colliery in north Wales with regard to the introduction of a second and third continuous miner will proceed on schedule.

Mr. Eggar: British Coal has given an assurance that development work will continue at the 21 pits covered by the review announced by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade on 21 October. This includes Point of Ayr. Detailed investment decisions are, however, a matter for British Coal.

Mr. Richards: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy that, in the event of British Coal deciding not to continue with its mining operation at the Point of Ayr colliery in north Wales, the mine will be offered for sale to a private enterprise.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has put in hand a full and wide-ranging review of the prospects for the 21 pits proposed for closure by British Coal but not subject to the statutory consultation currently being undertaken by British Coal. Point of Ayr is one of these. The review will decide whether the case for closure at each of the pits in question has been fully made. It would not be appropriate to speculate about the outcome in relation to Point of Ayr until the review is complete.

Mr. Richards: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with PowerGen about the demand for coal from the Point of Ayr colliery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The sourcing of coal for its power stations is a matter for PowerGen and its suppliers. The market prospects for coal and the future of Point of Ayr colliery will be considered as part of the review announced by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade on 21 October.

Mr. Hanson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy that planned investment in Point of Ayr colliery will continue during the period of the announced pit closure moratorium.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 29 October 1992]*: British Coal is continuing with development work at the 21 pits covered by the moratorium, including Point of Ayr, for the period of the review announced by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Fiddler's Ferry Power Station

Mr. Richards: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will list all the mines which supply coal to the Fiddler's Ferry power station according to tonnage during the last year for which data exists;

(2) if he will identify the sources of coal to the Fiddler's Ferry power station that were planned at the time of the original proposal to close 31 mines.

Mr. Eggar: The sources of coal to Fiddler's Ferry power station are commercial matters for PowerGen and its suppliers. The market prospects for coal will be considered as part of the review announced by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade on 21 October.

British Gas

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total cost to public funds of privatising British Gas.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to page 18 of the report by the National Audit Office on the sale of British Gas, House of Commons paper 22 published June 1987.

Redundancy Payments

Mr. Heppell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce packages of enhanced redundancy payments and training for people who, although not employed by British Coal, are losing their jobs as a direct result of pit closures.

Mr. Eggar: The package of training and counselling measures announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment on 19 October will be available for all those who are unemployed, or who become unemployed in the areas worst affected by possible pit closures—and also any redundant miners who live outside these areas. People in other areas who lose their jobs as a result of pit closures will be eligible for a wide range of employment, training and enterprise measures delivered through the training and enterprise councils and the Employment Service.

Industrial Injuries

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the text of the memorandum prepared in his Department, dated 8 October, about the report of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council concerning emphysema and bronchitis in metal workers and coal miners.

Mr. Eggar: This was advice from an official to a Minister which it would not be appropriate to publish.

Frigg Treaty

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions have taken place with the Norwegian Government on the re-negotiation of the Frigg treaty.

Mr. Eggar: United Kingdom and Norwegian officials commenced re-negotiation of the Frigg treaty on 8 July. Their next meeting is scheduled for 16 to 17 November. I met Mr. Finn Kristensen, the Norwegian Minister of Energy and Industry, on 9 October to discuss a number of matters including the Frigg treaty.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the proposals from the European Commission with respect to a joint data protection and telecommunications directive are of the kind that will be subject to subsidiarity arrangements; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: The Government believe that the proposed directive on data protection and the telecommunications sector should be examined carefully for its consistency with the principle of subsidiarity. Any revised proposals will be considered in the light of this principle once they have been submitted to the Council by the Commission.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will summarise his main objections to the revised proposals from the Commission with respect to a joint data protection and telecommunications directive; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: The Commission has not yet submitted its revised proposal for a directive on data protection in telecommunications to the Council. The revised text will be considered carefully once it is received.

Trentham Colliery

Mr. Stevenson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to prevent British Coal from closing down production at Trentham colliery complex.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for British Coal. The corporation has, however, undertaken to preserve the fabric of the 10 pits, including Trentham colliery, listed by my right hon. Friend in his statement on 19 October, which are currently subject to the statutory consultation process. If, at the end of the period of statutory consultation, it is decided to keep any or all of the collieries open, British Coal has assured us that it will remain possible to do so.

Environmental Pollution

Mr. Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what comparative assessment his Department has made of the pollutant discharges to the environment in aqueous, solid or aerial particulate form, of the cradle-to-grave process, productions and use of *(a)* nuclear fuels, *(b)* coal, *(c)* oil, *(d)* gas and *(e)* renewable energies used for electricity generation.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

No comprehensive comparison has been made by this Department. Details of releases from power stations burning coal, gas and oil and the relevant abatement technologies have been published by the Department in "Acidic Emission Abatement Technologies", volumes 1 to 3, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Releases to the environment from individual power stations for electricity generation using coal, oil, gas and nuclear fuels are controlled by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, HMIP. In determining each application from the electricity generators for these processes, HMIP will consider the environmental implications of releases to all three media; air, water and land.

Steel

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out *(a)* the total United Kingdom finished steel production in tonnes for each year since 1979 and *(b)* the principal products involved.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 29 October 1992]*: The information is as follows:

United Kingdom finished steel production, 1979 to 1991

	Million tonnes
1979	16·9
1980	10·4
1981	12·7
1982	11·8
1983	12·3
1984	12·6
1985	13·1
1986	13·1
1987	15·0
1988	16·7
1989	16·9
1990	16·1
1991	15·0

Source: Iron and Steel Statistics Bureau.

The principal products are: ingots and semi-finished steel blooms, billets and slabs; hot rolled bars; wire rod; heavy sections, sheet piling and rails; light sections; hot rolled coil; cold reduced sheet; coated sheet—zinc coated; tinplate; plates and hot rolled narrow strip; bright bars; cold rolled narrow strip; tubes and pipes; and forged billets and bars.

Imported Coal

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the price of imported coal has risen as a result of the fall in the value of pound sterling against the dollar; and if he will impose an anti-dumping duty where prices have not been raised in line with the fall in the exchange rate.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 27 October 1992]*: Imported coal is priced in dollars. The price in pound sterling of a consignment of imported coal will therefore increase pro rata with the fall in the value of the pound against the dollar. The European Commission may impose anti-dumping duties where there is substantive evidence of products being sold at a dumped price to the material injury of Community producers.

Mr. Madden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out in tabular form those countries which export coal to the United Kingdom, showing for each of the last five years the coal imported by volume and value; what action he or his predecessors took over the same period to substitute British coal for imported coal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 29 October 1992]*: The figures requested are given in the table. Over the past five years, the Government have encouraged and assisted British Coal to improve productivity and reduce costs so as to become competitive with imported coal. Since 1985-86 much progress has been made—British Coal has more than doubled productivity—but its international competitors have also improved productivity and further cost reductions are needed to attain full competitiveness with imported coal.

Quantity thousand tonnes

Country of origin	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
United States of America[1]	2,890	4,073	4,874	6,176	8,132
Australia[1]	3,459	3,416	2,676	3,044	4,654
Colombia[1]	319	574	874	1,506	2,447
USSR	89	375	181	592	900
Canada	362	553	729	986	760
South Africa	188	276	346	356	579
Poland	1,083	1,270	1,055	1,043	557
China	146	319	450	69	294
Belgium	192	122	78	60	231
Venezuela	—	92	86	169	230
Germany[2]	261	191	288	249	220
Others[1]	79[illegible]	425	501	533	488
Total	9,781	11,685	12,137	14,783	19,491

Value £ million

Country of origin	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
United States of America[1]	105	148	183	255	290
Australia[1]	115	106	89	152	171
Colombia[1]	12	21	34	44	71
USSR	2	10	6	17	26
Canada	12	16	26	38	26
South Africa	7	12	14	14	26
Poland	41	42	38	41	26
China	11	16	23	3	13
Belgium	9	6	4	4	10
Venezuela	—	3	3	4	7

Country of origin	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Germany[2]	26	18	24	24	21
Others[1]	28	19	26	8	15
Total	268	418	470	605	703

Because of rounding the sum of the constituent items may not agree with the totals shown.

[1] Some imports previously recorded by Customs and Excise as originating in the Netherlands have been re-allocated to the other countries indicated or, where revised country of origin data is not available, included in the residual entry "Others". This re-allocation has been carried out for 1991 and estimates of such imports previously classified to the Netherlands have been included for 1990. Figures for earlier years have not been re-allocated to individual countries.

[2] Includes imports previously recorded separately for the German Democratic Republic.

Source: Customs and Excise.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing total imports of coal by volume and value in each of the past five years and the current year to date, the tonnage imported through each port of entry, the value and volume in each case of the tonnage suitable for use in power stations and the nearest power stations.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 29 October 1992]:* The information requested is as follows:

Port of Entry	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	[1]*1992*
Total quantity of coal imports			Thousand tonnes			
Medway	556	565	652	855	1,989	2,249
Immingham	669	999	1,268	2,182	3,177	2,206
Middlesbrough	2,501	2,570	2,812	2,385	2,894	1,914
Port Talbot	1,958	1,997	2,610	2,885	2,655	1,716
London (inc. Tilbury)	538	743	782	2,104	3,016	1,596
Greenock	1,216	1,164	1,162	1,027	1,209	1,363
Liverpool	65	31	286	948	1,308	1,152
Belfast	172	192	182	332	387	536
Hull	19	1	44	152	416	322
Cardiff	222	294	229	410	491	292
Swansea	—	92	134	162	422	140
Others	1,865	3,036	1,975	1,340	1,527	983
Total	9,781	11,685	12,137	14,783	19,491	14,469
Total value of coal imports[2]			*£ million*			
Medway	23	24	29	41	79	74
Immingham	22	31	47	85	112	76
Middlesbrough	86	79	96	104	95	64
Port Talbot	69	65	87	112	93	60
London (inc. Tilbury)	22	31	34	80	101	51
Greenock	41	35	38	37	39	39
Liverpool	6	1	13	36	35	34
Belfast	10	12	14	21	23	22
Hull	1	—	2	4	14	10
Cardiff	9	13	9	17	20	10
Swansea	—	4	7	6	16	5
Others	80	122	92	64	77	48
Total	368	418	470	605	703	492
Quantity of imports of steam coal[3]						
Medway	555	563	651	854	1,938	2,249
Immingham	156	249	286	314	758	447
Middlesbrough	8	—	48	119	168	242
Port Talbot	1	—	1	—	—	—
London (including Tilbury)	525	742	762	1,971	3,016	1,591
Greenock	—	60	112	144	314	932
Liverpool	14	31	139	761	1,308	1,152
Belfast	76	55	27	134	187	435
Hull	16	—	44	152	416	278
Cardiff	1	3	7	34	105	108
Swansea	—	—	17	90	53	30
Others	1,364	2,095	1,281	928	949	690
Total	2,716	3,799	3,374	5,501	9,210	8,153
Value of imports of steam coal[2 3]			*£ million*			
Medway	23	24	28	41	77	74
Immingham	5	7	11	9	22	13
Middlesbrough	—	—	2	4	5	7
Port Talbot	—	—	—	—	—	—
London (including Tilbury)	21	31	32	74	101	51
Greenock	—	1	3	3	8	23

Port of Entry	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*[1]1992*
Liverpool	—	1	6	28	35	34
Belfast	3	2	2	6	9	15
Hull	—	—	2	4	14	9
Cardiff	—	—	—	1	3	3
Swansea	—	—	1	3	2	1
Others	42	71	47	34	37	25
Total	95	139	132	207	312	254

Because of rounding the sum of the constituent items may not agree with the totals shown.

[1] January to August.

[2] Includes costs of insurance and freight.

[3] Steam coal is the type of coal used in power stations, but it is also used by industrial, domestic and other consumers.

Source: Customs and Excise.

	Nearest power stations (coal-fired)
Medway	Kingsnorth
Immingham	West Burton
Middlesbrough	Blyth
Port Talbot	Aberthaw
London (inc. Tilbury)	Tilbury, West Thurrock
Greenock	Kindcardine, Longannet
Liverpool	Fiddler's Ferry
Belfast	West Belfast
Hull	Drax
Cardiff	Aberthaw
Swansea	Aberthaw

Gas Cookers

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he intends to take to ensure the existing safety regulation concerning the sale of second-hand gas cookers is to remain following the EEC regulations which are to be introduced from 1996; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 27 October 1992]:* The Government are committed to maintaining a high standard of consumer protection in respect of second-hand gas appliances. In addition to retaining the existing regulation of second-hand gas cookers, I am also considering the possibility of extending the same level of consumer protection to a wider range of second-hand gas appliances.

Segal Quince Wicksteed Report

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to reach a decision on the Segal Quince Wicksteed report on the availability of finance for small high technology firms; when that report was received by his Department; and if he will place that report in the Library.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 27 October 1992]:* The report by Segal Quince Wicksteed recently commissioned by my Department's innovation unit was received on 21 August 1992. It deals with the need for improved explanatory literature about finance for technological innovation. It does not deal with the availability of such finance.

Arrangements have been made to place a copy in the Library of the House.

Faraday Centres

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to reach a decision on the proposals presented to him by the Prince of Wales' working group to create Faraday centres.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 27 October 1992]:* The proposals from His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales' working group on innovation are a valuable contribution to the debate on improving the contribution of the United Kingdom's science and technology base to industrial competitiveness and wealth creation. The proposals will be considered alongside the other issues which will be addressed in the Government's White Paper on science and technology to be published next year.

British Standard Institute

Mr. Hendry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to review the monopoly status of the British Standards Institute in issuing kitemarks and extend the powers to the organisations entitled to issue BS 5750 certificates.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 26 October 1992]:* The Government have no plans to review the arrangements under which BSI quality assurance, BSIQA, licenses the use of the kitemark. BSIQA is the financially independent certification business of BSI and the kitemark is its registered certification trade mark. It therefore has sole right to grant the use of its own mark in the same way as the owner of any other certification trade mark.

The kitemark denotes that a product conforms to an agreed British, European or international standard; and that the system by which it has been manufactured has been subject to assessment and surveillance by BSIQA so as to ensure consistency of production. Any certification body is entitled to register and licence the use of its own mark, in accordance with these same standards and procedures. Indeed, some have already done so.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 212**

SESSION 1992–93

24th September—30th October 1992

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Speaker and deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

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